Mobilizon v3 : Find events and groups throughout the fediverse!

Mobilizon is the alternative we have been developing since 2019 so that everyone can emancipate their events and groups from Facebook. Except, unlike Facebook, Mobilizon is not a single platform. It is a software that specialists can install on a server to create multiple events and groups platforms (called « instances »), which can be linked together within a federation.

We do host Mobilizon.fr, but it is restricted to French speaking users (otherwise we wouldn’t be able to moderate). But we’ve got you covered : we propose a selection of other Mobilizon hosters on Mobilizon.org.

« Collectivise Internet / Convivialise Internet » Our new 3-year roadmap is funded by your donations. You will find a short presentation of this roadmap on our Support Framasoft website.

➡️ Read all blogposts of this campaign (oct. – déc. 2022, mostly in French)

It has been just under a year since we published the second version (« v2 ») of Mobilizon. That release brings us updates (time zones adjustment, improvements on language display, etc.), new features (possibility to follow the public activities of a group without having to join, exporting the attendants list of my event, possibility to search among past events, etc.) and some small tweaks (emails design, cards presenting events or groups appearance, etc.).
As we announced at the time, we wanted to develop in 2022 features that would improve content discovery (events, groups, their public pages, public articles of these groups). This is the path we have followed (well, when we say « we », we mean mainly ONE paid developer who devotes a part of his time to the project).

Let’s look around and see what this new version brings us!

Mobilizon Search Index, a global search engine to explore events and groups

As we know it was not always easy to find events or groups on Mobilizon, we worked for most of the year on creating Mobilizon Search Index, a new gateway to Mobilizon.

What can Mobilizon Search Index do for you

This tool allows you to search and explore Mobilizon by different ways:
- if you are looking for a specific event or group, use the search bar
- if you want to discover events by subject, browse through categories cards
- if you want to find events nearby, geolocate yourself
- if you want to discover popular groups, there is a category for that!
- if you want to attend online events, we also highlight them

Mobilizon Search Index Homepage

Mobilizon Search Index has been designed to inform you while respecting your attention:

- The results will be the same for everyone, based only on your search (and your browser’s language), and absolutely not pre-sorted according to a profile (because there is no profiling, here!).
- The results are presented in a clear and detailed way, to avoid the attention war leading to clickbait thumbnails and all caps over-the-top titles.
- Search filters give you the power to sort the results out and display those you really want.
- If you want to see in detail the content of an event or a group, Mobilizon Search Index will redirect you directly to the instance where it is hosted (since we have no interest in locking you into the search engine’s website). This is a way to help anyone experience and understand the notion of federation.

Let’s have a look at the new features of this search results page. First of all, you can choose the results display mode (list or map) by clicking on the top-right button.

results display in map mode

Then you can filter the results according to several criteria. Look at the left-hand column to see which filters are already active and change them if needed:

- type of content (events, groups or both)
- online events
- event date
- distance
- categories
- event status (confirmed, tentative or cancelled)
- language

You can also sort the results by using the top right button (only in the « List » mode display). If your results are events and groups, this feature does not apply, you must first filter by content type.

If your results are events, you can sort by 6 different criteria:

- best match (only relevant when using the search bar)
- event date (from earliest to latest)
- most recently published
- least recently published
- with the most participants

If your results are groups, you can sort by 2 different criteria:

- best match (only relevant when using the search bar)
- number of members (from largest to smallest)

Our gateway to explore Mobilizon contents

We know that by offering a single gateway to the Mobilizon federation, the structure that holds the keys to that gate gets great powers. They get the power to decide what will be accepted (or rejected) in the search directory. They get the power to record who searched for what, when, from where. And they get the power to intervene in the order and display of the results.

It is on such power mechanisms that Facebook has built its monopoly. Obviously, at Framasoft, we do not seek to be in a position of power... and even less to follow Meta’s (bad) example! Nevertheless, we want to show the emancipating potential of this software which allows to reclaim the means to gather.

As we already did with Sepia Search (our search engine to explore contents upload on PeerTube), we take the responsibility of opening Mobilizon Search Index, our gateway to Mobilizon.
An a posteriori moderated search engine

Not all Mobilizon instances will be referenced on Mobilizon Search Index. This search engine will be based on the list of instances we maintain at https://instances.joinmobilizon.org. To date, this list consists of 83 instances, but we hope that more and more organizations will use Mobilizon.

This list is aligned with the policy for all of the services we offer:

- compliance with French law
- compliance with our Terms and Conditions of Use
- respect of our moderation policy (FR only, for now)

Thus, if we are notified of an instance where contents explicitly condone terrorism or promote historical revisionism, we will remove it from the index (non-compliance with French laws, which we insist on in our TOS). Such removal will eliminate all events and groups hosted by that instance from the search results.

On the other hand, if one or more people come to abuse the time of our moderators with inappropriate and abusive reports, their words will be
discredited and ignored (as indicated in our moderation policy (FR)).

However, we hope not to have to moderate this list too much in order to offer everyone the opportunity to discover the multitude of events and groups created on Mobilizon.

A public indexing tool, reproducible and adaptable to your conditions

The source code, the « recipe » of Mobilizon Search Index, is transparent. We publish it on our software forge and we provides an API that other software (including Mobilizon instances) can use.

So anyone is free to set and host their own instance list, indexing engine and search site, by copying and adapting what we have created. It is up to you to take the power (and responsibilities) by hosting your own Mobilizon search engine, set up and moderated according to your culture, your indexing policy and your
values!

A V3 to improve content discovery

A new design for the homepage and the search results page

This is the main new feature of this V3, as it was obvious to us that we would implement all the work done on Mobilizon Search Index in Mobilizon software. This V3 offers you new homepage and the search results page design.
Homepage of our French-speaking instance, Mobilizon.fr

On this new homepage, in addition to a total makeover of the graphic interface (do you like it?), we have changed the order in which the different contents are displayed:

- the search bar is now more visible and you can precise a localization
- you have 3 categories cards displayed (we highlight those with the most events)
- 2 sections highlight events nearby and popular groups nearby your location (if you use the Geolocate me button or if you precise in your account’s preferences a city or region)
- a new section is dedicated to upcoming online events
- a section for the last published events on your instance and its federation

Our goal is to increase your chances of discovering events and groups that you never knew existed, to make the diversity of content published on Mobilizon more visible.

When you use the homepage search bar, Mobilizon displays a new search results page using Mobilizon Search Index design on which you can find all the features detailed above (map/list vue, filter system, sorting system). You even have one more criteria in the left-hand column: you can choose results in your instance’s network or on the Fediverse.

If you are a Mobilizon instance’s administrator, you can choose and set up which search engine you want to use by default.

Also, the section « These events may interest you », placed at the bottom of events, uses new criteria (categories, event language and distance if the event has a physical address) in addition to tags to recommend you more relevant events.
Necessary substantive changes

During this year, we have modified many elements of Mobilizon in order not to build up technical debt (switch to VueJS 3, migration of the CSS framework from Bulma to Tailwind, etc.). Those changes are not visible when using Mobilizon but are necessary. They already give you the possibility of using a dark theme and they will make it easier for us to offer you more features (e.g. a theme system) in the future.

And we now offer administrators the possibility to use metrics tools (Matomo and Plausible) on their Mobilizon instance that allow them to have additional data (e.g. number of views on a page or number of views of an event) in addition to the stats provided by the software itself.

Mobilizon is still financed thanks to your donations

This v3 of Mobilizon has been partly financed on our 2022 budget, so directly thanks to the donations of the people who support Framasoft, and partly by the
NLnet Foundation.

We don’t yet know exactly what we’re going to do on Mobilizon in 2023, but we know you’d love us to develop a feature for events import, ability for event organizers to privately contact attendees, and ability to fill in arbitrary contact information for event location.

Our new campaign Collectivize Internet / Convivialize Internet (in French) is going to require a lot of our energy, but be sure that we will hear your feedback to take them into account. So if you can (at the period we are aware that it is particularly complicated), and if you want to, please support the actions of our association.

At the time of publishing, we are still missing 178 200 € to finance our yearly budget and make everything we want to do in 2023 happen.

If you can (especially in these hard times) and if you want to, thanks for supporting our non-profit and our actions.

Soutenir Framasoft

Helpful links

- Mobilizon official website
- Our French speaking instance Mobilizon.fr
- Discover the federation on Mobilizon.org
- See the source code of Mobilizon
- See the source code of Mobilizon Search Index
- Support Framasoft