

## International Feedback on Policy on Open Standards

- [Open Source Initiative](http://www.opensource.org/node/551) (<http://www.opensource.org/node/551>)

.... This clause ensures that open standards do not discriminate against open source, which is great news for the free software and open source software communities. **More importantly, as India's star continues to rise, this shows that a leading nation of the world can discuss, debate, and decide a policy that balances—and indeed strengthens—the interests of business and the rights of the people. The wisdom and courage of India are on full display today! .....**

- [Computer World - UK - Blogs](http://blogs.computerworlduk.com/open-enterprise/2010/11/a-great-indian-takeaway/index.htm) (<http://blogs.computerworlduk.com/open-enterprise/2010/11/a-great-indian-takeaway/index.htm>)

..... A Great Indian Takeaway !

.... **Here's a fascinating result from India that has important lessons for the European Commission as they finalise EIF v2.**

..... **This is a particularly important result because India is a fast-rising power, particularly in the world of high technology. That means the knock-on consequences of its practices will be felt far beyond its borders.** For example, if the new version of the European Interoperability Framework were to opt for FRAND instead of restriction-free, this would tilt the playing-field against free software in that part of the world, **whereas in India it would be compete on an equal basis.**

As a result, free software would be more likely to flourish in India than it would in Europe, since it would not be shut out of some government contracts constrained by proprietary standards, with all that this means for lack of choice and higher costs. **India will end up with a richer and more dynamic software ecosystem than Europe, which will further disadvantage European coders struggling with economies that are not of the healthiest.**

**What might be called the main takeaway from India's important decision is that the way forward is with open standards that mandate restriction-free licensing of any patents claimed in the technologies concerned: let's hope that the European Commission gets it. ....**

- [Potsdam e-Government Competence Centre](http://www.ifg.cc/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=32882&Itemid=1) ([http://www.ifg.cc/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=32882&Itemid=1](http://www.ifg.cc/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=32882&Itemid=1))

..... Government makes way for open formats in e-governance

Four drafts and three years later, the Policy on Open Standards for e- Governance was finally released on November 15. **The policy is a victory for the open source community fighting since 2007 for the use of free and open formats to manage and create digital data of the Centre and the states.**

- [The H-On-line](http://www.h-online.com/open/news/item/India-to-implement-open-standards-1138213.html) (<http://www.h-online.com/open/news/item/India-to-implement-open-standards-1138213.html>)

..... However, the policy doesn't completely rule out FRAND licences. For instance, FRAND-based standards may be accepted on an interim basis in cases where a standard that meets all the mandatory characteristics of the policy is not available. **In the EU, lobbyists are still arguing**

about the definition of open standards. ....

- **Computer Reseller News CRN** (<http://www.crn.in/Software-016Nov010-Red-Hat-Welcomes-The-Indian-Open-Standards-Policy.aspx>)

..... The Indian government is spending billions of dollars on creating e-government applications, under the National e-Government Action Plan and **the finalization of the Open Standard policy is a key step in this direction.**

**Open Standards are the backbone that will unify these applications and enable the sharing of data across different applications. This will drive more efficiency in e-governance enabling policy makers and e-government practitioners to quickly pull together data from different government departments and take more informed decisions. ....**

- **Barefoot Technologies** (<http://barefoottechie.wordpress.com/2010/11/29/links-for-week-ending-26-november-2010/>)

..... The Centre for Internet and Society report that after three years of intense lobbying and debate, India has finalised its policy on Open Standards for e-Governance. **The policy represents an important victory for the open source software community, as it excludes patented software that requires royalty payments from being considered an open standard. ....**

- **IFace Thoughts** ( <http://ifacethoughts.net/2010/11/15/india-publishes-its-policy-on-open-standards/>)

..... **It is well thought out and quite solid in terms of specification**, and like [Michael Tiemann says](#), it is well balanced. I am keen to apply this policy to selection of standards, like ODF and OOXML. ....

- **The Centre for Internet and Society** (<http://www.cis-india.org/news/open-standards-policy>)

..... Last week, India became another major country to join the growing, global open standards movement. After three years of intense debate and discussion, India's Department of IT in India finalized its Policy on Open Standards for e-Governance, **joining the ranks of emerging economies like Brazil, South Africa and others. This is a historic moment and India's Department of Information Technology (DIT) deserves congratulations for approving a policy that will ensure the long-term preservation of India's e-government data.**

..... A major victory for the Open Source community is that the policy now says, "4.1.2 The Patent claims necessary to implement the Identified Standard shall be made available on a Royalty-Free basis for the life time of the Standard."

..... **The standards selected by India also have global implications because the sheer volumes of usage in India, could make those standards the most popular standards in the world.**

..... The Indian policy also states that a single open standard will be used for e-governance. This clause is also extremely important.

..... Therefore, **the usage of a single, open standard for an application area is the backbone that will unify these applications and enable the sharing of data across different applications. This will drive more efficiency in e-governance enabling policy makers and e-government practitioners to quickly pull together data from different government departments and take more informed decisions.**

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- [The Hindu](http://www.hindu.com/2010/11/21/stories/2010112154840800.htm) (<http://www.hindu.com/2010/11/21/stories/2010112154840800.htm>)

..... This is significant because it will promote standards that are inter-operable (say, among various government departments), avoid any form of vendor lock-in and are cost-effective. Significantly, it can also fuel technological innovation by offering domestic and home-grown companies a level playing field. The best example of how open standards can do this is the story of the growth of the Internet, one that was built entirely on open standards.

#### Historic move

While the European Union has set open standards for inter-operability and a few countries do emphasise the use of open standards, Brazil is the only other country known to have a formal policy. ....

- [Outlook India](http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?266988) (<http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?266988>)

..... What happens in open standards?

All technology/software used for e-governance becomes inter-operable. In other words, any technology platform or software should be able to read government documents, maps, images and datasheets.

#### Who gains?

- **Government:** Will not have to spend crores on a proprietary standard. Various offices would be able to access data without having same technology/software.
- **Consumers:** Will not have to buy proprietary software to access government documents .....

- [The Hindu](http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/article907442.ece?homepage=true)

(<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/article907442.ece?homepage=true>)

The implications of this policy, if implemented, are two-fold. Firstly, it will protect government data by providing for interoperability between various e-governance applications, avoiding any form of vendor lock-in and allowing development of cost-effective applications without getting caught in the tangled web of intellectual property right regimes. Secondly, it will foster an ecosystem of technological innovation by offering a level playing field. Smaller and home-grown technology firms, that hitherto could not afford to participate in several government technological processes as they cannot compete with larger firms that can afford to pay royalties for various proprietary standards (or specifications), can now enter the market.

.....The policy is remarkably clear in its reading of what an open technological standard is. It states that a single standards must be chosen in each technological domain. The policy specifies that the specifications of the standards must be accessible unconditionally and should be available on royalty-free licensing terms (associated patents and extensions included) in perpetuity. Further, the policy states that the open standards must be one that is evolved by a non-profit body. The policy is clear on how to deal with legacy applications — applications that are already existing and in use in government processes.

The owner of the application will have to ensure that bridges are built, that is the existing applications are interoperable with newer ones. The onus will be on the vendor to ensure that all

future versions of the same process comply with specified open standards. This will also protect government data by unlocking it from the influence or control of any particular vendor.

**.....With this policy, India becomes the second country in the developing world – the first being Brazil – to have a formal policy mandating open standards in e-governance. South Africa and a few other countries emphasise on the use of open standards; however, their commitments have not been at a formal policy level. A few developed countries in the European Union, and even the U.K., have set open standards for e-governance. With this policy, Free and Open Source Software advocates believe, India shows the way for the developing world. In developing countries, where e-governance is still in its nascent stages, governments stands to gain from adopting such a policy for an obvious reason: saving costs by not having to cough up huge royalties to proprietary firms, usually large multi-national companies, in terms of royalties.**