

# Lesson 1.4

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# Lesson Overview

FOSS communities or projects and their members have developed interesting ways of collaborating with each other across the globe. They are supported not only by their users, but also from bigger foundations or organisations. New users and IT experts wanting to contribute will find a number of ways to participate in these exciting groups. The most famous ones are the Linux community, the WordPress project, the Moodle project, and the Drupal project.

In this lesson we will explore:

- How can we find a relevant FOSS community or project?
- Which are the main FOSS communities in national and international level?
- How do the members of FOSS communities communicate and collaborate at local, national and transnational level?

# Part 1 – Finding a FOSS community



## FOSS communities

FOSS communities or projects often are diverse and highly motivated groups of developers and end-users. They sometimes are supported by initiatives, foundations or associations to contribute to a common effort, to maintain communication with each other and to efficiently organise themselves. As private companies (like Intel, IBM or Samsung) use open source code to build their own commercial products and services, they also see a strategic value in contributing back to those projects and support such

communities as well (such companies often also release FOSS themselves). Today there is a large community of users who run GNU/Linux and other FOSS and there are even more people, who would like to extend this work, and who try to convince more users to use FOSS.

Image source



## Finding a community

It is possible to find someone to either get or give help to no matter what your interests are. Looking across Social Media pages like Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn or Reddit, there are numerous official and unofficial accounts that share each community's news and views. This is an easy way to find all relevant international or national communities of Wordpress, Joomla, NextCloud, OwnCloud, Drupal, Mozilla or the Software Libre Society simply by looking for them with your internet search engine.

Image source

## Becoming member of a community and getting in contact



There are a lot of ways to contact members of the community and get involved by contributing to the development of new tools and exciting solutions. The first time it may be overwhelming or scary, but soon enough users realise how welcoming a community can be. Sometimes members come from very different countries and will probably never meet each other, but they often have a lot of fun and enjoy volunteering or helping each other.

Image source

## Establishing collaboration with the most relevant communities (for SMEs)

If an SME is new to FOSS, one option is to learn it on its own, as there is no secret code only insiders know. There are many examples in which companies accumulated experience from learning. Alternatively, an SME can consider to hire someone who has already collaborated with a FOSS community and can provide guidance to the SME concerning how to both contribute and gain the most from such communities. Experienced contributors can act as mentors and help SME-employees pursue the FOSS pathway. The ways in which an SME can establish new collaborations with relevant communities vary from project to project.

## Part 2 - Large FOSS communities in international level



Mozilla, GNU, GNOME, KDE, LibreOffice, Nextcloud are all large communities, but the largest and most active FOSS project in existence is the Linux community (Corbet 2016). The **Linux kernel**, is a project in which over 13,500 developers from over 1,300 different companies have contributed to since 2005 (The Linux Foundation 2019). One of the most compelling features of Linux is that it is accessible and anybody with the requisite skills can improve Linux and influence the direction of its development (Corbet 2016).

Image source



**Moodle** is a widely used Learning Management Software space, primarily concerned with e-learning and training, that is used by many universities around the world. The Moodle project has won the attention of large organisations like Cisco and IBM and has a range of useful features and over 1200 plugins. It allows you to be very specific about how you can customise your e-learning system and has a very hands-on community

forum with well-documented processes.

Image source



**WordPress** is a massive community powering over 30% of the web. The platform that was at first a blogging space has now mapping, video and enterprise commerce capability. 500 sites are created daily, and over 47,000 plugins are developed. The community is very active from day 1 and it allows for 14 different ways that users can contribute to the platform (CeBIT Australia 2018). The diverse community includes not just developers, but bloggers and business owners, so there is feedback on many levels.

Image source



The **Drupal community** -a similarly large community to Wordpress and its direct competitor in many usage cases- has more than 1 mill. passionate developers, designers, trainers, strategists, coordinators, editors, and sponsors that are working together to build Drupal, provide support, create documentation, share networking opportunities etc.

Image source

**Github** -which is a platform, together with GitLab, Gitea, GNU Savannah and others- is known as the ultimate 'geek-rave site' and it is considered as the largest open source hosting platform in the world, where millions of projects are running on coding, security, 3D Modelling, productivity tools, data visualisation etc. (CeBIT Australia 2018).

Image source



# Part 3 - How members of FOSS communities communicate and collaborate



## Live communication

The **IRC Live Chat** is commonly used for user support and general discussion within community members, like for example the members of the FSF join each other each Friday in the IRC Live Chat channel for their scheduled meetings or the OSI uses the #osi channel for their live chats. In the community pages (f.e. in the 'Free Software Directory blog') users find information, like the meeting topics or older minutes.

Image source



## Mailing lists

Mailing lists are another usual way to communicate with subscribed community members. At the OSI or the FSFE for instance, there are many global and regional mailing lists, for announcements, discussion, licensing or other topics. Users can easily follow the discussions, while the path to a successful and fulfilling collaboration is being smoothed.

Image source



## Live events, Meetups, Summits and Conferences

Community members are also meeting each other at **community events**, where they can meet face to face, swap tips, and get inspiration for their ongoing and next projects, making friends along the way. WordPress (the same applies to Drupal), for example, has 'WordCamps' all over the world, even more Meetup groups, and conferences like 'Pagely's annual PressNomics'.

Image source

## Working groups

Other projects, like Drupal, have 'Community Working Groups' that uphold the community's Code of Conduct and maintain a friendly and welcoming community for members and newcomers.

## Forums

Forums and Wikis offer communities a huge knowledge bank that supports both developers and users and are considered as another effective way to contribute and help others.

# Summary

Communities are usually diverse and highly motivated groups of developers and end-users, supported by initiatives and foundations or associations. There are a lot of ways to contact members of a community and get involved by contributing to the development of new tools and exciting solutions. The largest international FOSS communities are the Linux-, the WordPress-, the Moodle-, and the Drupal-project. Their members communicate and collaborate with each other using live chats, mailing-lists, by organising live events or by working together in online-groups and forums.



# Sources

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