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Press release

30 million euros annually for the decentralised social network Fediverse!

Alliance ‘Open Networks and Democratic Public Sphere. Decentralised, Sovereign and for the Common Good!’ presents four demands on the occasion of the ‘European Summit for Digital Sovereignty.’

On the occasion of the ‘European Summit on Digital Sovereignty’ on 18 November in Berlin, the alliance ‘Open Networks and Democratic Public Sphere. Decentralised, Sovereign and for the Common Good!’ is addressing four demands to President Emmanuel Macron, Chancellor Friedrich Merz and EU Commissioner Henna Virkkunen, with which genuine digital sovereignty can be secured. The demands are listed in detail in the position paper on the website www.offene-netzwerke.eu/forderungen

Don't just talk, implement political measures for public-interest digital infrastructures!

Michael Kolain, Head of Policy at the Centre for Digital Rights and Democracy, emphasises that political measures for public-interest digital infrastructures are urgently needed now: "A few tech companies decide how we inform ourselves, what we discuss – and ultimately how a large part of the public sphere is constituted. This is a threat to democracy. However, it is not enough to simply enforce EU digital laws consistently against the US corporations of Zuckerberg, Musk and Co. We also need real alternatives: digital platforms that serve the common good rather than the profit interests of a few, and open infrastructures that enable democratic decision-making rather than preventing it."

Currently, the European debate on digital sovereignty is focusing on supranational approaches, such as the various Eurostacks. The alliance therefore proposes a conceptual expansion of the public and political debate on the subject. ‘We need real solutions,’ says Sandra Barthel from the Digitale Gesellschaft association, which initiated the alliance. "Anyone who wants to secure Europe as a business location should implement sustainable public investment in digital infrastructures that can be used by all European citizens. These funds must be used to support and further develop open networks for democratic public spheres at European and national level. These infrastructures must be decentralised, sovereign and oriented towards the common good."

By implementing these four demands, the German and French governments and the European Commission could provide lasting support for existing European alternatives. According to the alliance, each of these demands would help Europeans to obtain information and exchange ideas independently, enabling them to take control of their digital future.

Claims

1. Fediverse Fund for user-centred development amounting to €30 million annually

In order to secure social media as open, democratic networks, their technological foundations must be strengthened. This requires funding to improve the user experience and make the Fediverse easier to moderate for smaller groups. The aim is also to give projects in the Fediverse the opportunity to generate revenue. ‘We need government investment in the digital self-determination of users and want to build on the successes of open source. With the Fediverse, we are continuing what the Sovereign Tech Agency and Zendis are doing for software,’ says Thomas Fricke, Cloud Security Architect & Innovationsverbund Öffentliche Gesundheit, commenting on the call for a Fediverse Fund. Björn Staschen, Managing Director of Save Social – Networks For Democracy, adds: ‘We can only develop open, decentralised networks for this society together with society: the technical foundations are in place. Now we need projects involving as many people as possible to revitalise and improve the existing networks. This social anchoring requires a political framework and comprehensive investment.’

2. Anchoring the +1 principle for the work of the federal government and public institutions

‘The “+1 principle” for social media sets a clear standard: where public funds flow into communication on commercial platforms, at least one free, digitally sovereign alternative should be considered and actively used in the future – preferably in the Fediverse,’ demands Ralf Stockmann of Save Social – Networks For Democracy.

3. Establishing legal certainty: recognition of non-profit status

"The recognition of non-profit status for free and open software without the intention of making a profit is long overdue. It is often developed on a voluntary basis, but has long formed the groundwork of the digital infrastructure that the state, economy and society use on a daily basis. In order to recognise this digital voluntary work, create legal certainty and secure its long-term maintenance both legally and financially, a new purpose for non-profit status is finally needed," says Sabine Grützmacher, former member of the German Bundestag.

4. Establishment of decentralised, interoperable and cross-sectoral pan-European media platforms with the involvement of civil society from the outset

In its new 'Apply AI Strategy', the EU Commission has announced its intention to promote the development of pan-European multilingual media platforms – an important step that is also taken up in the coalition agreement between the CDU and SPD with the proposal to include ARTE. The alliance of digital organisations expressly welcomes this initiative. At the same time, the signatories see the risk that, unless the right priorities are set from the outset, the initiative will be perceived in the political debate as a centralised Franco-German state project. The alliance therefore strongly recommends that the initiative be developed from the outset as a network of platforms based on open protocols, such as Mastodon's ActivityPub, and that civil society actors and initiatives such as Display Europe be involved. 'Europe does not need a EuroTube, but rather a vibrant network of media platforms that showcases our diversity – linguistic, cultural and civil society,' says Alexander Baratsits, CEO of cba.media and member of the supervisory board of Display Europe.

Alliance 'Open Networks and Democratic Public Spheres: Decentralised, Sovereign and for the Common Good!'

'The alliance 'Open Networks and Democratic Public Spheres: Decentralised, Sovereign and for the Common Good!' was formed on the occasion of the European Summit for Digital Sovereignty. Our demands focus on decentralised infrastructures, whether in the field of free software or open knowledge exchange – architectures for independent social networks and decentralised European media offerings. All these public welfare-oriented digital infrastructures enable democratic public spheres. The demands unite our perspectives and, if implemented politically, can enable the establishment of genuine digital sovereignty for all people in Europe.

The alliance 'Open Networks and Democratic Public Sphere. Decentralised, Sovereign and for the Common Good!' is supported by:

- Digitale Gesellschaft e.V.
- Save Social - Networks For Democracy
- Zentrum für Digitalrechte und Demokratie
- D64 – Zentrum für digitalen Fortschritt
- Mastodon gGmbH
- Innovationsverbund Öffentliche Gesundheit
- Cultural Broadcasting Archive – cba.media
- DisplayEurope.eu
- Newsmast Foundation
- IFTAS – federated trust and safety
- Verband Freier Rundfunk Österreich
- Free Software Foundation Europe
- Krytyk Polityczna
- Fairkom
- Wikimedia Deutschland
- Wikimedia Österreich
- Forum InformatikerInnen für Frieden und gesellschaftliche Verantwortung e. V. (FIfF)

The video of the press conference, the list of demands (German, English, French) and further information about the campaign can be found on the website www.offene-netzwerke.eu. For questions and interview requests to the alliance or individual persons or organisations, please contact Sandra Barthel: presse@offene-netzwerke.eu.