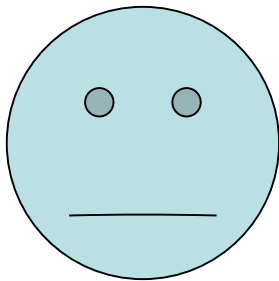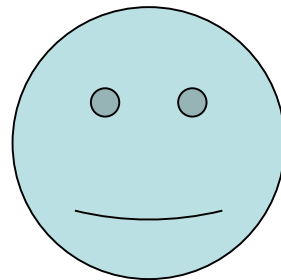# License advice and approval for opening software

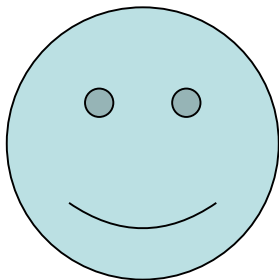GFZ Research Software Meet-up

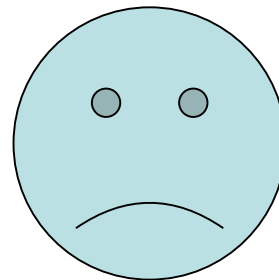14. September 2022

Christian Meeßen

Work on fantastic software for months
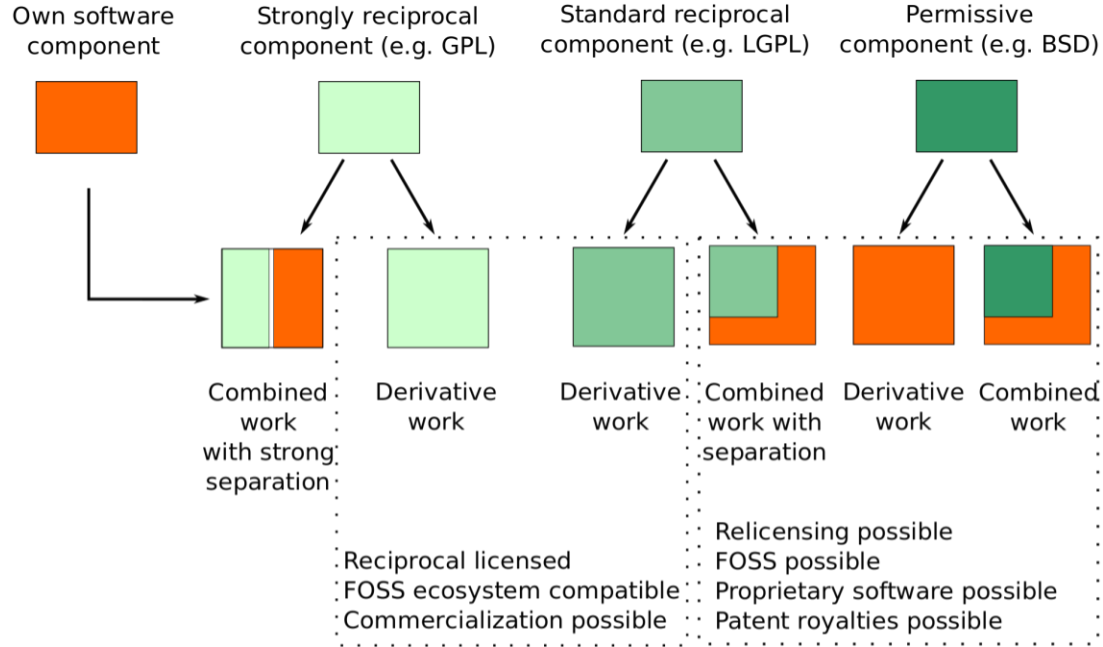
The results are perfect
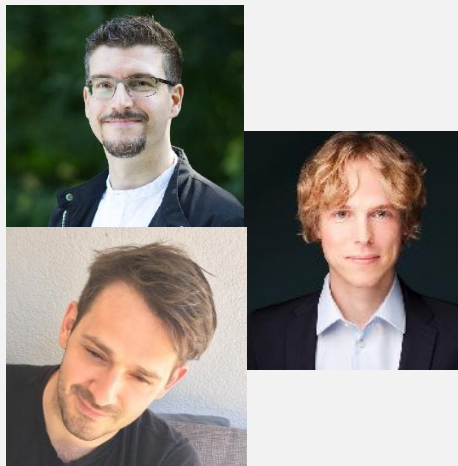
We are going to publish it

Incompatible licenses

What's the issue?

To get an overview about combined works and license compatibility, have a look at Wikipedia.

We are here to help you

eScience/HIFIS

Legal

Transfer & Innovation

We are here to help you

License compatibility
consultation

Proprietary licenses
for sales

Repository
structure, code quality

Legal documents for
external developers
(CLA, DCO)

When do you need to counsel us?

You just started developing new software   No

You want to involve external developers   Yes
e.g. PhD students with their office at GFZ but employed at a University

Publication or distribution of software   **Yes**

Software for GFZ internal usage   No
                                                                             but recommended

Get more information on the intranet.

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POTSDAM

These rules apply if you have a **contract with GFZ**.
If you are employed elsewhere, other rules may apply to you. Nonetheless, you can still contact us in these cases.

HELMHOLTZ

How to contact us

License consultation

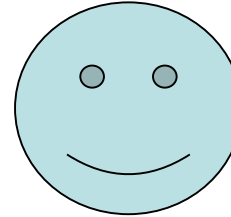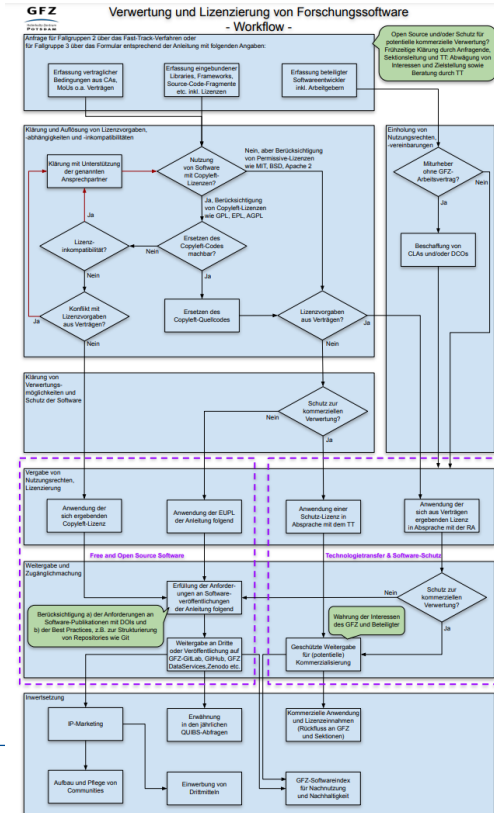### Contributor license agreements, Code quality, general advice or any other questions you have

software-legal@gfz-potsdam.de

https://forms.gfz-potsdam.de/en/other/software-distribution

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The process

If you want to know the details, please have a look here.

The process in a nutshell

I am going to distribute
my awesome code

Webform

Law department

eScience Center

Technology
transfer
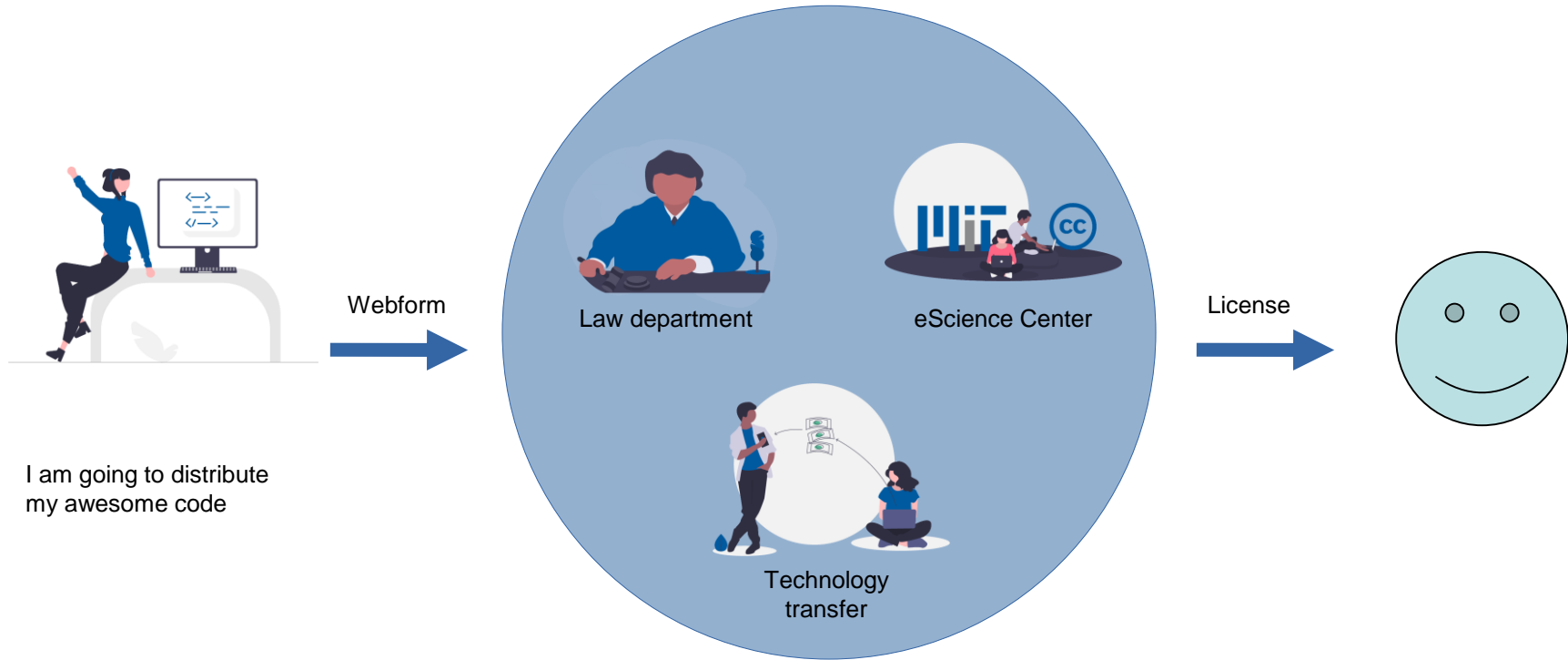
License

software-legal@gfz-potsdam.de

When you need to apply the license
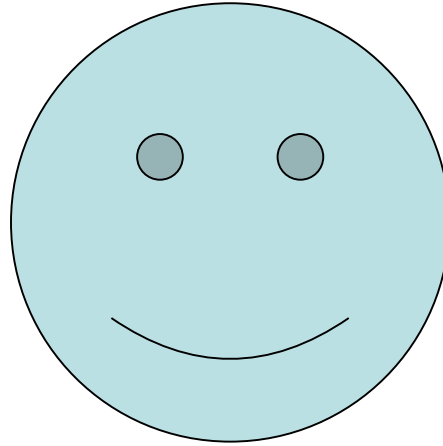
[visible confusion]

Applying your license

There are many ways to apply licenses to your code.

We suggest REUSE, because it is established by the FSF (Free Software Foundation) and provides a machine-readable solution.

Put all license texts inside the /LICENSES folder

📄 CC-BY-4.0.txt

📄 CC0-1.0.txt

📄 GPL-3.0-or-later.txt

Add per file license headers with copyright statements

```
# SPDX-FileCopyrightText: 2016, 2018-2019 Jane Doe <jane@example.com>
# SPDX-FileCopyrightText: 2019 Example Company
#
# SPDX-License-Identifier: GPL-3.0-or-later
```

Use the REUSE linter to check compatibility (inside SQA, see next slide)

```
~/Projects/reuse-tool $ reuse lint
[...]

Congratulations! Your project is compliant with version 3.0 of the REUSE Specification :-)
```

https://reuse.software/

Software Quality Assurance (SQA)

- Check your repository for
  - Dependencies incl. their licenses (currently JS, Python)
  - REUSE Compatibility
  - Accidentally committed credentials (gitleaks)
- Auto-apply license and copyright info (using reuse-tool)
- Run locally or in a CI/CD Pipeline

GitLab Repository Documentation

The repo is currently not actively maintained, but we are happy to accept contributions :)

Resources

- Our intranet page with all resources
  - http://intranet.gfz-potsdam.de/en/topics/policies-and-forms/internal-regulations/general/dissemination-and-publication-of-software/

- License compatibility
  - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/License_compatibility

- Webform to submit your licensing requests
  - https://forms.gfz-potsdam.de/en/other/software-distribution

- Software Quality Assurance tool
  - https://git.gfz-potsdam.de/id2/software/services/fair/software-quality-assurance

- REUSE Specification
  - https://reuse.software/

- Contact us
  - software-legal@gfz-potsdam.de