

Free Software Macedonia

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Expression of interest

for cooperation with the proposed OLPC UNDP project



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Proposal

The free software community in Macedonia, and in the world, is focused and working with permanent progress to promote free software, the concepts of free culture and the integration of these concepts within the fabric of society itself. We plan and workout the directions in advance of all our activities and the activities of the community, as well as the individuals within the community itself.

One of the pillars of the information society in Macedonia, should be the implementation and usage of free software, open standards and open document formats in every possible aspect of society.

The free software community in Macedonia under the auspices of the umbrella organization Free Software Macedonia (2C.MK) has a long term experience of implementing, using and spreading knowledge and presenting the possibilities and best practices by which businesses, governmental or non-profit institutions, educational institutions like primary, secondary schools and universities can benefit from the usage of free software, promoting of open standards and open document formats and the advantages and possibilities they offer. The free software community has built quality teams and personnel that can handle any perceivable technical situation and problems that can arouse when using free software, despite the fact that comparative analysis show that free software has compared to proprietary solutions a lower problem occurrence and a lower total cost of ownership.

One group of the community is involved in international free software projects among these are the maintenance of the Macedonian translation of Ubuntu, Fedora and the OLPC sugar user interface. The last part of the free software community is concentrated on awareness campaigns and advocacy related issues and questions of using and implementing free software, open document formats and open standards.

The involvement of different groups of the community of free software in the educational processes for the youth and future users of computers in Macedonia is essential. If we want experienced users for this issues, then with certainty we can tell that the range of competence that the community has built during the years of activism is only the beginning of the efforts and wishes to make the use of free software by individuals and groups in our country a reality. Some of them, and they

are quite a few, followed the steps of the activists from the community and became experienced users and what is more important, effective promoters of free software. Just as the giving of good quality IT education for the pupils and students is important, it is also very important to get that education from competent and experienced people. Having in mind that the community has already seen the possibilities and concepts on how to approach children and young people, we can tell that a large number of the community can get fully involved in the processes of free software education that would happen in our country, primarily by the demo for OLPC. By that, the institutions would offer and realize wide-range IT education that would involve different technologies (including free software), and the people would get good-quality education and experience of what free software is and how they would work with it.

Also, we emphasize the fact that different groups of members of the community that are involved in the activities which are organized by 2C.MK are young people that can express their desires and ideas on what would be the way to enable an effective approach, as well as sharing experiences and ideas on how to solve situations that they are faced with, while using and studying about free software. We can surely say that the most competent young people from primary and secondary school that can share their knowledge are active members of our organization and the free software community. If we want to involve young people that should build their educational system by themselves, and by that their future, we have to involve people that are familiar with the practice and acting as free software promoters. Their experience can further be a motive for other youngsters to join the free software community, to use free software and to work for future promotion and usage of free software among schoolchildren and young people.

Given the fact the OLPC is primarily a learning tool and because we see free software as an enabler of education and knowledge sharing, and we as a free software community guided by Free software Macedonia would like to help the process for the involvement of OLPC in the education process in our country. That is why we would like to take the role of a partner in the DEMO of OLPC in the primary education this coming 2007 school year and according to the ideas of UNDP and the government of Republic of Macedonia, we would like to say that:

1. We are prepared to take the role of partner of UNDP in the project related to demoing OLPC to primary schools in the autumn , due to our merits as an organizations with the free software community, and the fact that we had previous experience in successful collaboration with UNDP and the positive outcome;
2. We have knowledge, potential, skills and experience to organize lessons for professors and students for their work with OLPC, to help them overcome the technical aspect of the OLPC learning tool, to support them in any way possible so they OLPC experience is more pleasurable and successful;
3. We have resources, a complete knowledge base, our Wiki for free software, as well as a group of people that coordinates the activities of individuals and teams that would be involved in the OLPC project.
4. We are localizing the OLPC Sugar user interface and can continue doing so, we can involve students to take on this task and bring the most needed sustainability to the project so it can further develop and thrive.
5. We have started an initiative under the guidance of the OLPC project to form a students OLPC lab, so we would have our own experts who are familiar with this revolutionary technology, working early on on the project, this should start during the month of October with some of the ICT faculties in the University in Skopje
6. We are already running and awareness and information campaign on the following resource center <http://olpc.blog.com.mk>.

Everywhere in the world, the biggest supporter and factor for successful implementation of these processes is the free software community. The free software community is the most relevant point by which everyone that wants to help for the development of free software should start. Whatsoever, the reasons that motivate us are more ideological but practical and economical as well, our goal is to see the OLPC in the classrooms and to be a success, and the only factor for that would be if this demo works and students and teachers are using them and discovering new and innovative use for this learning tool for the 21st century.