

IT industry: neutrality the key in public procurement of information technology

Public administrations in the EU should adhere strictly to the principles of neutrality and non-discrimination laid down in EU public procurement directives when procuring information technology. That's the message conveyed by industry participants to policymakers in a special workshop organized by the Initiative for Software Choice (ISC) in Brussels today.

Brussels, 16 September 2004 – Over 50 policymakers and IT industry representatives from across Europe came together in Brussels today as part of the workshop “Public procurement of information technology: EU and international perspectives” organized by the Initiative for Software Choice.

Hugo Lueders, European Director of the ISC, said:

“This workshop has provided important guidance for public sector IT authorities looking to procure their IT services and equipment: the principles of neutrality and non-discrimination should be at the centre of any public procurement decision, and any derogation from this approach is likely to contravene EU procurement law.

“This unequivocal message needs now to be transmitted to all European capitals, for the sake of the IT industry in Europe. Governments that intervene in procurement processes and establish arbitrary and artificial preferences in favour of a particular type of product not only restrict the ability of the administration to choose the solution that best meets their needs. They also damage the IT industry by insulating certain providers from competition and unfairly penalizing others.”

Cathal Friel, Chairman of the Irish Software Association said:

“Whenever public procurement officials in Europe – be it at a municipal, regional, and national level – establish preferences for one kind of software over another, the software industry suffers. It is imperative that policymakers understand that local public procurement preferences can, and do, have repercussions elsewhere. Such preferences distort trade, undermine competition and inhibit innovation as markets are arbitrarily closed off.”

Notes

- *The international [Initiative for Software Choice](#) seeks to advance multiple competing software markets unimpeded by government preference, and to advise policymakers about the benefits of unimpeded software choice. The four key principles of the campaign are (i) Procuring software on merits, not regulatory preference (ii) Broad availability of government-funded research (iii) Interoperability through platform neutral standards and (iv) Maintaining intellectual property protection.*
- *The workshop is the latest in a series of workshops looking at issues of relevance to the European IT industry. Previous themes have included “The European Interoperability Framework” and “IDA Open Source migration guidelines”.*

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