In defense of an innovation-friendly environment for Text and Data Mining in Europe

OpenForum Europe has been an observer to the 'Licenses for Europe' stakeholder dialogue, active in the 4th Working Group on Text and Data Mining. After close to a year and as this process is coming to an end, we take a look back and share our observations and thoughts looking ahead.

It is our belief that the discussions that took place in this Working Group would have benefited from a more open and inclusive framing from the start of the exercise, with objectives clearly set out. It is obvious that this has had an impact on the environment in which the debate took place, as well as its outcomes. The focus on short-term, practical solutions, while understandable, has had the unfortunate consequence of excluding important parts of the discussion and over- emphasizing licensing as the only or main solution to address current challenges. We also regret that the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation was not formally involved in the activities of the Working Group from the start, although they were subsequently included in some of the discussions.

The social and economic potential of text and data mining is huge. Europe needs to embrace it and unburden itself from outdated, restrictive limitations on research and analytics that benefit citizens and businesses alike. We hope and trust that this view will be considered by the European Institutions in upcoming debates on a possible reform of the European copyright regime. The results of the Working Group on Text and Data Mining clearly show that solutions involving further licensing do not appropriately address the current challenges we face and that more thought has to be put into how to improve access to information and content.

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