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Open Source in Government

Designing an open source strategy for the state
administration of Geneva's IT services



On
Ramp

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Pre-existing context

It's been going on for some time

- Since the early 2000's open source has been in use, but without any strategy.
- End-user stations using utilities like VLC, notepad++, GanttProjetc...
- Infrastructure services using Linux, PostgreSQL, Tomcat...
- Specific solutions built on Drupal, Spring, Eclipse...
- Education services also using significant amounts of open source
- In 2016 there was a challenge to publish e-voting code
 - Alas not really open source!



Thinking politics and strategy

Open source is not just about software – this is where I came in

- Geneva is a canton, but also a republic
 - “Res Publica” has implications
 - One of them leads to “open source first”!
- Other political objectives
 - Show excellence and competence
 - Drive inter canton collaboration
 - Be a more attractive recruiter
 - Satisfy the canton leadership



Designing the strategy

Strategic alignment with the department's overall IT strategy

- There was an existing IT and Communications strategy for the canton administration
 - <https://www.ge.ch/document/strategie-systemes-information-communication-administration-cantonale>
- We do not yet have an OSPO
- Decided to align open source strategy to the strategic axis of the existing IT strategy
 - (Yeah, that's a lot of strategy...)
- 3 strategic axis
 - Position Geneva State as key regional player for IT technologies
 - Better serve the citizens with creative solutions tailored to their needs
 - Create a culture of excellence, better risk control, and breaking down silos by mutualizing resources
- Created the strategy in an InnerSource way through collaborative workshops
- Had it approved by management
- Published it online
 - <https://github.com/republique-et-canton-de-geneve/strategie-open-source>
- Added a charter for developers



Implementation

Created in an InnerSource mode

- We do not yet have an OSPO
- Did a series of workshops for brainstorming, and prioritizing actions
- Aligned with the various elements of the strategy
- Covering open source and InnerSource
- Getting the new management onboard
- Creating training/educational programs
- Internal mailing list
- Support for publishing
- Engaging with external partners
- Pushing for creation of an OSPO



Roadblocks

Welcome to the administration of Kafka

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- Administrations can be full of hierarchical rules, red tape, and people who get in the way
- While the strategy was fully approved by the director general, that was not properly communicated
- Not everybody involved understands how open source works
 - Not ready to publish what could actually be
 - No clear view on licenses despite the charter clarifying this
- Existing infrastructure, rules and processes make it sometimes hard
 - Pushing code to external GitHub
 - Installing open source apps on user machines
 - Communicating / personal blogs / social media accounts
- We have a new director general...



What now?

The road ahead...

- Getting the new director general to support and promote
- Creating the OSPO
- Defining a proper governance model
- Contribute in a more visible way
 - Drupal, Decidim, Vuetify / Material, NPM...
- Publish more systematically
- Leverage InnerSource more!
- Press complaining definitely helps!



Thanks for listening!



On to Q&A!

Q&A / Discussion
- *Under Chatham House Rules* -



Thanks for the discussion!



The end!