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FREE SOFTWARE FOR FREE GOVERNMENTS

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## Motion Text

It is hard to date when the first computing program was written. Current computers are different from the ones that were used in the 1950s. Augusta Ada King, known as Ada Lovelace, is considered the first programmer when in 1840, she published the first algorithm showing that computers could potentially do more than simply compute mathematical problems.

During 1950s and 1960s, it was common to deliver the source code alongside the operative systems and compilers. This was useful because source code allow to learn the exact behaviour of the programs and also the ability to fix current or future bugs in their software because there was no need to rely on the provider for a fix. This was common behaviour in the field because computer software was mainly an academic and scientific space where cooperation between parties was common.

In the 1970s the first private companies selling code based products appeared and so did the privatization of source code.

In the 1980s a project called “GNU Project” appeared to protect users’ rights to run, copy, distribute, study and modify computer programs. This in turn saw the creation of the “GNU General Public License” (commonly known as “GPL license”). The GPLv1 license allows users to have free access to human- readable source code and also modification and distribution rights over the software. In addition, this license enforces the usage of the same license or a more permissive one, but never one that is more restrictive so the source code will always be open sourced.

After the publication of the GPLv1, more free and open source software licenses appeared such as the Apache License, MIT License, BSD Licenses, GPLv2 and GPLv3. While there are differences between these licenses, a free and open source software license always guarantees the user these four fundamental rights:

- The right to study and change the software. This requires distribution of the human-readable source code.

- The right to modify the source code.

- The right to share the software.

- The right to share modified versions of the software.

Our society has evolved into an interconnected global world that is highly dependent on information technologies. European citizens have the possibility to submit a lot of their paperwork via online platforms. Even more, some European countries have almost all of their public bureaucracy online. Digitalization brings citizens information to the cloud, creating agile information processing that citizens can benefit from.

Public administrations in each European country have a different level of digitalization which means digital infiltration is not the same across the EU so the problems to solve are not the same in each state. But there is a general problem present in most of the European countries. This problem is

how little their citizens know how their data is being processed. There has been a step towards solving this challenge with the GDPR but more needs to be done. Private companies are developing the software that processes the information of European citizens and those companies are not always enforced to share the source code of these applications. European citizens need to have the right to know how the applications work and how they use their data.

Society requires more transparency from politicians and public administrations but they are not asking for the same about the applications that process their citizens' data.

On the other hand, public administrations make use of a lot of proprietary software that although is not bad or faulty, does not give freedom to the citizens. This has a double effect on the administrators and the citizens. First, it makes the administration dependent. Mostly from big companies and lobbies that own this software. Second, it creates a continuous cost for licenses for private software that only bring benefits to big groups and also the adoption of the administration to some companies rather than the opposite.

Open source code would allow administrations:

- A cost reduction in software licenses.

- The ability to fix problems without relying on another party to fix them.

- Create a publicly maintained repository to decrease development costs for EU developments and companies.

- Be less dependent on big companies and lobbies that could potentially have an opposite interests to the public will.

As European citizens we should have the right to know how our information is used and processed so that's why the next actions are required:

- Every software application that connects European citizens with public administrations should at least be under open source licenses.

- Every software application that processes or uses European citizens data provided by any of the member states should be under open source licenses.

- Every software application used by public administration should be under free software licenses.