MODULE 6: THE ETHICS OF OPEN-SOURCE SOFTWARE LICENSING

Duration: 30 minutes

Objective: This exercise aims to reinforce the main ideas and ethical considerations around open-source software (OSS) licensing, as discussed in the module notes. The exercise will encourage you to critically analyse the implications of different OSS licenses and develop a well-reasoned position on how to address ethical dilemmas that may arise from the use of OSS.

Instructions:

1. Divide the class into small groups of 3-5 students.
2. Assign each group one of the following scenarios:

Scenario A: You are a developer who has created a powerful data analysis tool using various OSS libraries. Your tool has the potential to be used for both beneficial and harmful purposes, such as targeted advertising or surveillance. You want to release your tool under an OSS license but are unsure which license to choose.

1. Within your groups, you should discuss the following questions:
   - What are the ethical considerations and potential risks associated with the given scenario?
   - Which OSS license(s) would be most appropriate for the scenario, and why?
   - What steps or measures can be taken to mitigate the identified ethical risks?
   - How would you balance the various interests and perspectives of different stakeholders (e.g., developers, users, companies, governments, advocacy groups)?
2. After 20 minutes of discussion, each group should prepare a 600-word written response summarizing their analysis and recommendations.
3. In the remaining 10 minutes, each group should present their response to the class, and the instructor should facilitate a broader discussion on the ethical implications of OSS licensing.

Evaluation:

The written responses and group presentations will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Identification and analysis of relevant ethical considerations and risks
- Justification and rationale for the chosen OSS license(s)
- Proposed measures to mitigate ethical risks and address stakeholder interests
- Clarity, coherence, and persuasiveness of the arguments presented

This exercise will encourage you to critically think about the ethical implications of OSS licensing, consider different perspectives and interests, and develop a well-reasoned position on how to address potential ethical dilemmas. The group discussions and written responses will reinforce the main ideas covered in the module notes while also fostering collaboration, communication, and decision-making skills.