



News Release

EU-FOSSA 2 - the EU's open source cybersecurity project ends

The EU-FOSSA 2 project to inventory, audit and improve the security and safety of the most critical open source software in use at the European institutions, has ended.

The project was closed at a final Steering Committee meeting on 2 June 2020 by Mario Campolargo, acting Director-General of DG Informatics of the European Commission in the presence of Marcel Kolaja, MEP and Vice-President of the European Parliament, MEP Andrus Ansip, MEP Eva Kaili, former MEP Julia Reda, and Thomas Gageik, Director for Digital Business Solutions, DG Informatics. They discussed options for building on the work done by EU-FOSSA 2 and re-affirmed their support for future initiatives.

The MEPs complimented the project for its results, achievements, and positive impact on the European free and open source software ecosystem. Julia Reda, the first sponsor of the programme, said, *“In all the years that I have worked on tech policies in the European Parliament, it was probably the project where there has been most unequivocal positive public reaction to European policy”*.

The EU-FOSSA 2 project aimed at exploring innovative methods for finding and fixing open source software vulnerabilities and at connecting with the wider open source developer community. Some of the key achievements of the project include:

- Expanding the scope of the project by connecting with the European Parliament, European Council, European External Action Service, European Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank;
- Fresh inventories of open source software for the Commission and the European Council;
- A comprehensive study on the trends and usage of open source software within public administrations worldwide;
- Establishing Licencing and IT Support requirements for future EU open source projects;
- Fifteen bug bounty programmes resulted in the discovery of 200 hidden bugs, including a 20-year-old bug in PuTTY. The project paid over €200 000 in rewards to ethical hackers.
- Three hackathons took place with open source developers from PHP Symfony, the Apache Software Foundation and internal EU open source projects. For the first time, the Commission shared its own source code during development with the community.

EU-FOSSA 2 covered a lot of ground with a relatively small budget. It put the EU firmly on the European open source map and made EU's open source software safer, while creating a proven security toolkit for future use. Thomas Gageik, Director for Digital Business Solutions, said: *“EU-FOSSA 2 was instrumental in our transition and maturity in terms of embracing open source principles, and in the way we work”*.

The results from the EU-FOSSA 2 project have also contributed to the upcoming new Open Source Strategy of the European Commission.

About EU-FOSSA Project

Given its increasing popularity, it was inevitable that open source software too would become a target of cyber security attacks. In 2014, the Heartbleed bug, a vulnerability in OpenSSL caused extensive damage to web servers worldwide. Suddenly it was clear, the security of free and open source software within the EU needed to be addressed.

In 2015, the European Parliament (MEPs Julia Reda and Max Andersson) secured an initial budget of €1M and the European Commission launched the EU-FOSSA pilot project. The EU's FOSSA, short for Free and Open Source Software Auditing, project was a call to action to audit the security of the EU's most critical open source software.

The pilot project created an inventory of open source software in use at the European Commission and defined a methodology to establish criticality. From the top 20 critical software, Apache HTTP Server and KeyPass (suggested by the public) underwent a detailed security audit. In addition, a communication campaign raised awareness of cyber security all around.

Following the success of the EU-FOSSA pilot, the European Parliament (MEP Mariejtte Schaake had also joined the team) secured additional funding of €2.6M, and EU-FOSSA 2, a preparatory action, was launched with a wider mandate.

The project extended its scope to cover open source software within other European institutions, and used innovative techniques such as Bug Bounties and Hackathons to find and fix key security vulnerabilities. In all, the project launched 15 bug bounties, which identified over 200 security vulnerabilities in a highly cost effective manner. To further improve the quality and security of open source software and to meet open source development communities, the project organised three Hackathons. At each event, open source software practitioners from across the world came together in Brussels to interact with each other and colleagues from European institutions.

The project also commissioned two studies. One on the latest trends in open source and best practices within public administrations worldwide; the other to establish requirements of future open source projects relating to licencing and IT support. The project also studied roadblocks for greater use of open source and interacted with leaders from the open source community to identify solutions. An extensive communication campaign helped engage with open source developers, micro communities and the EU public.

Initiatives such as EU-FOSSA are evidence of the European Commission's commitment to the security and integrity of open source software, and the wider open source ecosystem.

Additional quotes from MEPs

"Thanks to EU-FOSSA and EU-FOSSA 2 we were able to identify hundreds of vulnerabilities, and it was much more efficient for the open source software community, rather than having individuals dealing with those alone" – **Andrus Ansip, MEP**

"We need to make sure that public money is used for transparent open source solutions, and that the source code remains publicly available" – **Eva Kaili, MEP**

“Inter-institutional dialogue should be systematised on open source.”

“I would be really glad to be part of any future project at least half-successful as this one.”

- Marcel Kolaja, MEP and VP of the European Parliament

For more information

Joinup Collection – <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/eu-fossa-2>

Project Deliverables – <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/eu-fossa-2/eu-fossa-2-deliverables>

EU-FOSSA 2 Website - <https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/informatics/eu-fossa-2>