



Response to the European Union's call for contributions "Towards free European digital ecosystems"

Introduction

Open Source represents a strategic opportunity for Europe to strengthen its technological sovereignty, competitiveness and cyber resilience. As an entrepreneur and investor involved in the Open Source ecosystem, I propose an ambitious roadmap focused on **three key levers**:

- 1. Quadrupling the Linux user base in Europe in four years (from 16 million to 64 million users).**
- 2. Raise awareness of open source among the general public through targeted campaigns and public-private partnerships.**
- 3. Develop European Linux support and terminal companies to meet growing demand and build a sustainable ecosystem.**

1. Strengths and weaknesses of the open source sector in the EU – Barriers to adoption and sustainable contribution

Strengths

- Collaborative innovation: The EU is home to dynamic communities (KDE, Nextcloud, etc.) and flagship projects such as Blender (3D) and Mastodon (decentralised social networks), which demonstrate Europe's capacity for innovation.
- Technological sovereignty: Open source reduces dependence on non-European players (e.g. migration of French administrations to Linux, such as the Gendarmerie nationale).
- Security and transparency: Open code allows for independent audits, limiting the risk of backdoors (e.g. Signal, Matrix for secure messaging).
- Controlled costs: Reduction in software licences for SMEs and local authorities (e.g. City of Munich, estimated savings of several million euros with LiMux).



Weaknesses and barriers

- Lack of visibility: The general public still associates open source with a solution "for experts". **Awareness campaigns are rare and poorly coordinated.**
- Fragmentation of efforts: Multiple Linux distributions and projects, with no unified European leader (unlike Red Hat in the United States).
- **Lack of mature support companies:** Few European players offer professional services comparable to Red Hat or SUSE, slowing down adoption in businesses.
- Cultural barriers: CIOs are wary of the absence of a "single point of responsibility" (e.g. concerns about maintenance or hardware compatibility).
- Insufficient funding: Contributions from European companies to open source projects remain low compared to GAFAM (e.g. only 5% of contributors to the Linux kernel are European).
- Legal complexity: Uncertainties about licences (e.g. GPL) and intellectual property deter some organisations.

Specific barriers

- Adoption: **Lack of training for end users and system administrators.**
- Maintenance: Difficulty in sustaining projects without a clear business model.
- Sustainable contributions: European companies contribute little in terms of code or human resources, preferring to consume rather than participate.

2. Added value of open source for the public and private sectors

Public sector

- **Cost reduction:** *E.g. Italy saved €50 million/year by migrating 8,000 workstations to Linux (Bolzano region).*



- **Security:** E.g.: Germany uses Kolab for its sovereign emails, avoiding the risks of espionage.
- **Interoperability:** E.g.: The EU's OSOR portal facilitates the sharing of solutions between administrations.

Private sector

- **Competitiveness:** SMEs using open source software reduce their costs by 20-30% (European Commission study, 2022).
- **Avoiding lock-in:** E.g.: OVHcloud uses OpenStack to offer an alternative to AWS/Azure.
- **Agility:** E.g.: Blablacar and Doctolib rely on open source stacks to scale quickly.
- **Cybersecurity:** E.g.: Asterisk (IP telephony) enables companies to control their voice infrastructure.

Key factors for assessing added value

Factor	Concrete example	Impact
Cost	MAIF migration to Linux	40% reduction in software costs
Risk	Using Keepass (password management)	Reducing data leaks
Lock-in	Adoption of Nextcloud by Rennes University Hospital	Independence from Microsoft 365
Innovation	Rust (secure language)	Adopted by Firefox and Microsoft (!)
Security	OpenSSL (despite Heartbleed)	Rapid fixes thanks to the community

3. Concrete measures to support open source in the EU

To quadruple the Linux base in 4 years

- **Public awareness campaign:** "Linux is simple", "Linux is free" with **ambassadors** (e.g. partnerships with tech influencers, actors, journalists, etc.).



- **Pre-installation:** Require manufacturers to offer a Linux option on PCs sold in the EU (as Dell does with Ubuntu).
- **Training:** Integrate open source into school curricula (e.g. Class'Code in France) and create European certifications (e.g. "EU Certified Linux Administrator").
- **Tax incentives:** Tax credits for companies migrating to open source.

To raise awareness

- **Public events:** Organise a "Free Software Month" in European capitals, with workshops in shops.
- **Media:** Documentary series on the "heroes" of European Open Source
- **"Open Source Friendly" label:** For committed companies and administrations.

To develop support companies

- **European Investment Fund:** €500 million to finance European scale-ups
- **Reserved calls for tenders:** Reserve 20% of public IT contracts for open source solutions with local support.
- **Network of centres of excellence:** Create regional hubs (e.g. a "CERN for Free Software").

4. Priorité technology areas

Area	Why?
Operating systems	Reduce dependence on Windows/macOS
Cloud/Sovereignty	Avoid AWS/Azure dominance
Cybersecurity	Strengthen resilience against cyberattacks
AI/Big Data	Democratise access to tools (e.g. alternatives to TensorFlow)
Health	Securing medical data
Education	Equipping schools with free software



Conclusion: A roadmap for Europe

The EU must **step up its efforts** by:

1. **Setting a clear target: 64 million Linux users by 2029 (1 in 7 Europeans)**
2. **Making open source visible and desirable through high-impact campaigns.**
3. **Creating European support champions.**

Concrete proposal: Launch an "**Open Source Plan for Europe**" with a budget of €2 billion per year, combining subsidies, training and communication. This plan could be led by a **European Free Software Agency**, in partnership with the **Free Software Foundation Europe** and actors such as **APELL** (European Professional Free Software Association).