

Workshop announcement

"Open source software in Environmental Informatics: Potentials, challenges, examples"

In recent years a large number of open source solutions emerged which might be of special interest to Environmental Informatics with its wide range of applications. Today, Open source is not only a playground of universities, research institutes and committed individuals who are communicating via the Internet to make ideas come to reality. Open source is also increasingly reflected in the business models of large well-known IT companies which donate parts of their own software to the open source community.

In times of limited budgets the use of open source developments particularly in the context of environmental information systems appears to be promising. But it is still subject to verification which sort of open source software projects in the field of Environmental Informatics in general or as a base for e.g. developing industrial environmental information systems in particular will successfully remain a part of the open source community.

Moreover, the use and integration of open source components into one's own software may not only be beneficial but on the other hand may result in risks and restrictions related to the use of one's own products. License models of open source products need to be carefully analyzed because these licenses might be automatically "inherited" to one's own software by applying these products. Another point is how developers can meet the risk that open source products might no longer be maintained. Warranty claims for custom developments are a risk which should not be underestimated.

A certain charm lies in the creation and establishment of one's own open source project. In order for this project to be successful certain conditions need to be met which need to be taken into account before launching an open source project. The workshop shall in this context be a forum for the presenting and discussing

- licensing experiences with open source components,
- economic aspects and business models which led to the use of open source components,
- client initiated open source developments and reasons for choosing this approach,
- existing open source initiatives in the field of Environmental Informatics, especially an open source platform for the development of industrial environmental information systems (e.g. benefits, effort in practice and how to contribute) and
- whether the field of Environmental Informatics needs its own open source platforms

Date: 11th of September 2008

Chairs: Michael Haase and Volker Wohlgemuth