

An innovation is generally defined as something that has never existed before. In the field of technology development, for example, this could be a new type of programming language. However, the Prototype Fund defines the term innovation more broadly, as it is not only about discovering something new, but also about **using something that already exists in new contexts or making it accessible to a new target group.**

With regard to open source software in particular, it makes a lot of sense to use existing code, libraries or interfaces, apply them to new areas of application and make them more accessible – and in doing so, drive innovation. In terms of Prototype Fund funding, this means that an idea is not only considered innovative if a new type of technology is to be piloted, but also if a new module is developed for existing software or a tech stack is applied in a new area.

Innovation drivers have often been companies or research institutions. However, especially civil society can also develop a high innovation potential if provided with the appropriate support and access to the necessary resources. Innovation from society also works in their interest. Users are experts and do not find solutions as an end in themselves, but know the problems and challenges they want to tackle with the help of technology from the everyday reality of their own lives.

At the Prototype Fund, we therefore do not promote innovation as an end in itself either. We are convinced that innovation should always be **in the interests of users and the general public.**

To achieve this, it must be measured against certain criteria:

- » **Data minimization:** Users disclose as little data as possible when they use the tool or infrastructure.
- » **Ease of use:** The software is developed with a focus on the users and with their participation.
- » **Adaptability:** Because one single software can never be used for all purposes, it must be adaptable for different contexts.
- » **Open source:** Open source software is more secure for users because “back doors” can be found in the code. It saves resources because existing software can continue to be used and developed instead of having to start from scratch.