Press release

Kiwix turns 10.

The Swiss software that allows people to check Wikipedia without the need for internet access now has more than a million users in 160 countries, from the Swiss Alps to the North Korean underground !

Kiwix, the offline Wikipedia reader, broke the million users mark in more than 160 countries. Created 10 years ago, the Swiss piece of software allows everyone to get access to the free knowledge whether they are based in Swiss rural or mountain regions, Sub-Saharan Africa or North Korea.

Lausanne, 10 October 2016 – Exactly 10 years ago, Emmanuel Engelhart and Renaud Gaudin created Kiwix. Two computer programmers based in Zurich and Bamako, they wanted to make Wikipedia accessible to those who needed it the most and could afford it the least. Back in 2006, Kiwix was a simple solution to the lack of internet access. This might not be such an issue in Switzerland –unless you're stuck on a mountainside or at the bottom of a small valley – but 10 years later it still is a problem for 4 billion human beings whose access to internet might be slow or even censored like in China or the Middle East.

A million users with the same problem
After 10 years Kiwix has improved so much that it is now possible to hold all of Wikipedia, thousands of books and educational videos on a single USB drive. Kiwix was created to answer a specific need, and that problem is still there : in many places local infrastructures haven't been able to keep up with the internet's exponential growth ; others must deal with increased censorship. In Cuba, Kiwix is now distributed by small entrepreneurs who want to take on the island's monopoly company; the Orange Foundation uses it in schools across West and Southern Africa ; and it is now even being smuggled into North Korea by dissidents who want to share what the outside world is like. Kiwix already counts more than a million users, and was adopted last year by Libraries without Border to be rolled out in refugee camps and reach an additional 3 million people.

Going mobile
Managed from offices in Lausanne and Zurich and supported by Wikimedia CH, the project has grown quite a bit, so much so that it recently released a series of dedicated mobile apps : medical content tailor-made for field practitioners that allows them access to basic information no matter where they are. Says Engelhart « mobile phones nowadays are almost as powerful as desktop computers – and a lot easier to use. At the end of the day, what matters is that people can reach the information they need. »

Media contact
Stéphane Coillet-Matillon : +41 79 215 8510 or stephane@kiwix.org
For more information, please visit kiwix.org

About Wikimedia CH
Wikimedia CH is recognised by the Wikimedia Foundation as a local association with the aim of supporting projects for the creation of free content. The focus lies on the Wikimedia Foundation projects, especially Wikipedia, the free online encyclopaedia; Wikimedia Commons, the media collection for free images, videos and audio data; Wikidata, the free knowledge database; Wikibooks, the library with free learning and teaching materials; Wikinews, the free and neutral news portal; Wikiquote, the free collection of quotes and Wikisource, the free collection of source texts.

Wikimedia CH is recognised as a local association of the Wikimedia Foundation. Wikimedia CH does not, however, legally represent the Wikimedia Foundation in Switzerland. Moreover, Wikimedia CH has no influence on, or responsibility for, the contents of diverse Wikimedia projects which are run by the Wikimedia Foundation.