Open Source Software Reuse Service for SMEs

Results in Brief

Reusing computer code to reduce costs

Open source software (OSS) is a valuable resource if it can be mined effectively. This is particularly relevant to the reuse of code components.

DIGITAL ECONOMY

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OSS contains many programme components that could be attractive to a wide range of programmers. Mining such software for useful code components, and then making these available, would offer other programmers and information technology (IT)-based small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) the chance to stop reinventing the wheel.

The EU-funded 'Open source software reuse service for SMEs' (OPEN-SME) project has done just this by bringing together the component-based software engineering (CBSE) community with the growing activities of the OSS community. The project recognised that both have a lot to learn from each other.

A proper blending of their processes and methods could provide software developers with greater opportunities as well as cost efficiency through the reuse of blocks of OSS code, written for specific purposes. Software reuse is known to lower development costs, shorten the development and testing times, increase the quality of the final product and shorten the time to market.

The project developed a set of methodologies and business models centred on SME associations that group together many small IT-based SMEs. The researchers also created tools for finding, extracting, testing, documenting and packaging software components originating from OSS projects. These are then made available to software developers in the client SMEs through search and comparison tools. The consolidation of these tools is the key area of added value in OPEN-SME.

The final system is being tested at a science park in Greece, with an emphasis on robotics software. The intention is to subsequently expand its application to other SME associations, incubators and science parks.

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