

Enabling sustainable collaboration on open source software
in and among European Union municipalities

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Abstract: Collaboration in Open-Source Software (OSS) development is prominent in the private sector, and commonly enabled through institutions for collective action -- non-profit foundations – that act as neutral territory with open governance structures that support cross-organizational OSS collaboration. Uptake and collective action around OSS development in Public Sector Organizations (PSOs) exists but is more restrained because of their outsourcing of technical capabilities and legal and policy constraints. Consequently, studies on OSS nonprofit foundations in industry are maturing, but comparable studies on collective action within the public sector are limited. In this paper, we help close this gap through a qualitative study of three cases of public sector OSS collective action, each representing a form of association involving individual PSOs as members. The cases vary in terms of maturity, size, legal structure, geographical representation, and number and complexity of hosted OSS projects. Across these cases, we ask: (1) How did these efforts begin? What motivated the actors to initiate collective action? (2) How have they evolved over time? What, if any, collective action problems have emerged? (3) What mechanisms were applied to help overcome emergent collective action problems? Data is collected through multiple methods, including surveys, focus groups, and interviews. We combine the IAD\Governing Knowledge Commons framework and the Institutional Collective Action Framework to structure our analysis.

Note: For WOW 7, this will be a presentation on case study research actively in progress. No paper is ready to be uploaded.