PRESS RELEASE

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OpenForum Europe urges Governments across Europe to move quickly to avoid ICT lock-in by ‘practising what they promote’ through ‘Open Procurement’ processes


These important documents stress how necessary it is to avoid lock-in in ICT systems and they promote the use of global ICT standards in public procurement. OFE stands ready to support the Commission in driving the use of these documents by public bodies across Europe.

OFE's key objective is to drive an open, competitive market in Europe based on fair competition. These Commission documents work towards that same goal.

The Commission estimate that over €1 billion is wasted annually by Governments through the inadvertent lock-in to technologies from single suppliers. OFE's past analysis suggests this may be an underestimate.

Our own monitoring exercises (referenced by the Commission) regularly confirm a minimum of 16% of large tenders appear to break existing rules on procurement through the continued reference to brand names.

Governments may also be putting themselves and their citizens at a disadvantage by limiting their ability to adopt quickly to changes in technology, such as the move to cloud-based computing.

Some of the most important elements of the Commission's objectives outlined in the Communication are:

1. Emphasis on interoperability as an important consideration in public procurement, leading to better public services at lower cost.

2. Avoiding the referencing of brand names and proprietary technologies in public tenders, and referencing global standards instead.

3. Recognising the need to identify exit costs before the start and allocating those costs in
assessing competitive solutions.

4. Emphasis on an open, competitive ICT market to promote innovation and reduce costs, and acknowledgement of the role of Open Standards in achieving those aims.

OFE believes that ‘Open Procurement’ is fundamental to creating a more competitive environment.

“We will support the Commission to make certain that the communication and guide are effectively distributed and deployed across all Member State governments,” said OFE chief executive Graham Taylor.

Some Governments including the Netherlands and the UK are already ahead of the curve but many countries still have a long way to go, he added.

OFE welcomed the assurance that the European Commission will apply the Guide to its own procurement practises, and called on other European Institutions to do likewise.

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