

## Kochi Declaration on Public Software

**We, the participants of the “International Conference on Public Sector Software and FOSS in Education”, jointly organised by UNESCO and Government of Kerala, in Kochi, Kerala, after detailed deliberations amongst various stakeholders from May 27 to 29, 2010 on the context, need and imperatives for software that is in alignment with the spirit of the public sector, hereby make the following declaration:**

1. We **understand** Public Software as software, used for serving the public interest, developed or procured through public funding, and publicly owned, permitting its free sharing, modification and distribution. Recognising the unique context of public software and its objectives of ensuring equity and social justice has implications for ensuring universal access to such software, and transparency and participation by the citizens in its design and use.
2. We **define** Public Sector for the purpose of this declaration broadly, as comprising of institutions working for public interest, which include governments, entities established by acts of parliament, academia and civil society institutions.
3. We **recommend** that:
  - (a) As universal access to public services requires universal access to software, especially as more and more of such services are delivered through the use of ICTs, Public Software needs to be freely shareable amongst all members of society.
  - (b) Public institutions uphold the principles of transparency, equity, public participation and accountability to larger society. Therefore, it is essential that Public Software be open to permit public overview, participation and audit.
  - (c) Public Software must use open standards that ensure interoperability, and portability across multiple media.
  - (d) Repositories for Public Software resources be established at national and sub-national levels, that support re-use of applications.
  - (e) Digital learning material should not be procured on a royalty basis and any exception should need justification.
4. We **believe** that
  - (a) Public Software requires '**strategic and substantive public ownership**' for which ownership of source code is necessary but not sufficient. To this end, it must be ensured that the public agency commissioning a software development or procurement take up complete ownership of the software. This ownership should be real and not nominal providing the concerned public agency with full ability to share and modify the software as required, in perpetuity
    - i. This requires adequate and relevant capacity building of public functionaries, stakeholder participation in design and development, componentisation of the development process, as well as required user and program documentation
    - ii. To realise strategic and substantive public ownership, aspects of documentation, content, connectivity, data security and citizen privacy should meet the test of public sector imperatives

**We commit to take forward the experiences and learnings in Public Software, advocate and support Indian states and South Asian countries to adopt Public Software principles.**

**We welcome the offer of Government of Kerala to support this effort, and we acknowledge the role of UNESCO as facilitator in this process.**

**We urge governments and other public institutions in these countries to adopt and promote Public Software in the spirit of this Declaration.**