

EU OS · LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRACK

FROM EUROPEAN VISION TO LOCAL REALITY: MAKING EU OS WORK FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

Putting the choice back on the table

Linux desktops for local governments: from a working model to real adoption, together

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with Robert Riemann, EU OS

C-smart is an intercommunal owned by the municipalities it serves. Not a vendor.

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THE PROBLEM

When a town hall buys laptops, nobody chooses Windows



The operating system is decided by the hardware contract, *not* by policy.
There is no moment where anyone is asked.

WHY IT STAYS THAT WAY

Why the default never gets questioned

Procurement copies itself

Each tender repeats the last one. The OS is never a line item anyone debates.

Applications assume Windows

Core municipal software from a few vendors is built and supported for Windows only.

Small teams, one ecosystem

Local IT teams are small and trained on one stack. Any switch looks like pure risk.

Not on the political radar

Councillors see laptops as a purchase, not as a choice about control and dependency.

THE WHY

Why the choice matters



Less e-waste

Hardware stays useful longer when the OS no longer forces a refresh.



Control

A container-based desktop: the commune decides what runs and what goes out.



Choice

Local communes get a real alternative, not just a default.



Security

Full grip on updates, telemetry and where data flows.

THE BELGIAN REALITY

Change fatigue is real

OUR PERSPECTIVE

C-smart is owned by the communes it serves. We have no product to sell; our only interest is theirs.

A lot of Belgian communes have just gone through a major digital transition to Office 365. Staff and managers are tired of change.

So: no big bang. Run in parallel, start where it's easy, earn trust.

“

After Office 365, nobody wants another switch. So don't ask them to switch. Let them try.



Does it work?

EU OS: an operating system for the EU

Perceived problems with migrating to Linux

PERCEIVED PROBLEMS

- During migration, **two systems** must be supported: Windows and Linux
- **Expensive migration:** cost savings only for large desktop fleets
- **Little in-house know-how** and small ecosystems: a shortage of expertise
- **No role models:** many unknowns and a risk to fail
- **User aversion** to new or non-standard software, or change in general

POSSIBLE SOLUTION

- **Synergies between organisations:** a common approach to Linux and its migration
- **Synergies between building blocks:** reuse cloud technologies and expertise

EU OS and its unique selling point

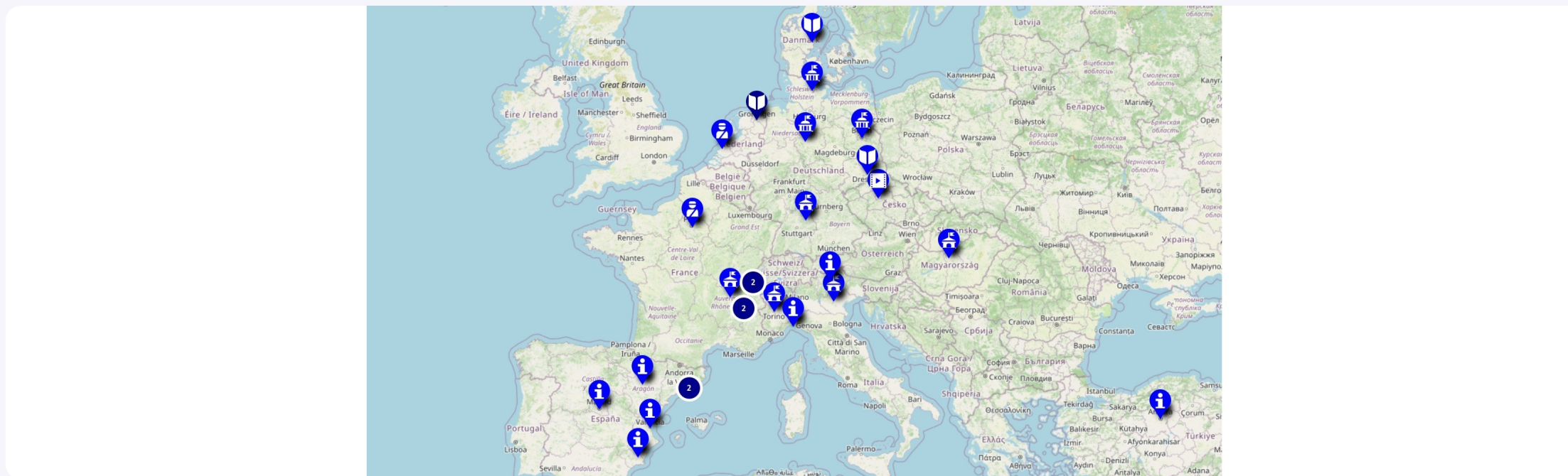
WHAT EU OS IS NOT

- Not a project of the European Union, **but it should be**
- Not a new Linux distribution, and not for private home users
- Not a project producing original code: EU OS **reuses existing software**

WHAT EU OS IS

- A **proof of concept** for deploying a Fedora-based Linux with KDE Plasma and bootable containers in a typical public sector organisation
- Usable by private organisations with similar needs
- A **community** and a **knowledge base**

Linux on the desktop in the European public sector



Source: eu-os.eu/use-cases#notable-migrations

Mark Carney at Davos, 20 January 2026



“Risk management comes at a price, but that **cost of strategic autonomy, of sovereignty can also be shared**. Collective investments in resilience are cheaper than everyone building their own fortresses. Shared standards **reduce fragmentations**. Complementarities are positive sum. And the question for middle powers like Canada is not whether to adapt to the new reality – we must. The question is whether we adapt by simply building higher walls, or whether **we can do something more ambitious**.”

Source: [independent.co.uk](https://www.independent.co.uk)

Can we share the cost of (EU) OS with all middle powers, such as Canada, Brazil, India, Mexico and Australia? Which distribution could get the broadest support?

The distro dilemma: which base for EU OS?

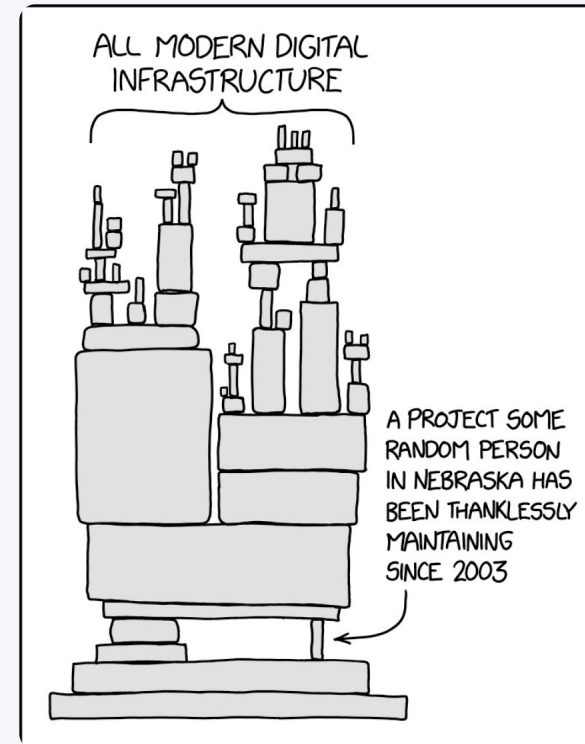
What we need: ownership stability. A non-profit foundation with financial sustainability (for the EU, ideally in the EU), or state ownership.

Distribution	Ownership and governance
IBM/Red Hat · Fedora	US based; Fedora has no separate legal entity (foundation)
SUSE · openSUSE	EU based; openSUSE has no separate legal entity (foundation)
AlmaLinux	A foundation, but US based and may not be sustainable
Ubuntu · Debian	Ubuntu is UK based; Debian has non-profit entities (incl. France), but no bootc/atomic support

No enterprise-ready distribution offers optimal ownership and governance yet. **AlmaLinux / Fedora has the largest potential.**

MS Windows as a supply chain dependency

MS Windows →



Source: xkcd.com/2347 (CC BY-NC 2.5)

WHERE WE ARE

Two questions, two phases

PHASE 1 · ROBERT RIEMANN

Does it work?

EU OS: a working proof of concept with automatic laptop provisioning and central user management.

Answer: yes.

PHASE 2 · THIS TALK

Will it land?

How a working model gets adopted by a town hall: politically, organisationally and technically.

Answer: only with a plan.

SEE THE WHOLE ORGANISATION

Convincing a municipality is more than just convincing IT

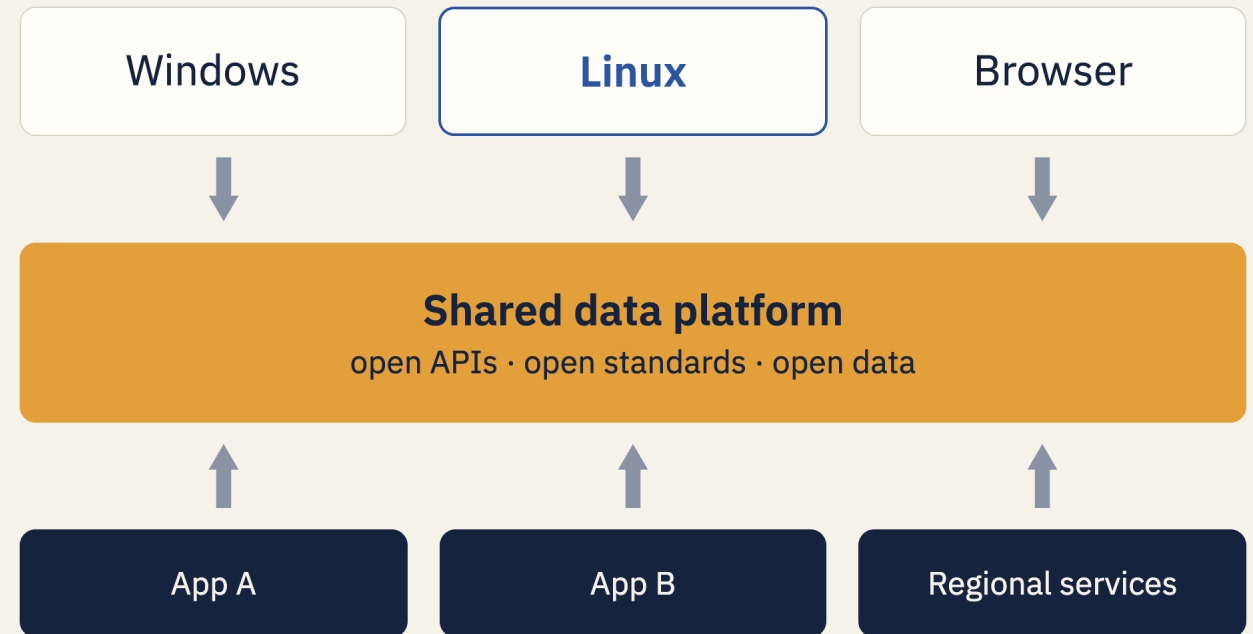
Politics	Mayor and council must want at least a pilot
Management	Must be willing to invest in a proof of concept
Services	Civil registry · finance · social services · works · ...
Applications	Vendor packages, regional government apps, SaaS
Data	Often locked inside each separate application
Desktop OS	Today: Windows, by default. The layer we want to open up.

Decouple the data from the desktop

When data is openly reachable through a shared platform, the OS on the desk stops being a lock.

- Less dependence on any one OS
- Leverage with vendors that won't support Linux
- Room to mix Windows, Linux and browser
- Every app that moves to the browser loosens the OS lock

European browser-based suites are emerging: Nextcloud, Office EU, Euro-Office, openDesk, La Suite.



HOW TO GET THERE

A phased path, not a big bang

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
| 1 | Inventory | Software inventories, already under way with participating communes |
| 2 | Ask the vendors | Request their Linux or browser roadmap, in writing |
| 3 | Pick the easy ground | Start in departments that already run on SaaS |
| 4 | Pilot in parallel | Linux next to Windows, so nobody loses their tools |
| 5 | Evaluate, then scale | Decide on evidence, at the next hardware refresh |

First building blocks: identity management, authentication and Flemish government applications, which typically already work on Linux.

ONE STORY, TWO AUDIENCES

Two tracks, run together

POLITICAL TRACK

Make it a choice again

- Control over data and suppliers
- Longer hardware life, less waste
- A small, bounded pilot budget
- Peers already moving: Schleswig-Holstein is migrating ~30,000 workstations

TECHNICAL TRACK

Know the obstacles

- Commune inventories we already run
- Vendor Linux roadmaps
- Identity and authentication first
- A shared data platform concept

FROM STORY TO PRACTICE

Our EU OS proof of concept

Testing EU OS in real municipalities, not in a lab report

C-smart Innovation Lab · Q3–Q4 2026

Four questions the POC must answer

Does it work?

Can an EU OS desktop function in a real municipal environment?

Can we manage it?

Is hybrid management workable for small IT teams?

Is it worth it?

Real costs, benefits and risks compared to what communes run today.

Can we show it?

Tangible results other communes can see, try and build on.

THE PROOF OF CONCEPT

How we pick a pilot municipality

	Buy-in	Sovereignty or open source is in the multi-year plan
	Trust	An existing relationship, e.g. our DPO/CISO services
	IT maturity	Basic operations in order, not constant firefighting
	Scale	Small enough to guide, large enough for real data
	Motivation	Willing to free up time for testing and feedback

What we test, and what we deliberately don't

IN SCOPE

- **Desktop:** KDE-based, familiar to Windows users
- **Identity:** existing AD/Azure AD, or Keycloak
- **Core apps:** browser, office suite, PDF with e-signature
- **Device management:** basic MDM, hybrid
- **Network:** VPN and Wi-Fi integration
- **Software test:** common departmental apps

CONSCIOUSLY OUT OF SCOPE

- Migrating all workstations
- Windows-only legacy apps (Wine/VM as a test only)
- Production-critical processes
- Complex server-side integrations

EXAMPLE: BELGIUM AND FLANDERS

Every country has mandatory building blocks



Identity & access

eID · itsme · eIDAS · FAS/CSAM · IDM



Digital service platforms

Mijn Burgerprofiel · eBox · Verenigingsloket
· e-loket ondernemers · IPDC/LPDC ·
Formulierentool · DOSIS · Notificaties



Data & authentic sources

MAGDA · VDIP · Rijksregister · KBO/VKBO ·
KSZ · DIV · LED · address, building and
road registers

OUR ARCHITECTURE PRINCIPLE: REGIONAL BY DEFAULT

Use the regional building block. A local alternative only when none exists, and then comply or explain.

THE PROOF OF CONCEPT

Planned backwards from 22 October

Jul – Aug

Prepare

Pick pilot
commune, EU OS
access,
infrastructure ready

Aug – Sep

Set up

Build image, test
identity and
integrations, core
apps running

Sep – Oct

User pilot

5–10 end users,
feedback loops,
issue tracking

Mid-Oct

Evaluate

Business
case, lessons
learned, report

22 Oct

Show

Demo at Trefdag
Digitaal Vlaanderen

After Oct

Share

Generate interest,
co-working
sessions

THE PROOF OF CONCEPT

How we will know it worked

>90%

of core apps
compatible, or with a
good alternative

$\geq 7/10$

user satisfaction score

Comparable

time per incident,
compared to Windows

Neutral

total cost of ownership
versus current licences

Working

federal and Flemish
building blocks fully
operational

The risks we see, and what we do about them

Risk	Mitigation
User resistance	Early involvement, training, a buddy system
Management complexity	Test hybrid tooling, document, Lab support
Identity integration	Early contact with Digitaal Vlaanderen onboarding
App compatibility	Inventory up front, fallback options
Timeline pressure	Reverse planning, MVP focus, built-in buffer
Mandate system client	Browser-based, API-first, web component fallback

THE PROOF OF CONCEPT

Everything we build is meant to be reused

Reference build

A reusable image and configuration for other municipalities

Business case

A generic model any municipality can fill in

Procurement texts

Specification texts for sovereign software procurement

Lessons learned

An honest account of what works and what doesn't

Back to EU OS

Feedback and fixes contributed to the EU OS project

Integration guide

How Flemish building blocks run on Linux and EU OS

OUR CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR

Not anti-Microsoft. Pro freedom of choice.

Constructive and pragmatic, not ideological. That lowers resistance and opens the door to broad adoption.

Across the Benelux, we hit the same wall separately

Same type of vendors

Municipal software built for Windows only

Same contracts

Hardware bought with the OS bundled in

Same politics

Councils that don't yet see it as a choice

Same people

Small teams, tired of change, wary of risk

The OS is only one piece. We can also share *how* we approach communes, how we make the political case, and what we ask of legislators.

AN OPEN INVITATION

Let's form a Benelux working group



Compare architectures

Put Belgian, Dutch and Luxembourg commune architectures side by side, and find the shared blockers.



Share the delivery

How we approach communes, run pilots and bring staff along. Not only the OS.



Align on public affairs

One strategy on procurement rules, legislation and funding, at every level of government.

TO CLOSE

Next time a town hall buys laptops, let it be a **decision**.

Working on this too? Let's talk after the session.

Also today, 16:30–17:00: How the KDE community is building the EU's Public Administration's next desktop software

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