

# FLOSS for e-learning

**Source:** <http://linux.derkeiler.com/Newsgroups/comp.os.linux.announce/2004-06/0016.html>

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[http://portal.unesco.org/ci/ev.php?URL\\_ID=15841&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201&reload=1086621](http://portal.unesco.org/ci/ev.php?URL_ID=15841&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201&reload=1086621)

Participants will be given a brief document introducing the forum, with several suggested general background documents. The discussion and debate will be summarized in a report that will be made available to all the participants as documentation on the issues and concerns related to the potential of FOSS for e-learning. To join the forum, you can send an e-mail message to: [virtual.university@iiep.unesco.org](mailto:virtual.university@iiep.unesco.org)

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Free and Open Source Software for e-learning

Discussion forum  
1-25 June 2004

Background Note

Introductory comments

This background document has been compiled to give a brief overview of Free and Open Source Software. It is based largely upon information quoted directly from a number of documents available on the web. The source and link appear at the end of each section for further reference.

What is Free/Open Source Software? 1

"Briefly, OSS/FS programs are programs whose licenses give users the freedom to run the program for any purpose, to study and modify the program, and to redistribute copies of either the original or modified program (without having to pay royalties to previous developers)." David Wheeler

1 Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) has become an international phenomenon, moving from relative obscurity to being the latest buzzword in a few short years. However, there is still a lack of understanding about what really constitutes FOSS and the ramifications of this new concept. To better

explain this phenomenon, we will examine the philosophy and development methods behind FOSS.

2 There are two major philosophies in the FOSS world: the Free Software Foundation (FSF) philosophy and the Open Source Initiative (OSI) philosophy.

According to the FSF, free software is about protecting four user freedoms:

The freedom to run a program, for any purpose;

The freedom to study how a program works and adapt it to a person's needs. Access to the source code is a precondition for this;

The freedom to redistribute copies so that you can help your neighbor;

The freedom to improve a program and release your improvements to the public, so that the whole community benefits. Access to the source code is a precondition for this.

The OSI philosophy is somewhat different:

3 When programm