

FREE SOFTWARE LEGAL 101

FSFE TRACK

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WHY?

NO SOFTWARE COMES WITHOUT LICENCE TAG

You think that because there is no licensing condition attached to the software, there is no restriction? **Think better!**

- Full copyright is by default
- Seek license
- Without a licence (or *license*), you are stuck with statutory provisions

INBOUND VS OUTBOUND LICENSING, DERIVATIVE SOFTWARE

Nobody writes software from scratch!

- You take some code
- That code has its own conditions
- Conditions of software you are reusing is called **inbound**
- Conditions of software you are *distributing* is called **outbound**
- If software contains substantial fragments of other software, it is a **derivative**.
- Derivative software needs permission from the original(s)

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW?

A license can be very simple and just permit whatever to whomever. But with most licenses, **permission** is granted only *provided that* you comply with **conditions**

- **If** condition is complied with, **then** you can {modify, distribute original or modified software}
- **If** condition **is not** complied with, **then** you cannot {modify, distribute original or modified software}

IS THIS "COPYLEFT"?

No, copyleft is a *subclass* of Free Software conditions.

- Conditions impact on **outbound** software, and outbound license
- One condition is **"inbound license == outbound license"**
- Depending on the scope of this condition (just the library, the file or the entire derivative), we have **"strong"** or **"weak copyleft"**

A CLASH OF LICENSES

The more conditions and the stricter, the more likely you have **incompatibilities**: there is no state in which you can comply with both.

COMPLIANCE

Means *respect* conditions upon which you receive a Free Software *grant*

HOW?

DIFFERENT STRATEGIES

- SPDX, Reuse
- Standards procedures (OpenChain)
- Scanning

SPDX

Software Package Data Exchange

- An open *standard* to communicate data about components, their licensing conditions and more
- <https://spdx.org/>

REUSE

- Tools and processes to make sure you offer simple and complete licensing information
- <https://reuse.software/>

STANDARDS

OpenChain, a full legal compliance standard to show you have set up processes, training, documentation, to ensure compliance in your own organization and to demonstrate it.

Find more at <https://www.openchainproject.org/>

SCANNING

- Only for more complex projects, with many packages
- Two goals:
 - "find cheaters"
 - find accurate licensing information in the text and record them
- Most popular: **Fossology** (open source project)
- Needs to be included in CD/CI:
- CD/CI/**CC**
- DepTree

WHERE TO FIND HELP

FSFE's legal team <https://fsfe.org/activities/ftf/activities.en.html>

Talk to us

WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE (ADVERTISEMENT)



THANK YOU!



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