BRUSSELS (Reuters) - Microsoft Corp.'s (Nasdaq:MSFT - news) top lawyer said on Wednesday that the U.S. software giant would offer licences for some of its source codes in a bid to comply with antitrust requirements set by the European Commission.

"We will also license the Windows source code itself," Microsoft General Counsel Brad Smith told a news conference. He added he did not know what percentage of the company's source codes would be licensed.

The executive Commission decided in March 2004 that the firm had violated European Union antitrust laws by exploiting its dominant position to compete unfairly against other companies.

It had fined Microsoft 497 million euros ($610 million) and ordered it to change its business practices. It required the firm to offer a version of its Windows computer operating system without audiovisual software.

As part of the Commission's decision, Microsoft also was supposed to offer rivals so-called protocols, or rules of the road.

That would enable rival makers of server software that helps manage tasks like printing within a group of desktop machines to work as well with Windows as Microsoft server software does.

The Commission announced in December that Microsoft had failed to offer enough documentation for rivals to use the protocols and threatened to fine it up to 2 million euros a day.

But Microsoft replied on Wednesday by offering the source codes for those protocols.

"The source code is the best documentation," he said.
"All the source codes cover all the technologies covered by the European Commission's remedies."

Smith also said Microsoft was not closing the door to other compliance steps.

"We are opening the door to a new step -- we are not seeking to close the door on any old steps," he said.

Earlier in the day, the European Union's Court of First Instance announced that a hearing on Microsoft's appeal against the Commission decision would be held from April 24 to 28.