

## On FUD Toward Free Software Projects

Written by magus  
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Today's rant was provoked by yet another overheard discussion in Identica about Mono and Moonlight.

People are repeating FUD about Mono and switching from the GNOME desktop, which uses Mono in a few places, to KDE, which doesn't use Mono at all. I don't know who started it, and I don't care. It needs to stop.

For the uninitiated, Mono is an implementation of Microsoft's .Net framework, licensed under GPLv2, LGPLv2, and MIT licenses. It is meant to comply with the ECMA standard. Moonlight is similarly an implementation (a clone, really) of Microsoft's Silverlight framework, licensed under LGPLv2 and built atop Mono. FUD stands for Fear, Uncertainty, Doubt, and refers to unsubstantiated rumors used to scare people away from a competitor.

Microsoft is the scourge of the Free Software world for a number of reasons, most of them quite valid. They have a number of patents on their .Net implementation, as well as patents on technologies built on top of .Net, including ASP.Net and Windows Forms. Silverlight is often referred to as Microsoft's "Flash killer" (referring to Adobe's proprietary Flash technology) and is quite proprietary as well. When Microsoft gets involved in free software, the community is skeptical and almost always rightly so.

The fear is that Microsoft will use its patent portfolio to threaten the Mono and Moonlight projects. The uncertainty comes from Microsoft's patent pact with Novel. Microsoft and Novel formed a mutual nonaggression agreement with regard to either party's patent collection, giving users of each immunity from patent lawsuits from the other. Novell owns Suse Linux and is the driving force behind the openSuse distribution. Other Linux distributions, as well as BSD, OS X and (open)Solaris are not under this pact and may be vulnerable to patent lawsuits. If one distribution is safe, one wonders whether the rest are safe. Many Free Software users doubt the safety of Mono and its derivatives, and are avoiding Mono like the Plague.

This is stupid.

As I mentioned at the beginning, the source code is released under a number of prominent free software licenses. The Mono C# compiler source code is available under both GPLv2 and the MIT X11 licenses, and the C# tools are also GPLv2. The runtime libraries are LGPLv2. The class libraries are released under the MIT license.

( [Mono \(software\) License](#) )

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What really burns me is the people switching to KDE because the GNOME project is using Mono code in some applications. I wouldn't be surprised if these are the same people who switched from KDE to GNOME over the QPL licensing back around Qt 2 (a long time ago). QPL was a free software license, but incompatible with GPL according to the FSF. In 2000, Trolltech released Qt/Unix under both QPL and GPL. Years later, there was still a strong myth that KDE wasn't really free software. FUD doesn't go away quickly, and if people don't do the research it won't go away at all.

I've been a KDE user for years, and used GNOME before that. Both have their merits, and KDE fits me better. A lot of people have told me to switch back because "KDE isn't really free" and I kept telling them "I looked up the licenses, it IS free." I want to feel good about the reversal of roles, but I can't. It's wrong.

There are many reasons to switch to KDE. It's a major Free Software project with a long history. It's very configurable and flexible. It has a complete set of applications written with the same libraries. It's intuitive to use. It looks as flashy or as bland as you want. It has a cooler logo than GNOME. These are all good reasons to switch.

FUD is not a good reason to switch. FUD is not a good reason to do anything. And I would prefer it if you didn't bring your FUD into my community.

Sources:

[Mono \(software\)](#)

[Qt \(toolkit\) History](#)

[KDE Origins](#)