PRESS RELEASE: A call on public administrations to practice what they preach and support open document formats

15 September 2014

Today marks the start of the Global Legislative Openness Week, an annual celebration of open, participatory legislative processes. For the occasion, we join a number of organisations in signing an open letter addressed to all national legislatures around the world to make parliamentary information open by default. Opening up legislative, and more generally governmental information is not only crucial to improve transparency and accountability, but also enables third parties to leverage the potential of that information through the development of applications and services that address public and private demands.

One particularly important aspect to consider when opening up government information is to make sure to consistently publish in open formats that can be read and manipulated by anyone. In the context of editable documents used for sharing and collaborating, the leading such format is OpenDocument Format (ODF). A number of public administrations throughout Europe (most recently in the UK) have decided to provide support for ODF. These are laudable decisions that help public administrations achieve greater independence and/or foster inclusiveness and interaction with citizens, by avoiding to impose on them to use a piece of software from any particular vendor. Undeniably, these decisions are also challenging to implement, not least because of the number of people regularly involved in creating and sharing documents in any single administration.

This is why we are now launching a new platform to leverage citizen's participation in helping public administrations support open document formats, called FixMyDocuments.eu. Through this platform, anyone can report web pages that fail to make editable documents that are intended for collaboration available or accept submissions in ODF, when such documents are coming from or received by administrations that have committed to do so. We offer to communicate the data directly to the relevant administration on a regular basis, as well as to check and track progress of the administrations' compliance to their own commitments. We hope that through this collective effort, we can help public administrations offer more consistent support for open document formats.

For more information on the campaign, visit this page or contact OFE's Director in charge of European Policy & Government Relations Maël Brunet on +32 2 210 02 80, mael@openforumeurope.org. You may also subscribe to receive future updates by email. Follow the campaign on twitter @fixmydocuments.

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