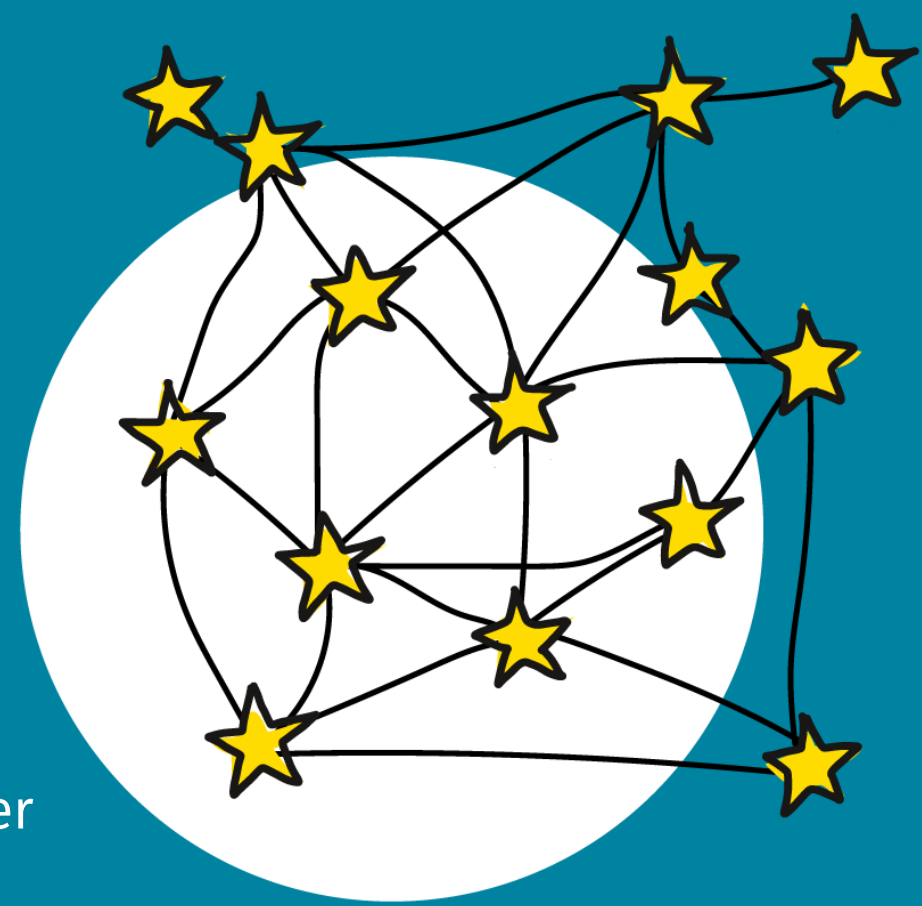


# Five years Open Search Initiative – where do we stand?

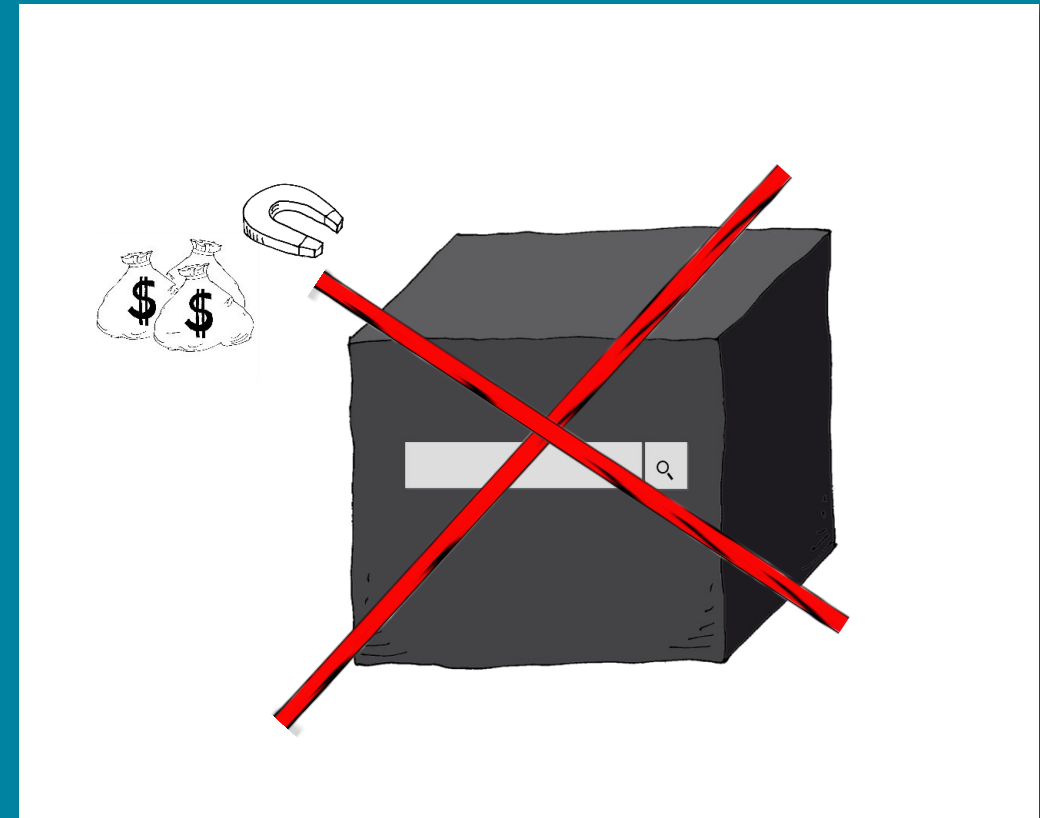
Stefan Voigt, Christine Plote, Christian Geminn and Frank Hauser

Open Search Foundation, Starnberg, Germany



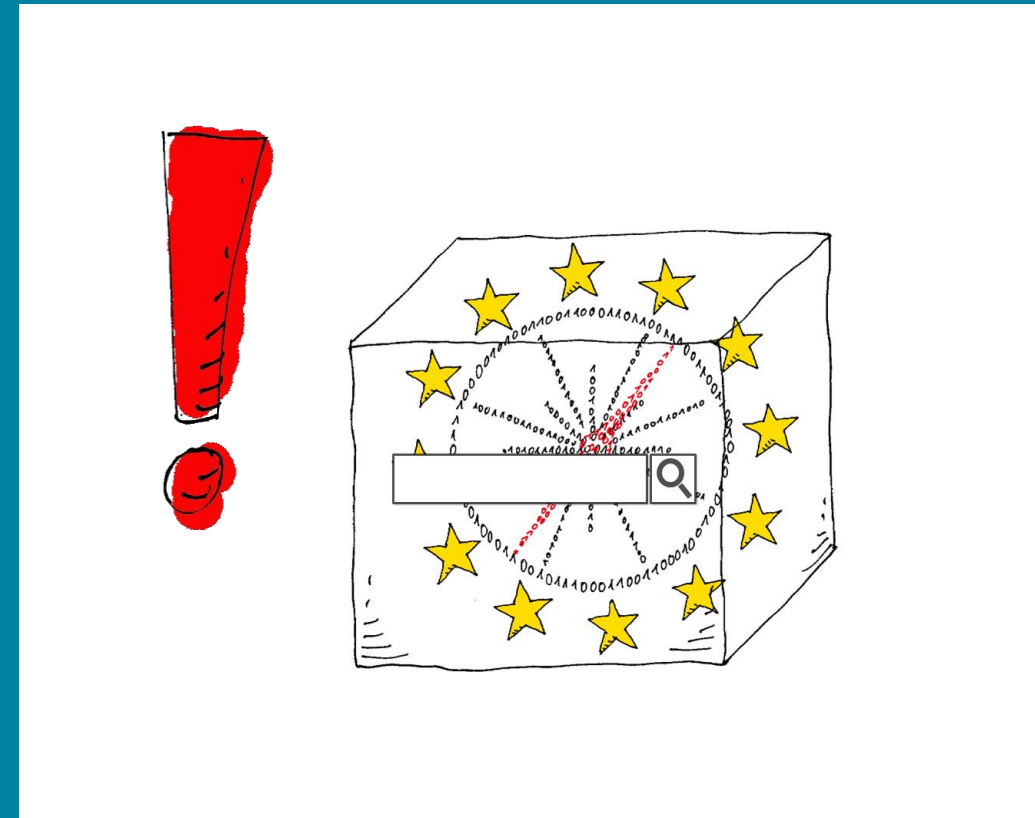
The Open Search Initiative advocates for an **independent, free and self-determined navigation and access to information** on the internet.

- From profit-driven search to **search that benefits everyone**
- based upon **ethical values and fundamental rights**
- An ecosystem that offers **manifold choices, public and commercial**
- **Cooperation** of scientific organizations, universities, computing centers, dedicated individuals, administrative bodies, foundations, NGOs, start-ups
- Developing **concepts, components and general rules** for the envisaged open search ecosystem.



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**Goal: Search ecosystem** based on open and auditable source code for distributed crawling, indexing and hosting across many different computing centers and language spaces; as well as on public moderation and democratic oversight of the infrastructure

- It is the aim to **make web search a common good** that is implemented and maintained by public and partially maybe also private actors, as it is the case with other relevant infrastructure such as roads, water supply or electricity
- It will allow the building of a **diversity of search front-ends** and will furthermore enable establishing many other open web analysis services, both, public/free of charge or commercially driven



**During the first 5 years**, the Open Search Initiative focused on spreading and jointly sharpening the concepts, as well as on **building an interdisciplinary network of supporters**, addressing the many different technical, organizational, legal, ethical and societal aspects of cooperative and open web search

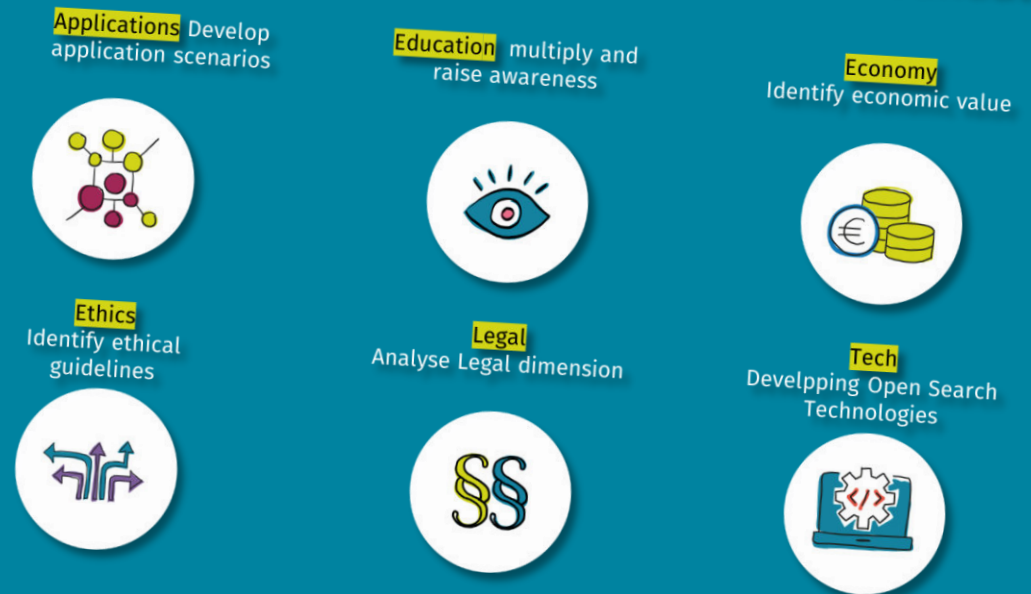
- First stakeholder workshop in 2017
- Establishing the Open Search Foundation as non-profit organization in 2018
- Growing the community over the past five years
- Currently 120+ individuals from 50+ organizations and 12+ countries
- Groups cooperating in different disciplines
- Many events being organized for fundraising, community building, awareness raising and scientific exchange.
- The initiative has gained an sound momentum already and the
- Central event is the yearly International Open Search Symposium



It is clear, that **web search is more than a technological challenge**. Many aspects play a role, such as legal, ethical, economic, and educational disciplines.

- In order to address this diversity, specialist working groups were established helping to structure the work
- Education, Ethics, Legal, Tech, Application and Economy
- Important: **even stronger cooperation, exchange and communication** among the working groups

### The Working Groups of the Open Search Foundation





A key activity is **raising awareness** for the open search idea with organizations, public bodies, politics as well as the general public

- Need to move from **'understanding the problem'** to **'taking action'**!
- **European Commission** started supporting research on open search
- **Dialogue** with members of the European and German parliament, it gained support by several federal and 'Länder' Ministries in Germany and liaised with many NGOs, start-ups, universities, foundations etc.
- Many **'internal' open search related projects** and activities, to strengthen and coordinate their contribution (e.g. DLR, LRZ, CERN, universities).
- **'External' project support and funds** from public donors and foundations, e.g. European Commission, Stiftung Mercator, BMW-Foundation and NLNet. These range from a few ten- thousand Euros for individual projects to several million Euro of research funds e.g. for the OpenWebSearch.EU EC Horizon Europe project => We'll need much more of this!



# Where do we stand with the Open Search Initiative?

- Reflecting the developments and the achievements: the Open Search Initiative can be considered as **having left its initial phase**.
- A **substantial group of relevant organizations**, science centers, universities, computing centers and concerned individuals are engaging and is cooperating.
- **Awareness and concern** about single platforms controlling access to information on the Internet **is significantly raising**.
- Through the work of different specialist groups within the initiative, **key aspects and development tasks** for the envisaged open web search ecosystem could already be identified and **are being further advanced**.





**Next important steps:** With the basic technical, organizational and societal dimensions of an open search ecosystem being identified, it will be important during this next phase of the initiative to connect these different dimensions through:

- Intensifying the dialogue and cooperation between the involved disciplines
- Implementing and operating a first substantial and lasting prototype, to demonstrate the full potential of open web search
- Elaborating sound and concrete principles, rules of engagement and interfaces for operating the open search ecosystem, technically and organizationally and



In parallel to this, it will be important to **bring open web search on the political agenda** at European level as well as in Member States, to ensure concrete commitments in terms of funding and legislative support.

- Beyond this, it will be important in the coming phase to **develop the financing and operating models**, as well as the governance framework for an open and cooperative web search infrastructure in Europe.
- It will be important to **develop the technical, organizational, societal, financial and legislative aspects of this open search ecosystem in parallel**. By doing so, it will be possible to implement and scale the open search idea at the necessary pace and to bring it to routine operation across Europe and for different language spaces and top-level domains
- All this can only be achieved if a **cooperative and team-play approach** can be maintained.
- **Together, for a better net.**

