

ISC applauds Portuguese rejection of law restricting government choice in software procurement

Brussels, October 10, 2003 - The Initiative for Software Choice (ISC) today welcomed the decision by the Portuguese parliament to reject Bill no. 126/IX, which had sought to impose the use of "free software" in the public administration, virtually without regard to other viable commercial alternatives.

"I am delighted and relieved that the Portuguese parliament has decided to reject this Bill," Hugo Lueders, director for ISC in Europe said. "Establishing hard preferences in law for one type of software over another can never be in the best interests of governments, their taxpayers, or the ICT industry.

"Preference' laws – such as Bill no.126 - oversimplify the selection process by using access to source code in place of a balanced analysis by government procurement professionals. They strip merit from the process, arbitrarily limiting choice without properly looking to a range of factors, such as total cost of ownership, reliability, security, functionality, ease of use, interoperability, training and availability, among others, when software acquisitions are made.

"In rejecting the Bill, Portuguese legislators have shown they understand that eliminating merit-based choice from the selection process reduces the range of software options open to government consideration, shortchanging the taxpayer and harming the local ICT industry which functions best when it competes to provide a wide range of solutions.

"Today's decision is only the latest example of a growing acceptance among European governments, including Sweden, Denmark and Italy, of the need to allow different software models to compete freely with one another, without public intervention in favour of one particular development model," said Mr. Lueders. "As Portugal leads its citizens into the Information Age we believe today's decision has helped ensure that it is fully equipped to face the challenges of the future."

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About the ISC

The Initiative for Software Choice (ISC) is a global coalition of large and small companies committed to advancing the concept that multiple competing software markets should be allowed to develop and flourish unimpeded by government preference or mandate. ISC represents over 250 companies worldwide, of which more than 50 are based in Europe.

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