

## **What is meant by the copyleft effect?**

Common to all open-source licences is the granting of a right of reproduction and a right of processing which is usually subject to certain conditions or restrictions. The individual licences differ primarily in terms of the conditions of use and the obligations imposed on the licence holder (user or processor) in respect of the exercise of the right of reproduction and the right of processing.

It is important to note which requirements are placed on the further distribution of modified versions of the software or new software developed on the basis of OSS.

The various licence models can best be distinguished by whether or not the licence in any given case includes what is referred to as a copyleft effect. The copyleft effect is the term used to refer to the obligation imposed on the licence holder to issue the software and any adaptation as OSS under the same licence conditions.

Three different types of copyleft have evolved in practice:

### **1. Open-source licences with strict copyleft effect**

The right of use of the licence holder (user or processor) is restricted. Any changes, including improvements, must be passed on under the same licence conditions. This affects anything over and above pure internal use within BAM. But software with a wider application, which uses the original software as a sub-component, must also be passed on under the same licence conditions as the original software.

Examples: GNU General Public License (GPL) (serves as a model for all licences with strict copyleft effect); Common Public License (CPL); Eclipse Public License (EPL)

### **2. Open-source licences with limited copyleft effect**

The open-source licences with limited copyleft effect prescribe the validity of the same open-source licences for each distribution of the OSS in its original form. Any modifications of the original software can also be redistributed under other licence terms, e.g. proprietary conditions.

Examples: Mozilla Public License (MPL); GNU Lesser General Public License (LGPL)

### **3. Open-source licences without copyleft effect**

The developer (licenser) leaves it up to the users or processors (licence holders) as to whether their changes and/or improvements to the original software or their own overarching modifications will also be passed on as OSS. The users or processors (licence holders) are therefore free to decide whether to make their modifications or results of their adaptation into closed software or to pass on the source code. This means that the licence holders are allowed to keep the results of their improvements and/or modifications for themselves, even though these results were based on free software.

Examples: BSD License; Apache Software License Version 2.0; MIT License; PHP License; OpenLDAP Public License

The licence types used in practice cannot always be classified wholesale as strict, limited and non-copyleft because the licence conditions are often unclear or the criteria will depend on the concrete use. You can click on the link below to access a list of different open-source licences to get an overview of the classification of the licence types:

<http://www.ifross.org/lizenz-center>

The Research Services Department ("Referat Z.9 - Servicebereich Forschung") will be happy to help you with the categorisation of OSS and to answer any questions you may have on this subject.