



Licence compatibility lists: Could they compensate proliferation by developing circles of trust ?

FLOSS interoperability v/s Licence tourism

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European Opensource Lawyers
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Questions

- How to reduce the impact of licence proliferation?
- How to reduce barriers between copyleft licences?
- Licence compatibility lists: could they compensate proliferation by developing circles of trust?"
- Risks of "Licence tourism" ?
- Towards copyleft licence interoperability?

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Licence Proliferation

- Is a **FACT**
- Testimony of FLOSS movement success
- Inherent to human ego
- Inherent to diversity

- Is a **RISK** for FLOSS
 - Increasing complexity
 - Increasing barriers between copyleft licences
 - Develops controversies

- Will **NEVER STOP** !
 - Limiting the number of licence to 2 or 4?
= a dream / wishful thinking!
 - OSI restricts proliferation through discussion and persuasion, but is powerless to reverse the move

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Licences that could be complementary are not compatible



	Name: EUPL Family: Free/OSS licence Gender: Strong Copyleft Born: 9 January 2007 OSI approved
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Short,
Simple
Principle driven
For all / lawyers

Multi-lingual (22 equal versions)



	Name: GPL v.3 Family: Free/OSS license Gender: Strong Copyleft Born: July 2007 OSI approved
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Complex
Detailed
Technology driven
For FLOSS developer

In **English** (lingua franca of developers)

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GPL & EURL approach of compatibility



Compatible licences
= upstream compatibility
All permissive licences &
GPL / LGPL family

**No downstream
compatibility**

**Conflict with all other
copyleft licences, whatever
their advantages**

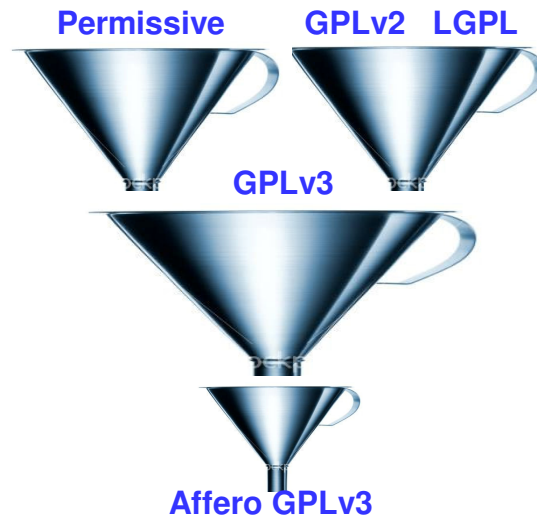


Compatible licences
= upstream compatibility
All permissive licences

= downstream compatibility
with a list of other copyleft
licences

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The GPL « Funnel strategy »



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The EUPL compatibility list



You **MAY** redistribute
EUPLed software,
Under the provisions of:

- GPLv2,
- Eclipse,
- OSL,
- CeCILL,
- Common Public Licence.

Downstream compatibility is based on **necessity**,
not on convenience:

- It is **not** for distributing copies
- It is for solving conflicts
- It is one way, as long no reciprocity...

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Pro and contra of compatibility lists

(it is currently specific to the EUPL)

- + **More freedom for developers**
(no licence conflicts between copyleft licenses)
- **Uncertainty if other licences would adopt the same type of “unconditional” provision**
 - Risk of unilateral impact on the “assets” of other communities.
 - Risk of “Licence tourism” could make that a FLOSS software licensed originally under a copyleft license could ultimately become proprietary.

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Licence Tourism



Compatibility List:
B (copyleft)
C (copyleft)
D (copyleft)
E (copyleft)
F (copyleft)



Compatibility List:
A (copyleft)
C (copyleft)
G (permissive)
H (copyleft)
Z (copyleft)



Compatibility List:
Any



Compatibility List:
None
(proprietary licence)

= unpredictable licence changes, making your software becoming proprietary

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Licence Interoperability

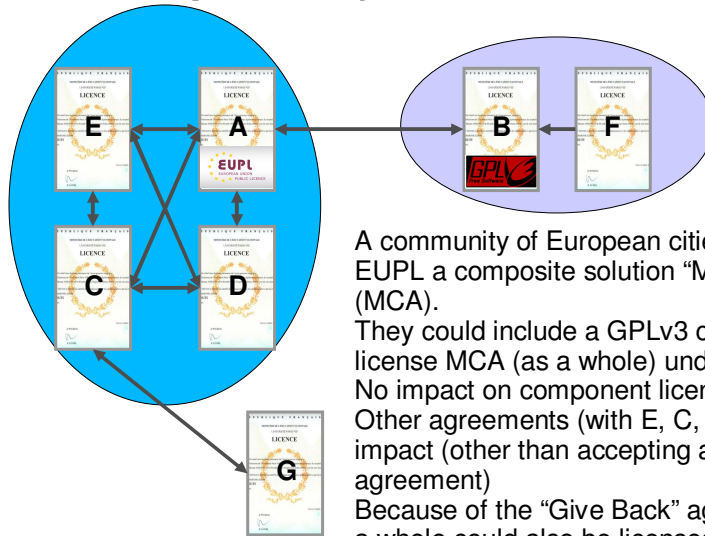
Third approach is “Loan and give back”

Loans from a community could be recovered by the same community (and not transferred to any other).

- Multiple agreements (“one to one”, or “circle of trust”)
- Independent agreements (no impact on others)
- Less conflicts and barriers
- Reduces the impact of licence proliferation
- Negotiation replaces confrontation
- Could formalises complementarities (i.e. between the multi-lingual EUPL and the GPLv3)

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Interoperability / Give Back example



A community of European cities develops under EUPL a composite solution "My_City_Admin" (MCA).

They could include a GPLv3 component and license MCA (as a whole) under EUPL.

No impact on component licence (stays GPLv3). Other agreements (with E, C, D, G) have no impact (other than accepting also the "give back" agreement)

Because of the "Give Back" agreement, MCA (as a whole) could also be licensed under GPLv3.

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Conclusions

Compatibility lists represent a progress, in order to:

- Promote the developer's freedom
- Combine licence advantages (rather than opposing)
- Trust replace confrontation
- Make the FLOSS message more consistent, less controversial
- Increase the amount of Free Software

However...

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Conclusions (continued)

However...

- Publishing compatibility list “unilaterally and without conditions” present a potential risk in case of reciprocity / cascade.
- Prior to extending the EUPL method (compatibility list) to any other copyleft licence, common provisions for Copyleft licence interoperability must be invented, formalised and agreed with counterparts.
- Compatibility list must be complemented by interoperability provisions
- Avoiding licence tourism is the condition for building circles of trust.

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Questions & Answers



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