



For open networks and democratic public spheres – decentralised, sovereign, and for the common good!

Demands on the occasion of the European Summit for Digital Sovereignty on 18 November 2025 in Berlin

Our alliance of digital organisations would like to actively contribute to the development of concepts for digital sovereignty on the occasion of the ‘European Summit on Digital Sovereignty’ hosted by Germany and France on 18 November 2025.¹

In order to enable and implement digital sovereignty for our society and all citizens in Europe, government investment in public-interest-oriented, open and decentralised digital infrastructures is needed. Thanks to such support, sustainable and widely used alternatives to monopolies are emerging. These reduce dependencies, secure creative and decision-making sovereignty, and make Europe digitally sovereign. That is why serious efforts to achieve sovereignty also require ambitious investment in infrastructures that contribute to preserving digital self-determination, strengthening Europe as a business location and ensuring the greatest possible independence from proprietary gatekeepers outside European legal systems. We call on elected representatives in Germany, France and the EU to adopt coherent measures to strengthen Europe as a business location and to establish public-interest digital infrastructures as the basis for our digital sovereignty.

In his speech on 3 October, French President Emmanuel Macron called for existing European laws to finally be enforced against centralised social networks. In order to give European citizens genuine freedom of choice, in parallel it is necessary to support existing decentralised and interoperable social networks. With the Fediverse, which is based on the open ActivityPub protocol, there are public-interest-oriented digital structures that now need to be sustainably supported and expanded. Genuine digital sovereignty based on open protocols and open-source software is already being enabled and implemented by Mastodon in Germany and by Peertube and Mobilizon, two successful projects in France. Public institutions should use and strengthen these existing European infrastructures in line with their public responsibility.

Demands

- 1. Fediverse Fund for user-centred further development, amounting to €30 million annually**
- 2. Anchoring the +1 principle in the work of the federal government and public institutions**
- 3. Recognition of non-profit status in the field of decentralised digital infrastructure, thereby establishing legal certainty**
- 4. Establishment of decentralised, interoperable and cross-sectoral pan-European media platforms with the involvement of civil society from the outset**

¹ We base our work, among other sources, on the [Konzept zur Förderung des fediverse](#) (FöFed) of the [Zentrum für Digitalrechte und Demokratie](#).

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

In order for the Fediverse to be sustainably established in Germany as a digital infrastructure oriented towards the common good, and thus also serve as a model for Europe, it is necessary to finance a Fediverse Fund in the amount of 30 million euros from 2026 onwards, from the budgetary resources of the Federal Ministry for Digitalisation and State Modernisation. Parallel to the technological development of the Fediverse, it must be anchored in society through a variety of community-based projects in order to incorporate the needs and experiences of users into its development.

The table (see appendix) shows examples of the amounts required for this start-up financing for the first year. Depending on experience, as with the Sovereign Tech Fund, adjustments should be made in subsequent years following evaluation.

2. Anchoring the Plus1 principle in the work of the federal government and public institutions

Public institutions (politics, authorities, universities, libraries, public broadcasting and others) currently produce content for closed platforms such as Instagram, X or TikTok, sometimes at great expense. It is unacceptable that citizens should have to create accounts on commercial platforms and pay for them – even if it is "only" with their data – in order to access information that is relevant to the public. Free platforms are available.

Therefore, in accordance with the "Plus1 principle" (developed by Ralf Stockmann of ZLB Berlin) and the demands of the Save Social initiative, they will be obliged in future to consider at least one open platform with comparable financial and structural expenditure. SMART criteria² would be posting frequency, posting complexity and interactions with citizens.

We call on the German and French governments to commit to this principle as a signal on the occasion of the summit.

To this end, the federal government could, for example, add a new paragraph 6 to Section 25 of the Joint Rules of Procedure (GGO) on press and public relations work, as proposed by the Centre for Digital Rights and Democracy³:

"If the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government or the federal ministries use third-party services for their public relations work on the internet, in particular digital platforms or social media, it must be ensured that services based on open source and decentralised infrastructures and operated independently of non-European economic influences are also included to a comparable extent."

3. Establishing legal certainty: recognition of charitable status

Organisations that promote or operate Fediverse instances or free software infrastructure on a non-profit basis need legal certainty. These activities must therefore be reliably recognised as charitable.

Volunteering in the context of free software has not yet been sufficiently recognised in Germany in social, legal and funding terms, even though a widely used digital commons is being developed,

² In project management, this refers to criteria for the clear formulation of measurable and verifiable objectives (acronym for Specific Measurable Achievable Reasonable Time-bound; see [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria)).

³ See footnote 1.

operated and maintained (digital sovereignty, security, reusability, cost efficiency for the state, schools, civil society and the economy).

We therefore propose adding the following to Section 52(2) of the German Fiscal Code (AO) after number 26: *“27. the promotion of the development, maintenance and operation of non-profit-oriented open digital infrastructures and free software (also known as open source), which can be used, analysed, distributed and modified by everyone and thus contributes to the common good.”*

This could be implemented by means of an amendment to the Annual Tax Act. At the same time, for reasons of legal certainty, a clarification should be made in the explanatory memorandum to the Annual Tax Act. In this case, responsibility lies with the Federal Ministry of Finance, among others, with which the Federal Ministry of Defence should coordinate closely.

FOSS⁴ is largely supported by volunteers and has not yet received sufficient social, legal and funding recognition in Germany, even though it develops and operates a widely used digital commons (digital sovereignty, security, reusability, cost efficiency for the state, schools, civil society and the economy). It is possible to distinguish it from commercial activities: guidance can be found in the logic applied in the EU Cyber Resilience Act, which uses manufacturers (commercial product manufacturers) as a distinction from non-profit activities.

4. Decentralised, interoperable and cross-sector European media platforms in the European Media Data Space

With reference to the CDU/SPD coalition agreement: "We support the establishment of a European media platform involving ARTE" (p. 87) and the European Commission's "Apply AI Strategy", which provides for the EU Commission to support the development of (several) pan-European media platforms, we demand that these European media platforms should:

- in line with the European Media Data Space, be multilingual, decentralised/federated, not only public-law but cross-sectoral (public-law, private-commercial, civil society/not-for-profit), format-independent (not video-only, but also text and audio) and interoperable on the basis of recognised, open protocols (including ActivityPub),
- support democratic debate among European citizens and therefore be a cornerstone of a federated, sovereign European social media ecosystem, and
- be democratically operated and set up from the outset with the involvement of civil society and with a dedicated proportion of funding allocated to the operation of civil society infrastructure.

4 Free and Open Source Software.

Appendix

Calculation basis for the Fediverse Fund

#	Project	Total/million €
0	Selection, prototypes	0,5
1	Usability and interfaces	3,0
2	Cross-application integration	4,0
3	Provision for small installations (moderation capability and design)	5,0
4	applications	6,0
5	Anonymous Micropayment	4,0
6	Integration of existing systems	2,5
7	Community-based projects as input and testing ground for technological advancement	5,0
8	Total	30,0

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and other organisations, which we will announce shortly.

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All further information at <https://offene-netzwerke.eu/>