

Brazil's Embratur Goes Open Source

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Embratur (Brazilian Institute of Tourism), the Brazilian government's tourism agency, should finish by April the task of implanting the first stage of free software in all of its computers.

With the measure, the Institute should stop spending about US\$ 65,000 with licensing of programs. The economy represents about 33% of the value of all computer equipment from Embratur.

Since 2003, Embratur has been using a webmail system with about 300 accounts, all built around a free platform. If paid, the system would cost the Institute US\$ 25,000. The webmail is a system that allows the user to access its email from any computer in the world.

Besides, Embratel has already two sites developed using free open source software: www.braziltour.com, in four languages (Portuguese, English, Spanish and French) and www.brasilnetwork.tur.br. Both bring an extra savings of US\$ 7,800 to the government's coffers.

The president of Brazil's ITI (National Institute of Information Technology), Sérgio Amadeu, believes that Embratur is following the example of several other Brazilian public organs, which are adopting free software in order to increase safety, have bigger technological autonomy and also contribute to saving money:

"This movement provokes a chain reaction and a change of behavior in the market. More and more we will have companies with specialized technicians in the free platform applications, which will democratize access to technology and will create jobs".

According to Carlos Seixas, Embratur's manager of computer science, free software is a computer program that can be used, copied and distributed freely.

"Commercial products have secret codes and it is a crime to copy them. As for free software not only it can be copied but it can also be modified. Besides all the savings it represents, there is a great political meaning in its use, " says.

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