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Byvarious

re-posted from Sarai [Commons-Law] list. Link to a BBC article published today here: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/4649348.stm> and an older BBC article from December which might help give the background on why Internet Explorer (TM) doesn't work very well with this website : <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/4555378.stm>

Microsoft to give access to code

Microsoft has said it will give rival software companies access to parts of the source code for its Windows operating system.

The concession was made in response to a 2004 European Union (EU) anti-trust ruling which ordered the company to share its code with competitors.

It came three weeks ahead of the EU's compliance deadline, which threatened fines of 2m euros (Â£1.4m; \$2.4m) a day.

The code will help rivals make their software compatible with Microsoft's.

"Today we are putting our most valuable intellectual property on the table so we can put technical compliance issues to rest and move forward with a serious discussion about the substance of the case," said Microsoft's legal chief, Brad Smith.

Record fine

The compliance deadline was set in December when the European Commission said that Microsoft's offer of 12,000 pages of documentation and 500 hours of free technical support was not adequate.

The landmark 2004 ruling said the world's biggest software company was guilty of abusing its position and hit Microsoft with a record 497m euros fine, telling it to open up its operating systems.

Microsoft said that the latest concession went "far beyond" the 2004 decision.

It maintains that it has tried to comply with the EU's demands, but says that Brussels keeps changing its guidelines.

The EU's second highest court, the European Court of First Instance, will hear Microsoft's appeal against the 2004 ruling in April.