

## “Public Money, Public Code” for AI in Europe

Position by Wikimedia’s Free Knowledge Advocacy Group

It is the intention of the European Commission to propose measure that help the EU stand its ground and take a global lead in the development of artificial intelligence and machine learning. It is a further public policy goal to ensure citizen trust in such systems and that European fundamental and civil rights are protected.

We at Wikimedia believe that relying on and investing in open source software and releasing non-personal data as open data will help the EU and its Member States tackle these policy intentions. We therefore suggest three straightforward principles:

1. The **public sector should use and develop open source software exclusively** and promote it
2. All **software financed by public money** - for instance through research, innovation and start-ups funds - **should be open source**.
3. All **non-personal data generated either directly by the public sector or generated with public sector funds should be open data**. This way it can easily and safely serve as training data for artificial intelligence and machine learning projects.

By following these three principles the European Commission can help promote the best practices in the field of artificial intelligence, i.e. the projects based entirely on free software and open data, which are instrumental for open science, open government and more generally for transparency, citizen empowerment and human rights. We can provide examples of best practices like Wikimedia software, Moses MT, Tesseract, GROBID and others useful for the promotion of culture. One very recent example are the so-called Corona apps. The French application, which is non-open, is controversial even within the French government, while the open source corona applications tend to be praised in the media for their transparency.

More generally, open source AI development would have the following benefits:

- **Fostering Innovation:** With open source code and transparent processes, others don't have to reinvent the wheel. Investments done with public sector money can and will be re-used by citizens and start-ups to develop their own initiatives.
- **Saving Public Money:** Similar applications don't have to be programmed from scratch every time.
- **Public Scrutiny:** Citizens should never be subjected to any state power making use of closed source. Any usage of secret/unpublished methods and data to limit a citizen's freedoms and their ability to benefit from effective redress. It would infringe articles 20, 21, 41, 47 and 49 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.
- **Trust & Liability:** Even the producer of the software cannot know what they are working on if it is not open source or the work processes are intransparent.

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