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Why the key only works in the global kilo.jsonc, and not in a project's file

Kilo Code

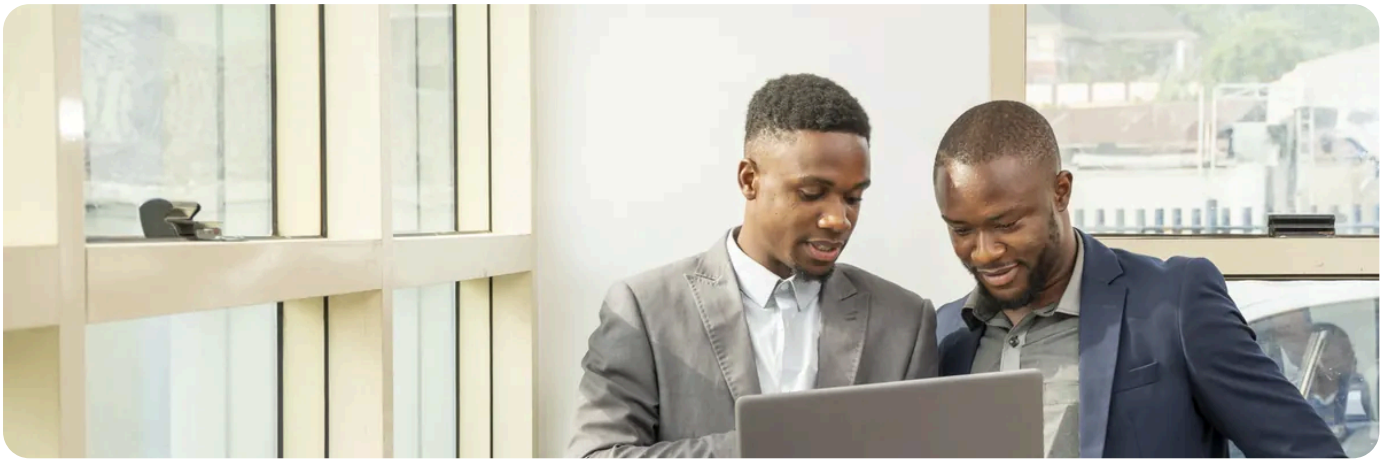
CODE	VERSION	COUNTRY · LANGUAGE
RLX-MZ-KB-3204	v2026.11.28	Mozambique · English

Interweb Mozambique
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https://www.meu.interweb.co.mz/knowledgebase/3204

Why the key only works in the global kilo.jsonc, and not in a project's file

Kilo Code Created on **November 28, 2026** 2 min read



A common case: you put the Interweb provider in the project's `kilo.jsonc`, with `"apiKey": "{env:INTERWEB_API_KEY}"`, and Kilo Code behaves as if there were no key. The setup is not wrong. Kilo Code does not read variables in project files, on purpose.

The rule

Kilo Code only replaces `{env:...}` in configuration it trusts: the global file (in `~/.config/kilo/`), a file given in the `KILO_CONFIG` or `KILO_CONFIG_CONTENT` variables, and configuration managed by your organisation. In a project's `kilo.jsonc` or `opencode.json`, the reference is ignored and Kilo Code writes a warning in its log.

The reason: a project file can come from any repository. This way, a repository you cloned cannot read your key.

What happens in practice

The provider has no key and the requests fail with `401`. Kilo Code may show "Invalid API Key".

The fix

1. Move the Interweb provider block (with `options` and `models`) to the global file: `~/.config/kilo/kilo.jsonc`, or `C:\Users\<your name>\.config\kilo\kilo.jsonc` on Windows.

2. In the project file, leave only what does not need the key, such as the model: `"model": "api/zai-org/glm-5.2"`. Project settings win over the global ones.

3. Check that the `INTERWEB_API_KEY` variable exists (`setx` on Windows, `export` on Linux and macOS) and open a new terminal.

4 Close Kilo Code and start it again.

The full provider block is in the article on **the global kilo.jsonc file**.

What about writing the key in the project file?

Do not do it. The Kilo Code documentation itself warns that these files must not hold keys (`provider.*.options.apiKey`), because they usually go into the repository, and tells you to use environment variables.

Kilo Code accepts `{file:...}` in a project file, but only for files inside the project folder, which is the one that goes to Git. So it is no good for the key either.

OpenCode is different: its project file reads variables and can go into the repository. See **sharing an OpenCode setup without sharing the key**.

RECOMMENDED

Want Kilo Code with your key kept safe? Visit the Coding with AI page.

See Coding with AI →

SEE ALSO

- **Kilo Code with All in One AI: the custom provider in VS Code and kilo.jsonc in the CLI**
- **Kilo Code on the command line: the global kilo.jsonc file**
- **An API key or token has leaked: what to do, in the right order**
- **Sharing an OpenCode setup in your repository without sharing the key**
- **Coding with AI in All in One AI**

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