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**A Study on OSPOs in the
European Public Sector**

OSPO = Open Source Program Office



*“center of competency
for an organization's
open source operations
and structure”* – TODO
Group

*“a cross-functional team
to help define and steer
an organization's open
source management
strategy and
organizational
readiness”* – OSPO
Alliance

*“an institutional
organizational construct
that supports and
accelerates the
consumption, creation,
and application of Open
Source software”* –
OpenForum Europe



So, what is an OSPO?

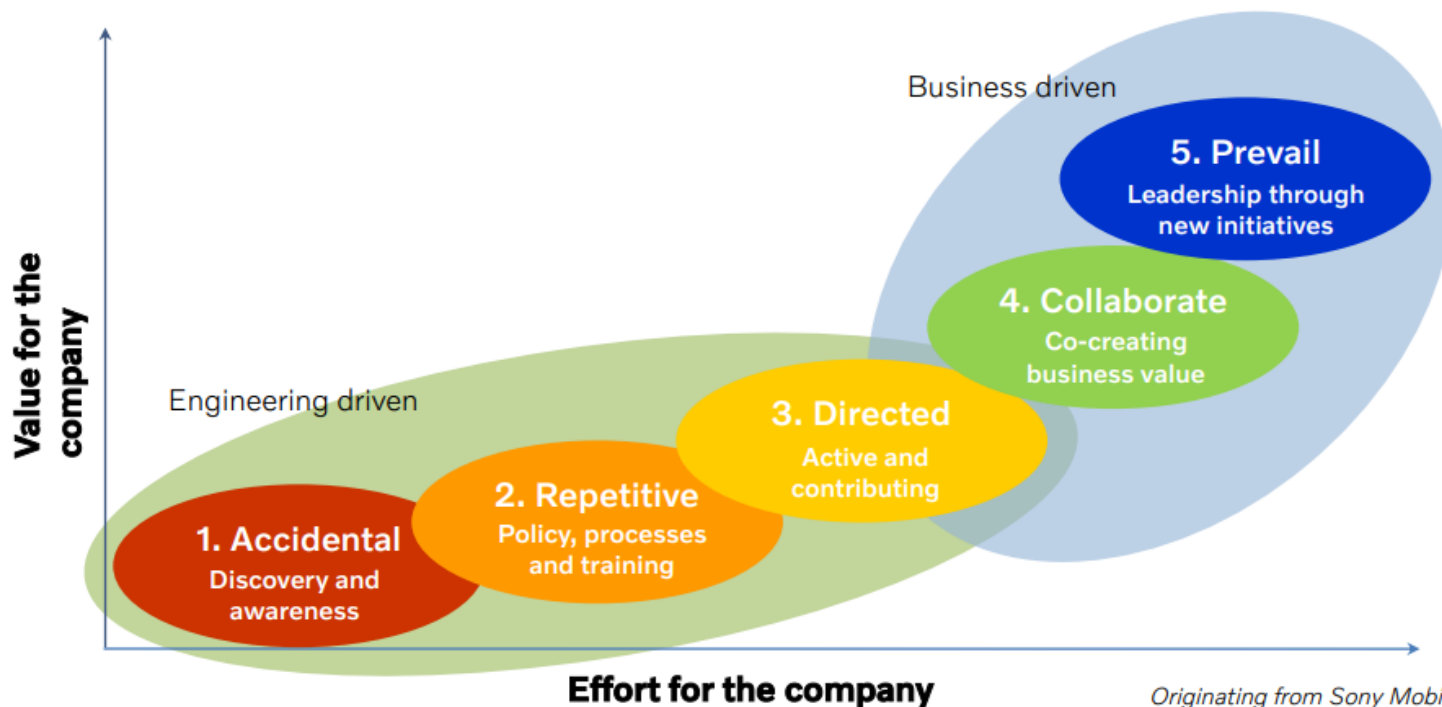
- Center of competency and support
- Drives organizational readiness and maturity forward on open source
- Designs and executes an organization's overarching open source strategy
- Provides voice of reason and objectivity on the benefits, risks, and costs of open source and how to balance between
- Supports use, development, and collaboration on open source



So, what is an OSPO?

- Naming convention not always very well suited for public sector
- Other naming conventions, and structures to be expected
- Focus should be on the support-function and competence/resource provisioning needed to solve needs at hand

The Open Source Maturity model



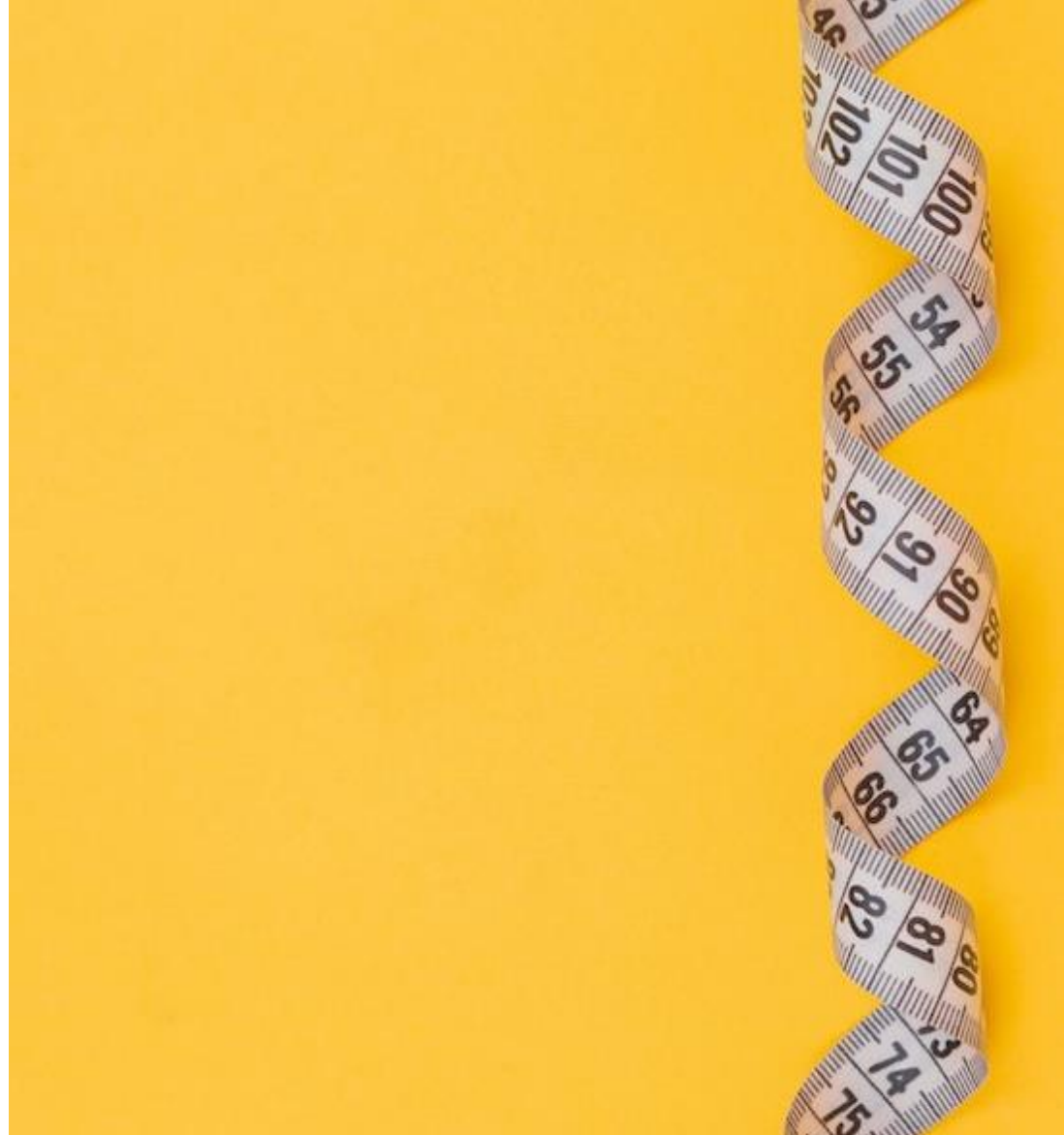
Originating from Sony Mobile in 2011
/ Adapted by Carl-Eric Mols 2023

The study

- Mapping of the OSPO landscape in the European public sector (EU + Iceland, Norway, and Lichtenstein)
- Characterize the landscape overview through survey
- Gain in-depth knowledge through interviews with 12 diverse cases
- Validate and enrich findings through focus groups
- Commissioned by European Commission's DG DIGIT to OpenForum Europe and RISE through the OSOR project



**No one
suit fits
all..**



**How are OSPOs organized
and structured in public
sector organizations?**

How are OSPOs structured in industry?

- Sponsor
 - Executive management, Head of Engineering
- Supporting entities
 - Main organization, single/multiple divisions, multiple product teams
- Budget
 - Dedicated, or partial
- Staffing
 - Head of Open Source + dedicated or virtual team

What can we expect in Public Sector?

- Level of Government
 - International, National, Regional, or Municipal
- Sponsor
 - CIO/CDO, Procurement office, General assembly/owners
- Supporting entities
 - Internal operations, External organizations, Member organizations
- Budget
 - Dedicated, or partial
- Staffing
 - Head of Open Source + dedicated or virtual team

**What are their
responsibilities? What
support do they provide?**

What responsibilities does the OSPO have in industry?

- Develop and execute OSS strategy
- Oversee OSS Compliance
- Establish and improve OSS policies and processes
- Prioritize and drive OSS upstream development
- Collaborate with OSS organizations

What responsibilities does the OSPO have in industry?

- Track performance metrics
- Implement Inner Source practices
- Grow and retain OSS talent inside the organization
- Provide advice and support on OSS
- Manage Open Source IT infrastructure

What can we expect in Public Sector?

- Somewhat similar responsibilities but in different executions and focus, e.g.,
 - Different types of open source strategies, objectives, and risks
 - Collaboration between PSOs – inner source within the government
 - Higher focus on consumption, acquisition, and collaboration
 - Procurement and outsourcing of development and technical tasks

**What are their challenges?
How can they be addressed?**

What challenges do OSPOs experience in industry?

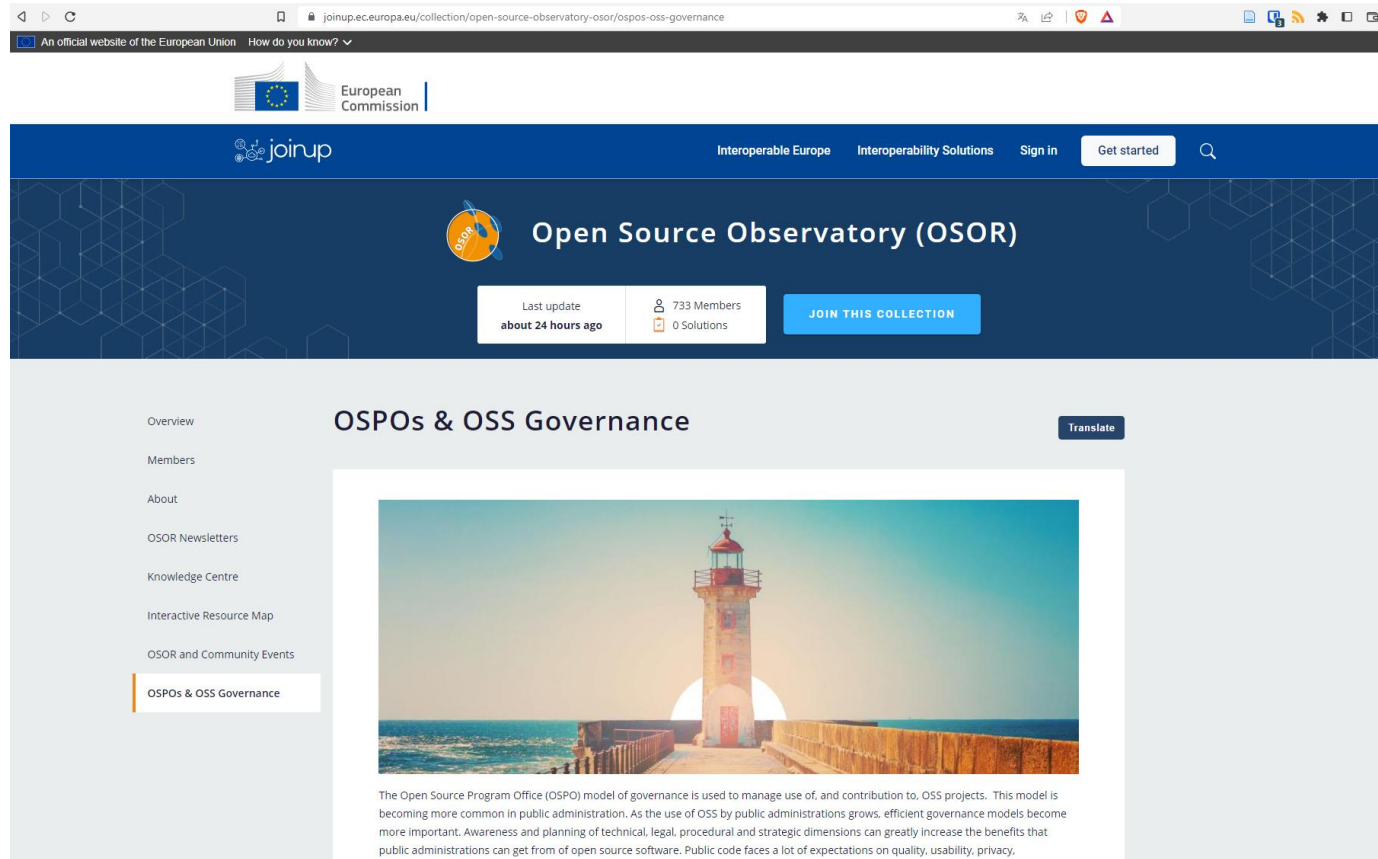
- Execute awareness and support
- Finding and recruiting open source developers
- Insufficient budget, program costs
- Internal awareness of the program
- Ability to influence open source projects
- Tracking metrics and performance
- Getting teams on board with compliance and security approaches
- License compliance overhead External awareness (marketing and communications)
- Vulnerability monitoring and remediation
- Tool selection and adoption

(OSPO Survey 2022, The Linux Foundation)

What can we expect in Public Sector?

- Limited resources and knowledge
- Regulatory constraints
- Risk-averse culture and short-term focus
- Limited understanding and overall support
- Dependency on outsourced and procured technical capacity
- ...
- Where industry was 20 years ago

For more information, visit OSPO corner



The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the OSOR website. The browser's address bar shows the URL: joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/open-source-observatory-osor/ospos-oss-governance. The page header includes the European Commission logo and the 'joinup' logo. The main navigation bar contains links for 'Interoperable Europe', 'Interoperability Solutions', 'Sign in', and a 'Get started' button. The main content area features the 'Open Source Observatory (OSOR)' logo and a 'JOIN THIS COLLECTION' button. Below this, there are statistics: 'Last update about 24 hours ago', '733 Members', and '0 Solutions'. The main heading is 'OSPOs & OSS Governance' with a 'Translate' button. A sidebar on the left lists navigation options: Overview, Members, About, OSOR Newsletters, Knowledge Centre, Interactive Resource Map, OSOR and Community Events, and OSPOs & OSS Governance (which is highlighted). The main content area features a large image of a lighthouse on a rocky shore. Below the image, there is a paragraph of text: 'The Open Source Program Office (OSPO) model of governance is used to manage use of, and contribution to, OSS projects. This model is becoming more common in public administration. As the use of OSS by public administrations grows, efficient governance models become more important. Awareness and planning of technical, legal, procedural and strategic dimensions can greatly increase the benefits that public administrations can get from of open source software. Public code faces a lot of expectations on quality, usability, privacy.'



