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Creating Awareness for the Use of OpenSource Systems in the Public Sector in Afghanistan

Abstract

The notion that Afghanistan at present is at a decisive point in time is well known. Information systems in Afghan public institutions are no exception. Mainly caused by the lack of available knowledge and competencies with regard to Open Source software, information systems infrastructures - by default - are build-up from scratch by using proprietary software. This strategy might not be sustainable in the medium or long term.

It was a lucky coincidence that the [NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme](#) was ready to provide the funding for a workshop about the utilization of Open Source systems in different application environments in Sept. 2012 in Kabul. We were able to assemble a group of about thirty Afghan and international IT/IS specialists (some of them representing the fledgling Afghan Open Source community) for a three days workshop.

Focal areas of presentations and discussions were Open Source systems in health care management, city administration, universities, justice, and additional topics in technical areas. There were discussions/presentations about regional cooperation in Central Asia and the status of Open Source projects/communities in Europe and Central Asia as well. We had lively exchanges of views and concepts and both parties – Afghan and European IT/IS specialists – enjoyed a host of new insights and ideas.

A mayor concern of the participants of the workshop and the training sessions was to find a way to systematically introduce and support Open Source systems in Afghan organizations. While there is already strong interest in Open Source systems in some of the larger public organizations in Afghanistan, professional support is available only for proprietary software.

Therefore, an important precondition for helping Afghan organizations to build-up and utilize Open Source systems in a professional way is the formation of an [Afghan Center for Open Source Systems](#) (ACOSS) in cooperation with Afghan and international stakeholders. Furthermore, such a competence center could accept important second level support functions for selected Open Source application systems.

Keywords: Open source systems, information systems, information management, open source software (OSS), IT infrastructure, computer systems, Afghan public institutions, ACOSS Afghan Center for Open Source Systems, WollMUX, health care management.

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