Declaration by the Presidency of the Council of the European Union
calling for a European Initiative for Digital Commons

Digital commons are non-rivalrous and non-exclusive digital resources defined by shared production, maintenance and governance. Wikipedia, Linux, OpenStreetMap, and Open Food Facts, of which three are European, are some of the most visible examples. Under the right conditions, digital commons contribute to the preservation of the **collective control and valuation of data**, and consequently to improve the **security of digital tools and innovations**.

In addition, **digital commons challenge the enclosure strategies pursued by some governments and major digital service providers.** Additionally, they provide affordable and ethically governed digital systems to associations and democratic initiatives. **Digital commons constitute a significant lever for setting up multilateral governance - in the sense of mutual and mutually accepted constraint - of our data and the tools that use it, and for recovering a share of digital strategic autonomy.** In the context of an increasingly digitalized world, commons can become a pillar of Europe's digital sovereignty.

Our economy and daily use of digital tools rely on a multilayer Internet infrastructure build with countless software components. Many are made and sustained by citizen communities on a voluntary basis, often with limited resources. The discovery on December 10, 2021, of a vulnerability in Apache Log4J – an essential building block of the Internet broadly used in technology services and products and maintained by a few citizens – brought into sharp focus the critical importance of digital commons communities in the protection and resilience of a global, open, neutral, non-fragmented, and secure digital architecture. Incidents like this one have enhanced our collective understanding of the challenges we face and how they can be addressed.

The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union calls for a new initiative for digital commons in Europe, to support and accelerate their development as well as their internationalization.

The initiative would build on existing programs and initiatives that have proved efficient like the *Next Generation Internet* to fund commons and open-source technological components on strategic segments, both at the European and at the national level. By facilitating a change of scale in the use of open-source solutions and digital commons in public tenders, the European initiative for digital commons will complement ongoing national programs and will build on existing European structures and projects to provide recurrent aid. In this regard**,** Member States are warmly encouraged to identify quality and security-and-safety-by-design digital commons projects which would benefit from public procurement to foster their development and uptake across the European Union. This initiative should **(i) steer efforts towards the identification and the Europeanization of existing national digital commons and open-source software, (ii) promote the use of digital commons within European institutions and Member States' public services, and (iii) set up a framework for contributing to strategic commons by allocating human resources or financial support, or by participating, formally or informally, in their governance.**

The Presidency calls for the establishment of a provisional working team gathering Member States participating on a voluntary basis to discuss: *(i)* **opportunities to mobilize funding available in the European Union;** *(ii)* **a European incubator for digital commons, either virtual or hosted in a** *physical* **location; and** *(iii)* **the means or a structure to provide guidance and assistance to Member States in addition to funding for digital commons.** This last activity would entail a close cooperation and be established hand-to-hand with digital commons communities to combine public and plural forces.

Some digital commons communities have specifically expressed their need to *(i)* **access expertise** (legal, governance, organizational); *(ii)* **receive funds to maintain** – and sometimes extend – **the digital commons they hold**; and *(iii)* **further connect with other communities** to share expertise and recognition of value. The working team will deliver its conclusions at the Digital Assembly from 21 to June 22, 2022.

This initiative is aimed at enabling Europe to take a step forward by meeting the needs of digital commons in order to unlock their full potential for Europe's economy, security, resilience, and democracy in line with the Union's values and principles.