Debian Social Contract

Debian, the producers of the Debian GNU/Linux system, have created the Debian Social Contract. The Debian Free Software Guidelines (DFSG) part of the contract, initially designed as a set of commitments that we agree to abide by, has been adopted by the free software community as the basis of the Open Source Definition.

"Social Contract" with the Free Software Community

1. Debian Will Remain 100% Free Software

   We promise to keep the Debian GNU/Linux Distribution entirely free software. As there are many definitions of free software, we include the guidelines we use to determine if software is "free" below. We will support our users who develop and run non-free software on Debian, but we will never make the system depend on an item of non-free software.

2. We Will Give Back to the Free Software Community

   When we write new components of the Debian system, we will license them as free software. We will make the best system we can, so that free software will be widely distributed and used. We will feed back bug-fixes, improvements, user requests, etc. to the "upstream" authors of software included in our system.

3. We Won't Hide Problems

   We will keep our entire bug-report database open for public view at all times. Reports that users file on-line will immediately become visible to others.

4. Our Priorities are Our Users and Free Software

   We will be guided by the needs of our users and the free-software community. We will place their interests first in our priorities. We will support the needs of our users for operation in many different kinds of computing environment. We won't object to commercial software that is intended to run on Debian systems, and we'll allow others to create value-added distributions containing both Debian and commercial software, without any fee from us. To support these goals, we will provide an integrated system of high-quality, 100% free software, with no legal restrictions that would prevent these kinds of use.

5. Programs That Don't Meet Our Free-Software Standards

   We acknowledge that some of our users require the use of programs that don't conform to the Debian Free Software Guidelines. We have created "contrib" and "non-free" areas in our FTP archive for this software. The software in these directories is not part of the Debian system, although it has been configured for use with Debian. We encourage CD manufacturers to read the licenses of software packages in these directories and determine if they can distribute that software on their CDs. Thus, although non-free software isn't a part of Debian, we support its use, and we provide infrastructure (such as our bug-tracking system and mailing lists) for non-free software packages.

The Debian Free Software Guidelines (DFSG)

1. Free Redistribution

   The license of a Debian component may not restrict any party from selling or giving away the software as a component of an aggregate software distribution containing programs from several different sources. The license may not require a royalty or other fee for such sale.

2. Source Code

   The program must include source code, and must allow distribution in source code as well as compiled form.

3. Derived Works

   The license must allow modifications and derived works, and must allow them to be distributed under the same terms as the license of the original software.

4. Integrity of The Author's Source Code

   The license may restrict source-code from being distributed in modified form _only_ if the license allows the distribution of "patch files" with the source code for the purpose of modifying the program at build time. The license must explicitly permit distribution of software built from modified source code. The license may require derived works to carry a different name or version number from the original software. (This is a compromise. The Debian group encourages all authors not to restrict any files, source or binary, from being modified.)

5. No Discrimination Against Persons or Groups

   The license must not discriminate against any person or group of persons.

6. No Discrimination Against Fields of Endeavor

   The license must not restrict anyone from making use of the program in a specific field of endeavor. For example, it may not restrict the program from being used in a business, or from being used for genetic research.

7. Distribution of License

   The rights attached to the program must apply to all to whom the program is redistributed without the need for execution of an additional license by those parties.

8. License Must Not Be Specific to Debian

   The rights attached to the program must not depend on the program's being part of a Debian system. If the program is extracted from Debian and used or distributed without Debian but otherwise within the terms of the program's license, all parties to whom the program is redistributed should have the same rights as those that are granted in conjunction with the Debian system.

9. License Must Not Contaminate Other Software

   The license must not place restrictions on other software that is distributed along with the licensed software. For example, the license must not insist that all other programs distributed on the same medium must be free software.

10. Example Licenses

    The "GPL", "BSD", and "Artistic" licenses are examples of licenses that we consider "free".

The concept of stating our "social contract with the free software community" was suggested by Ean Schuessler. This document was drafted by Bruce Perens, refined by the other Debian developers during a month-long e-mail conference in June 1997, and then accepted as the publicly stated policy of the Debian Project.

Bruce Perens later removed the Debian-specific references from the Debian Free Software Guidelines to create "The Open Source Definition".