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From "Paisios" to "Pastitsios" there's a blasphemy

A 27 year old was arrested by Greek police on charges of blasphemy, because on his Facebook page he satirized a monk, well known as Elder Paisios, paraphrasing his name to Elder Pastitsios, referring to the famous Greek food "pastitsio", macaroni pie with minced meat.

Are there limits to freedom of expression? Is there censorship in satire?

The answer depends on from which angle one sees things, but no one can close his eyes when constitutional rights are being blatantly violated. And in the case of the 27-year-old from Psahna Evia, his inspiration was considered offensive, after seeing the police entering his home, make seizure of his computer and waiver of confidentiality, to open his account on Facebook, even for alleged blasphemy and insults religion.

This fact was discussed by the Pirate Party of Greece on a press release entitled "Practicing in censorship", in which they say it was unnecessary lifting of secrecy:

"Although the adoption of ACTA wrecked in the European Parliament, resident judges and prosecutors do not know.

This offense is a misdemeanor and not a felony, and in no way justifies downgrade based on the law N.2225/1994 (as amended and in force), in conjunction with Article 19 of the Constitution for

"particularly serious crimes" with effect of violating the privacy rights of young users.

We believe in respecting individual liberty, freedom of expression, privacy and confidentiality of communications and that the "lawful" actions of the authorities to refer the young user was arbitrary and unlawful."

The case originated from a question asked in Parliament by an MP of the far-right nationalist party Golden Dawn, previously known for its views on immigrants, people with disabilities and homosexuals, calling for the intervention of the Minister of Justice.

The mobilization of digital community was immediate. Many groups in support of the 27-year-old were created, while the tag #FreeGeronPastitsio became an international topic and reached up to 2nd place in world tweet trend, filling the internet with photos of macaroni pie.

However, lawyers say that since the young man didn't challenge the symbols of orthodoxy, but a simple man who died in 1994, there is no case that he insulted religion.

Written by Stathis Leivaditis published at September 26, 2012

Inside the Clean-IT conflict

CleanIT is a project by several European governments and private stakeholders. The project officially aims to reduce the use (or abuse) of the internet by terrorists. The list of the CleanIT goals reads, on the surface, like it is motivated by the wish to protect children or otherwise easily influenced persons from exposure to terrorist content. This protection is motivated through a fear that these people might become radicalised or otherwise harmed by seeing it.

After a recent leak made public by European Digital Rights (EDRI), a Non-Governmental-Organization (NGO), CleanIT has made rounds through the blogosphere. The document has incited outrage because it contains paragraphs about enforcing real names on websites as well as plans for a filtering system against "terrorist content", without properly defining the term "terrorist".

The Pirate Times talked with Pascal Gloor, Vice-President of the Pirate Party of Switzerland. While at first, in his function as a Pirate member, Mr. Gloor was not allowed to join, he was later able to take part in the project's working groups by virtue of being the President for the SwiNOG Federation, an association representing small Swiss internet service providers (ISPs).

Mr. Gloor is generally in favour of the project's aims, because law enforcement officials made a good case for the radicalisation and recruitment of young people over the internet actually being a problem. He told us that there were cases where extremists used perfidious methods to induce hate in young people for other groups of people (or the existing democratic system) through, at first seemingly harmless online contacts. Of course, he does not agree on any measures to solve this problem unconditionally..

This is a point where opposition to the project begins. EDRi spokesperson Joe McNamee, whom we also asked to comment on the issue, is not convinced that there is a problem at all. He demands that CleanIT defines it more clearly. He considers the whole project a carelessly and rashly taken action with little substance following the motto "someone should do something, because terrorism isn't nice".

When asked about his rationale for joining in on a project many Pirates and digital activists categorically reject, Mr. Gloor told us:

"When you're taking part in the discussion you can change a lot more in your favour than by merely rejecting it all together. Pirates should seize such opportunities of participation beyond parliamentary work."

Mr. Gloor explained that the heavily criticized paragraph about enforcing real names on the internet has been eradicated from the draft document, after he argued against it at the last CleanIT meeting a few weeks ago in Utrecht, Netherlands. Another example of what he tries to do from inside the working groups of CleanIT is giving input on the paragraph about

"Semi-Auto-Detection" of critical content. He says that this part of the text is also undergoing strong revision in the current discussions. Arguments about the mere technical infeasibility of the amount of data processing this approach would cause have been raised. Another point about it is that it might be made impossible anyway by legal constraints for any measures that would go beyond simply googling for publicly available data.

Mr. Gloor was able to support some measures in good faith without changing much of their core ideas. One such measure is education and awareness at schools to make children less susceptible to hateful ideologies and the ways in which they are propagated. Another such point was the establishment of a help and info hotline for parents who are clueless about their children's internet usage.

Mr. Gloor also said that he tries to advocate for more transparency within the group, on principle as well as for their own benefit, as he thinks most of the media coverage which followed the leak to be ill-informed. Whether a push for more transparency can be successful is unclear, as lobbyists and working-level officials participating in such projects "are not used to this kind of new political culture", as Mr. Gloor notes.

One example of non-transparency influencing coverage is that despite many news outlets reporting that CleanIT was an "EU project", the European Commission's funding of the project is restricted to paying travel costs to the meetings for the participants. Of course the Directorate General, which is paying out those funds is under the control of Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, who has a track record of political ideas that did not sit well with advocates of civil rights. Mr. McNamee therefore had previous negative experience on his side when he told us that he sees CleanIT as a deliberate attempt by the European Commission to push its own agenda onto private businesses. He considers this to be the reason behind the funding for this particular project. He also pointed out to us that because of this the Commission is most likely in conflict with Article 17 of the 2003 Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Lawmaking, where they agreed upon consistency of co-regulation and self-regulation proceedings with Community law

as well as transparency rules for these proceedings.

Nonetheless, the actors "on the ground" are the governments and agencies listed on the project's website, who also mustered up the political will to start the project and likely would have paid for travel costs themselves, had the Commission not come along. After all, all member states involved in the founding of CleanIT, with the exception of Belgium, are currently governed by conservative parties who have floated comparable ideas before, all by themselves. Additionally, there is a long list of undisclosed private participants of NGOs, business associations and large internet companies.

The core, and probably most controversial part, of CleanIT is what the leaked document calls "End-User Controlled Filters". Contrary to what the name suggests, end-user controlled does not necessarily mean in the end-user's hand. "It really is about parental controls", Mr. Gloor stated. Parents are supposed to be able to activate filters that are harder to circumvent than locally installed nanny software. On a very general level, even EDRI's Joe McNamee doesn't disagree: "If parents want to implement user-level filters, they should have the freedom to do so."

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However, CleanIT does not exclude the option that these filters might be applied at infrastructure-level, meaning through the ISPs. For many this goes beyond the end-user, and is extremely problematic from a civil rights perspective, as it is creating an infrastructure that might be abused for censorship. Also, according to Mr. McNamee, "[n]etwork level filtering is less efficient, less configurable and less predictable than end-user filters".

Mr. Gloor on the other hand could tolerate an implementation at infrastructure level, but only

should it be done on a strictly opt-in basis. This means optional for the ISPs to implement, as well as optional for consumers to use it (should they have chosen an ISP who offers it). "This is the only version I would be willing to tolerate" he told us, backed by concerns of both aspects of his double role - a Pirate, who doesn't want anyone to be subject to censorship or forced to use censorship-enabled infrastructure, and as the president of his business association, who wouldn't want to put the burden of an obligatory implementation on small ISPs.

"All in all", Mr. Gloor told us, "the project is strictly constrained by the current legal situation in each participating country, data protection laws included." He also gave an explanation for the much criticized non-legislative approach. The project's governments lack the political will to actually commit to any of the ideas far enough that they could move beyond what is covered by the current legal framework.

Because of this criticism gets directed at the nature of the current process itself. Public interest in this issue has grown to such high levels, that a quiet deal between ministries and industry associations, even one that merely explores the boundaries of current laws without changing them, might not be a feasible option any more. Mr. McNamee questioned how the project group got the legitimacy and technical competency to decide on any of these matters, outside of an orderly democratic process. He commented that the project is "apparently based on an inexplicable belief that industry's interests both today and forever into the future will perfectly match those of society, without any need for democratic oversight."

While this deeper look into the project shows that there is more to CleanIT than previous media coverage has taken note of, and some of it possibly not quite as bad as expected from the leak, this will certainly not appease digital rights advocates. Still, some red lines, which civil society and also international Pirate observers refuse to cross, might be seen to be in danger. One such line is the categorical opposition to even building an infrastructure fit for abuse as a censorship-device.

Child protection and civil rights, free speech in particular, have long been at odds. In discussions involving the topic of shielding children from harmful content, many participants state that it should be the parent's responsibility, not the government's or the service provider's. Should the final version of CleanIT not go beyond giving parents an optional tool to help them enforce restrictions on their own child's internet consumption, it might actually be a compromise worth discussing. Approaches like running the filter via modified home routers, which concerned parents can optionally request when they sign their telecommunications contract, might help. This would provide a more secure child protection than pure software, while it leaves consumers full control over their internet access, as they can always use a regular router instead. This would possibly keep the infrastructure beyond the WAN-port of those routers untainted in the eyes of digital rights and network neutrality advocates.

Another remaining controversial point is the practice of deciding regulations with high relevance for everyone in this manner, meaning as a closed-door deal between government officials and industry associations. Calls for increased democratic control will surely continue. Transparency is one way, and a crucial one, to improve relations with the public. Instead of relying on selectively publishing or leaking draft documents, whether or not any ideas or planned provisions touch on civil rights could be subject to true public scrutiny.

This would begin with laying open any data on the problem CleanIT officially aims to tackle and continue with a more open meeting practice. It may be against the nature of working-level projects like CleanIT to provide transparency, but should they not warm up to the idea in this case, they will likely have to deal with public attention such working groups rarely get. Civil liberties are a sensitive issue, which might even prompt political factions beyond the Pirates to oppose something that includes even a hint of restrictions on them, as it is already happening with the European Greens.

There have been faint attempts at increasing legitimisation otherwise, for example by now listing Mr. Gloor as a Pirate, instead of the SwiNOG President, on the CleanIT web-page. Those

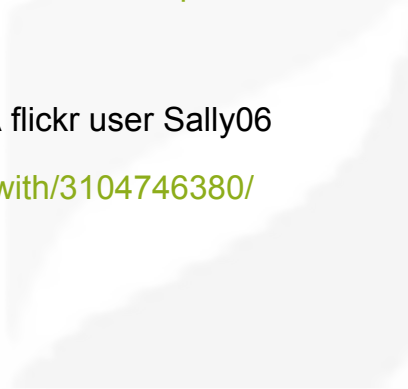
attempts do fall short as the digital rights movement and the Pirates tend to answer questions of legitimacy in a much more basic democratic way and will demand direct insight into the processes. To expect that a conference, open only to invited stakeholders, however wisely selected across civil society they may be, will be seen as legitimate shows a grave misunderstanding of the principles and demands that the project's greatest critics have.

The next CleanIT meeting is scheduled for November in Vienna, Austria.

Header photo: CC-BY flickr user karindalziel <http://www.flickr.com/photos/nirak/>

Photo of Protesters: CC BY-NC-SA flickr user Sally06

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ocarr/with/3104746380/>



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Written by Paul Wardenga published at September 25, 2012

The Pirate Movement on Facebook and Twitter “ September 2012

The pirate movement has grown with 7 138 followers on Facebook and 5 315 followers on Twitter. The aggregated amount of new followers is 12 453 during the last month. To see the statistics from last month you can look [here](#), these figures are from September 18th (1 month and 3 days after the last report). Last month there was an error in the calculation of Facebook fans for Latvia (3587) the correct amount should be 450 fans. This is why you can see a significant drop for Latvia in this months' statistics and the number calculations are a bit odd.

This report about Facebook and Twitter followers is a recurring statistical analysis which will become more interesting once I have more history to compare with. This month I added the population of countries and the followers per inhabitant written in scientific notation (e.g.

$5.15E-03 = 0.00515$ followers / inhabitant in the country). For now you will have to do with the following screenshots of the data. But in the future I aim to make the raw data available to whoever would like to dig deeper into it.

Facebook

The most significant change can be seen in the 1 425 new followers that Netherlands managed to gather. This coincided with their election and campaigning. As we wrote earlier **they did not get a seat but the future is looking bright**. The top countries seem to be steadily adding followers, apart from Sweden who might have spammed away some of their followers by sending out up to six updates in a single day (mostly three to four updates per day), another reason for the drop might have been the **controversial blog post** that Rick Falkvinge had on his blog.

The Czech Republic have regional elections coming up for October 12-13 and we will hopefully see a significant jump in their followers in the next month. Considering their per capita followers they seem to be doing very good. In Israel a new pirate party started and seems to be gaining a good amount of new followers as well. Looking at followers per capita we see that Sweden is still first by far despite being one of few countries losing followers this month. They are followed by the Czech Republic and Luxembourg. The significant drop of followers by Latvia, as mentioned above, is not a real drop but a correction according the completely wrong amount of followers reported for last month. The other significant loss is by Poland who seems to have got their fan page deleted.

Twitter

Germany keeps amassing followers and is far ahead of any other country. They also have a second place as counted per capita. The leader, when counted per capita followers, is Luxembourg who has a small population of 511 800 citizens according to Wikipedia. In third

place we see Catalunya. The only major difference from last month is the Netherlands who gained 1 186 new followers because of their national election.

*Why only Facebook and Twitter and not Google+, vk.com or others? - Mostly because it's hard to know what other social networks to include. Only doing Facebook and Twitter takes a lot of time as well, even though there are scripts to update followers. The same reasoning goes for federated services such as status.net as well since it's hard to gather useful statistics for them. And on top of that Google announces that they will end this service in November 2013.

<http://support.google.com/websearch/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=2664197>

*Can I have access to the .csv file you used for these stats? - Right now only if you have a very good reason and a set purpose with them. I am working on updating contact information for different pirate parties. The plan is to make everything accessible in a good format with continuous updates. Giving out the information freely at this stage would only cause several versions of the document being around where some were badly updated.

Featured image is CC BY Anton Nordenfur.

Written by Josef Ohlsson Collentine published at September 25, 2012

Alex Arnold Becomes the First Elected Pirate Mayor!

The Swiss Pirate Party had a major victory Sunday, as 31-year-old Alex Arnold was elected mayor of **Eichberg**, a municipality in North Eastern Switzerland. He is not **the first Pirate Mayor**, but the first pirate to be selected by an electoral process. The city of Eichberg, where Alex Arnold was elected, has a population of 1,481 persons.

The region's local Pirate Party is less than a year old, yet Arnold managed to win the election with 60% of the votes, **349 votes to 145**. In office, he has vowed to focus on a policy of transparency. **Much like many pirates**, he chooses to place himself neither left nor right on the political spectrum.

Thomas Bruderer, president of the Swiss Pirate Party, said of the victory:

These results are an important milestone for our young party. Winning a majority vote shows that our members are not part of a fringe phenomenon but are rooted in the midst of society. This is not the first victory from the Swiss Pirates - in 2010, they **won their first seat** in the city of Winterthur, the sixth largest city of Switzerland. In the general elections of 2011, the pirates won 0.48 % of the votes, not enough to enter parliament but a good result for a young party.

Featured image is CC BY-SA Schofför.

Written by Anton Nordenfur published at September 24, 2012

Interview with Dirk Poot, first candidate of the Dutch Pirate Party

Dirk Poot was the first candidate of the Dutch Pirate Party for the past parliamentary elections on 12 September 2012. He is the press spokesperson and a member of the Board of PPNL.

Even though the Pirates did not make it into the parliament the results improved significantly from the elections in 2010. Overall they tripled their number of voters from 10,471 in the last election (2010) to about 30,000 votes this election. Many regions saw a significant increase of voters and the best results were 0.7% in Delft and 0.6% in Eindhoven, Groningen and Zandvoort. The future success of the Pirates seems inevitable. Only in the past six months their membership has grown from 372 to 1192 members.

Pirate Times: Hello Dirk, I met you the first time at a benefit event for the Maastricht Pirate Party where you spoke about copyright and medical patents:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqQWWuol8Yc>

This event was held about ten days before the parliamentary elections in the Netherlands and it had the purpose of informing citizens about the Pirate Party and its programme. Tell us a bit about yourself - your age, your profession, your role in the PPNL and other facts you want to share.

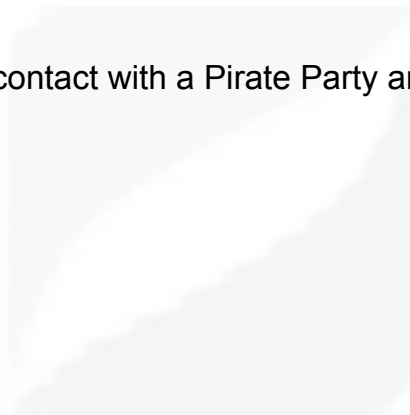
Dirk Poot: I am 44 years old, currently I am living close to Breda in the south of the Netherlands. I am self-employed, working as a programmer. Mainly applications in the medical field, but in the recent year I have been shifting my focus to educational apps.

I have been active in the Pirate Party since late 2009; in the 2010 elections I was #4 on the list and ever since that I have been active in the press team and the blogging team. In 2011 I was elected to the board and since December 2011 I have been functioning as the press spokesperson for the board.

Pirate Times: Were you involved in other political or non-governmental organizations, groups or teams before joining the PPNL?

Dirk Poot: When I was much younger I have been a member of the JOVD (Jongerenorganisatie Vrijheid en Democratie), which was the liberal youth organization of the, then liberal, VVD (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie: the main Dutch conservative party). Since 2005 I have been blogging actively, and when I read back on that blog, my focus has been very much on democracy, privacy and medical issues. But the PPNL was my first real political activity.

Pirate Times: When was your first contact with a Pirate Party and how?

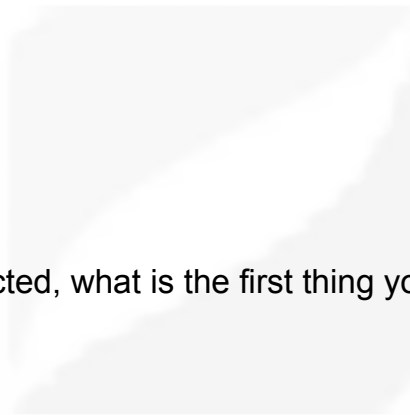


Dirk Poot: It was at the end of 2009 through IRC, when I stumbled upon the Dutch pirate party while blogging about ACTA and the loss of the doctor-patient confidentiality that would arise from the Dutch government's proposal for an Electronic Patient File framework.

Pirate Times: What are the core issues that motivate you to be a Pirate?

Dirk Poot: I have been using the internet in some form or other since the early 90's; the recent efforts to turn the entire internet into a sort of Compu\$erve-like moderated forum and the inherent loss of freedom is detrimental to our democratic and civilian rights.

My main motivation is that I want my kids to grow up with the same freedoms that I had the luxury of growing up with. Without censorship, with free access to all information they require and without fear for being criminalized for sharing their culture and music with their friends.



Pirate Times: If you were to be elected, what is the first thing you would like to do or change at a political level?

Dirk Poot: I would have liked to kickstart, from within parliament, a broad discussion in the Dutch society, bringing the need for copyright and patent reform to the attention of other politicians and the general public and to foster those discussions in the other European countries as well. The aim would be to formulate a vision supported by a broad majority of citizens to counter the one-sided policies that are being pushed by copyright maximalists. As a more symbolic gesture, I would have liked to request the new government to undo the recent name change of the Justice Department, which is now officially called Department for Security and Justice.

Pirate Times: What is your opinion on the state of civil rights in the Netherlands?

Dirk Poot: Civil rights are eroding in the Netherlands, probably faster than in Germany for example. The Dutch citizens have very little regard for privacy and very little people realize that the constitutional right to private correspondence has been wilfully eroded in the transition from paper letters to email. The Netherlands has the highest incidence of phone-taps in the world, with 1/1000 phones being tapped. The government actively monitors Facebook and Twitter for 'suspicious activity' but refuses to give any details.

The ultra conservative right wing government, that has ruled Holland in recent years, is trying to kill the very successful drug-policies we have had for over 30 years in favour of a faith-based war on drugs. The wietpas, requiring citizens to register themselves if they want to patronize a coffee shop, is another erosion of privacy as well as a threat to the prevention of drug-abuse. The recent push to create a central fingerprint database is also an example of a government that seems to view each citizen as a potential suspect first. It goes beyond the EU-requirement for 2 prints, and ignores the EU-directive that those prints should not be centrally stored.

By ignoring the fact that the Dutch copyright law is outdated, and by allowing private lobby-clubs to build a legal framework of jurisprudence upon those outdated laws, the Dutch internet is quickly becoming one of the most censored parts of the internet, with detrimental effects to freedom of speech and freedom of information. Parliament has lost the initiative and the citizens are paying the price. It seems the Dutch government is only in favour of civil rights when they can be used as a propaganda-tool against foreign governments, but has very little regard for protecting these rights at home. The extremely tightly worded 'coalition-agreements' that the Netherlands have gravitated to, have basically eroded the natural balance of power that should exist between government and parliament, and has virtually ended parliament's ability to control the government. And since Holland has no concept of a 'Constitutional Court' the citizens have very little recourse against the erosion of democratic and civil rights.

Pirate Times: What has been the reaction of the public to the Pirate Party?

Dirk Poot: In 2010 we were hardly taken seriously. Our fight with BREIN (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BREIN>) in April and May this year has given us a lot of credibility. The international success of the Pirate Parties has also helped a lot to be taken more seriously in the political debate. As a result we had much more opportunities to be heard during the last election campaign, and we are seeing our points already being copy-pasted by other political parties.

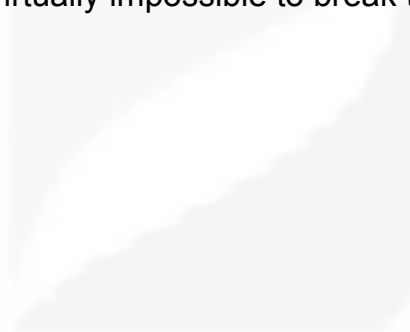
Dutch media however have turned the recent elections into a three way battle between the largest parties, more resembling a game-show like "Idols" than a serious election campaign, so in the last weeks of the campaign the focus has been almost exclusively on the old style political parties.

Pirate Times: Tell me a little bit about the Dutch pre-elections. What were your best impressions and which problems did you have to confront?

Dirk Poot: We were able to capitalize on the fact that the largest parties waited a long time with their campaign. So in the summer we were able to get quite a bit of media-attention. Since a new party has to jump a lot of procedural hoops, our campaign has been much longer than most

of the existing parties. In July we were working hard to gain enough signatures in order to enter the elections; this drive proved a nice way to gain extra publicity.

The main problem we had to confront is that Holland has no real impartial public broadcasting system. What is called public media in the Netherlands is formed by broadcast-associations, which are very closely aligned with existing political parties. These ties go back to the days of radio, when Dutch society was divided into different groups, based on faith or political colour, in which each part of society had its own political party and broadcast association. These old ties still form the basis and reason of existence for the broadcasting associations, and during election campaigns those ties are virtually impossible to break through.



Pirate Times: Was there support from other Pirate Parties? Are you connected to other Pirate Parties worldwide?

Dirk Poot: Especially in the border regions we had a lot of help from German pirates. We also had international support within the creative team, and were able to copy-paste other Pirate Parties election campaign materials. However our international connection is currently contingent on one international coordinator, and we are trying to find more volunteers to work on international coordination. Now that the election race is over we must use the time to strengthen the party by tapping into the huge member influx we experienced over the last months, and also focus more on the international aspect, I think.

Pirate Times: The election results, 0.3 %, were sadly below the expectations. What do you feel about the results in hindsight, and how will this affect the party?

Dirk Poot: It is disappointing that we did not manage to gain a seat, but on the other hand we have tripled our electoral support over the last 2 years; we went from 10K votes in 2010 to 30K votes this year. 60K votes would have given us a parliamentary seat.

We have managed to quadruple our membership and hopefully will be able to translate that into a more robust party structure and a better equipped volunteer network. If we manage to keep on developing the way we have, we should be able to finally gain that seat during the next elections.

It is also good to see that patent-reform has been an election-issue this year and that other parties seem to be becoming aware of the risks and costs of patents in general and medical patents in particular. Other parties have also voiced concern about the power that the Dutch copyright law has given to private organizations, enabling them to censor the internet.

We have succeeded in making our issues more relevant and should use that as a basis to keep on pushing these issues into the forefront of the debate the coming years. It seems that other parties are also starting to experiment with ways to implement Liquid Feedback into the political process, which may help to bring some democratic reform to the Netherlands.

Pirate Times: When are the local elections in the Netherlands?

Dirk Poot: In 2014.



Pirate Times: Will the PPNL take part in the European elections in 2014?

Dirk Poot: Definitely.

Pirate Times: Where do you think PPNL will be in 5 years?

Dirk Poot: In five years time we should have at least 6000 members. Dutch elections are supposed to be held every 4 years, but the last 10 years we have had 5 elections, so around that time we will have managed to gain that seat, maybe two, in the Dutch parliament. Chances are that there will be Pirates in many other national parliaments as well, giving us the chance to push our agenda on a national level as well as on a European level.

Pirate Times: 5 elections in 10 years? That's a lot. Probably the current Dutch politicians are doing something wrong. In your opinion, what are the causes for those frequently held elections?

Dirk Poot: Dutch politics seems to have become less about the greater good for the country and all about the greater good of the party. The best analogy I can think of would be a national soccer-team where the players are so aware of the clubs that other players play for that they'd rather loose the match than pass the ball to a player that normally plays for a different team.

As a result of that, Dutch politics have become extremely short term and is mainly guided by the opinion polls. Dutch media are willing partners in the hype-of-the-day way of doing things, so it has become of a self-amplifying system, from which it's very hard to break free.

Pirate Times: Thanks a lot for answering our questions, Dirk!

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Additional Information about Dirk Poot:

https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dirk_Poot

<http://www.piratenpartij.nl/sites/piratenpartij.nl/files/sollicitanten-kieslijst-tk2012/cv-dirk-poot.pdf>

http://www.joop.nl/opinies/bio/auteur/dirk_poot/

Written by Patrick Schiffer published at September 21, 2012

Neither left nor right – an essay on Pirate politics

"From each according to his ability, to each according to his need" is one of the most well known **Marxist slogans** and it is also how Free and Open Source Software (FLOSS) is being used and produced. Is FLOSS communist?

In FLOSS you choose what you want to do and you do it your own way and you don't need to ask anyone to let you test your ideas, just like in the free market you can test your business ideas without asking for permission. Is FLOSS libertarian?

FLOSS meets the goals of both communism and libertarianism without following the methods they propose. There is no central planning, no government is dictating what everyone has to do, no state coercion forcing people to follow the plans. But there are also no exclusive private rights over the use of the produced software, everyone can use it freely and people don't get money directly from selling their product.

And it is not a kind of charity, there are people that participate out of pure altruism - but I suspect that more egoistic motivations are much more important: like proving your point, showing off, getting publicity or, especially in the case of companies, getting an edge in selling services

related to the produced software. Let me quote a [recent blog post from a venture capitalist](#): MongoDB is an open source data-store for web scale applications. The first users were developers who wanted a simple, easy to get started data-store. It was perfect for hackathons and such where the developer needed to get something up quickly. This post I read yesterday does a good job of explaining why MongoDB took off. These developers became a network of users and contributors to the open source project. Many of them worked in enterprises and brought MongoDB into their teams. Soon enough 10gen started getting calls from executives saying something like "I just learned that we have 50 instances of MongoDB in production and I'm eager to get a support contract".

This is not charity - there is a business case in doing that and there are others. Just like in the case of the famous invisible hand of the free market, the system guides the individual egoistic actions towards a common goal. FLOSS shows how technology changes economy and politics.

Software is only a part of the whole creative economy, that includes music, films, literature, patents and all other human endeavors that, in the current economic dogma, should be supported by selling copies of the original works and rights to making such copies. The idea is to reduce the creativity problem to the free market solution by granting state enforced monopolies to making copies.

This worked pretty well in the last century when making copies was an industrial process. Unfortunately with the advent of Internet and other personal communication media (like exchanging data on memory sticks), this clean solution started to show cracks. It now requires more and more state coercion supported by more and more totalitarian surveillance of citizens. It is a paradox that it is advocated by the same people who were abhorred by the state coercion practiced by the late communist governments.

I can only explain it by them being so in love with the simplicity of the free market solution that they became blind to the problems that arise when it is forced on problems that don't fit it. It works great in theory, in a theory that does not take into account actual human nature, and in

that it follows the very steps of communist regimes. Isn't that ironic?

The pirate movement started as a protest against that heavy handed state coercion that is the result of enforcing copyright monopolies in the Internet era. It is neither left nor right - it is about pragmatic reevaluation of the policies proposed by the left or right. Do they really work towards the intended goals?

Featured Image: CC BY-SA Elena Olivo

Written by Zbigniew Å• ukasiak published at September 20, 2012

Julia Schramm and DMCA Takedowns – a Pirate and Her Copyright

Julia Schramm, member of the national board of the Pirate Party Germany, published a book which came out a few days ago. Since she is a publicist, this should not have come as a surprise. Julia announced the book well before she was elected into the board of the German Pirate Party during April of 2012. Time passed by, and suddenly - one gets the impression - there was a book! It was published this week and promptly illegal downloads became available, which were taken down by her publisher, a subsidiary of Random House.

The publishing created some discussions as well as accusations. According to rumours, Julia received an advance payment of 100,000 € from the publisher. Julia herself did not confirm these rumours, but we can guess that the amount is close to the real amount according to her earlier statements. In an [interview with Welt online](#), she explained some of the details from the contract. For example: she is not allowed to discuss her payment and she will re-gain the intellectual property rights for her book in ten years (when she plans to make it publicly available). According to the same contract, no one who downloads the book will be charged. They receive a warning (a "yellow card"), and might be charged if they then download it again.

Julia is already since before a [very controversial person](#) within the German Pirate Party. She used to be part of the "Spackeria" and roused complaints when she stated that "privacy is so

Eighties". Later, she described the term "intellectual property" as "disgusting". This description now comes back to haunt her, whilst her publisher defends Julia's intellectual property.

However, it seems, signing the contract did not turn out to be the best decision for Julia. Being part of the Random House Group, the subsidiary 'Knaus Verlag' is sure to defend the rights they bought no matter the cost. Soon after the book was published, the first illegal download appeared - a Dropbox file, linked from a website that was [set up for this sole reason](#). According to rumours, this website was set up by the German tabloid 'Bild', in order to get a nice story from the expected takedown notice. Unfortunately it was not possible to confirm these rumours. The illegal downloads did not occur solely on Dropbox: there was also a copy uploaded to the [German Pirate Party Wiki](#).

The publisher had all these files [taken down via a DMCA notice](#). These takedowns then obviously led to international media reporting that a prominent pirate acts in contradiction to the party values. The [German manifesto](#) states:

"We therefore demand that copying, providing access to, storing and using creative products for non-commercial purposes must not just be legalized, but actively promoted to improve the public availability of information, knowledge and culture, because this is a prerequisite for the social, technological and economic development of our society."

[One blog already suggested](#), that paying 100,000 € is not a large sum if the "content-mafia" wants to disable the Pirate Party. Having a well known Pirate Party member sign a contract that allows to violate the party values in her name is sure to damage the public opinion of the whole organization.

What makes the situation strange is the fact, that the German Pirate Party officials did not issue

any official statement concerning the issue and their and/or Julia's position. On request, we were told that "the discussion around the publication of the book "Klick Mich" shows impressively the big necessity to consider new solutions for copyright. The helpless actions of the publisher Random House, facing the leaked online versions, shows how much publishers lost control in the informational age. It is about time to discuss a reformation of the copyright laws. Julia could not have offered a better example than the publication of her book."

This half-official statement is most likely not enough to calm the media and the outraged pirates. A strong statement by Julia, explaining her reasons and the situation with her publishing company, might work more effectively. Calls for Julia to step down can already be heard, unfortunately she was not available for a statement for Pirate Times.

Written by Gefion published at September 19, 2012

PirateCon – the PPUK conference

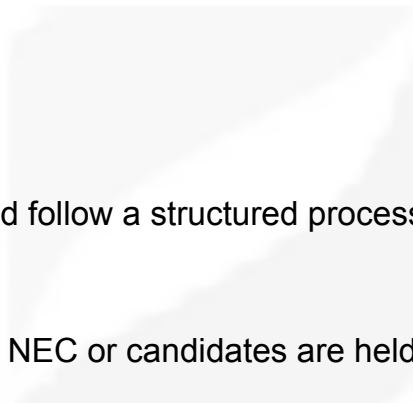
The Pirate Party UK had a lot on their plate for their conference last weekend. On Saturday, around 15 pirates enjoyed a sightseeing tour with lots of socialising and had the opportunity to visit a gig the conference organizers arranged in South London, where pirates celebrated into the morning hours. Nevertheless, most of them were up early enough to join the discussions at the "PirateCon 2012".

It was really interesting to visit this event as a German pirate - it seems, not only can other parties learn from the German party, but we also can learn a lot from our British sister - especially some pragmatism.

The organisational structure of the party, with round about 600 members, is very different from the German (or any other one I know). The National Executive Committee (NEC) is responsible for all organisational tasks and running the day to day business of the party. It is elected every

two years and is authorized to assign other pirates with specific jobs or tasks. The board of the PPUK is more like a council: It is elected every five years and oversees the administration, discipline and arbitration.

The board gave an overview of the State of the Party: During the last year, the UK pirates were primarily busy with their statutes, getting them into a form that allowed functioning processes. They also had several internal elections for the NEC as well as several assignments. In May 2012, Party leader Loz Kaye won 5% in a local election in Manchester. Unfortunately, in the UK system, at least 50% of votes are required, so this didn't bring him into any parliament.



Internal elections happen online and follow a structured process

Internal elections for the board, the NEC or candidates are held in the online voting system of the PPUK. Candidates can be selected for single elections or generally for all elections in their region. The NEC defined several conditions that need to be met before a candidate can be assigned: For example support from two other pirates, fulfilment of legal requirements (like a residency in the requested area). All pirates are eligible to vote for their regional candidates. Also, if there are not enough pirates in an area to vote for a candidate, the NEC can appoint one. This also ensures, that candidates are suitable to speak for the Pirate Party and agree with their values and policy. All candidates have to go through a telephone interview and meeting with one of the NEC members. The process was introduced by the NEC members Andy and Phil and can be discussed and improved in the PPUK wiki. Overall, the process is supposed to help find more candidates, who can then promote themselves and the party in their region.

PPUK members rarely have a political background. Primarily, they come from a technical background and want to fight for their common cause. What exactly they stand for was a big part of the discussions in several panels on the conference.

A policy is required

In a continuous process, the UK pirates want to define their policy: What do they stand for? What do these positions mean to voters in their lives? What do candidates have to say to their voters? How can these positions be developed?

Andy Halsall (NEC Campaigns Manager) collected suggestions and ideas and drafted a manifesto out of 3,000 submissions. This draft will now be discussed and then hopefully accepted by the pirates. The platform is supposed to be evolutionary, it will be changed or amended where required at every point in time for the future. The focus is set on evidence-based policy: Positions shall be right and verifiable. "We know we are right. But for the people we have to prove that we are, so they can see that - and why! - we are right." Based on the platform, campaigns, flyers and whole election campaigns can be run, with amendments, for local requirements.

The UK pirates track exactly what they do and which impact their activities have - regardless, if they distribute flyers, set up local websites, update online content, visit or run events. Every activity is tracked and success is measured, to make future activities even more efficient. They now found many things that do not work, which helps them decide what kind of activities they spend their resources on in the future.

What they lack is manpower to put all the great ideas into action. Especially the IT and policy groups urgently need support. The use of Liquid Feedback is being considered, to support the policy process - but there's no one to take care of it so far. Currently, the whole infrastructure (from members management down to the frontend of their homepage) is dealt with by only two people.

Candidates are hard to find

Apart from support for working and organisational groups, candidates are also much sought-after - in a very obvious contrast to the German pirates, who have the opposite problem with too many applicants for too few positions. The UK pirates struggle to find enough candidates to participate in all their local elections.

In a panel with several candidates they discussed what makes the Pirates different from other parties. For example, Labour candidates will hold the same speech for all events they visit, regardless of the present target group. Finally, a candidate who stood in three elections in Scotland and Glasgow, pointed out that it's important to not become "one of those politicians". "Politics should be for everyone!" Everyone should be able to participate in politics, therefore candidates have to be real human beings, who are not seen as "those politicians" by the voters. Especially beyond election campaigns it is important to show presence and participate in local activities to generate awareness. Political work should be concentrated on personal relationships rather than electoral campaigning. "The more you talk to people, the more they like you!" Laura - another candidate from Scotland - pointed out.

At the end of the conference, party leader Loz Kaye held a speech about the success story of the UK pirate party and their achievements over the last year and what comes next. The UK pirates are no longer overshadowed by their bigger sister parties but can be confident and stand up in their own right. The next important date is the election in Manchester mid-November, after which they are looking at the EU-election in 2014. More than enough time to build up the platform, create structures and recruit more active members and candidates. Loz concluded: "Let's get to work!" - with a direct response from the audience: "Can we go to the pub now?" - which we did, to finish off with the conference with constructive discussions, food and drinks.

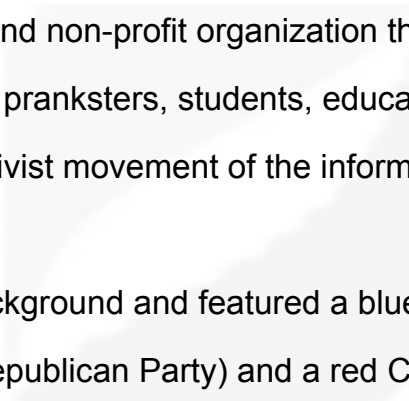
With kind permission by the [Flaschenpost](#).

Written by Gefion published at September 19, 2012

What is #piratepartyusa?

In the early hours of August 18, two images started making the rounds on Facebook, Twitter, and other parts of the Internet.

The two images were both part of the same advertisement found in the then-latest issue of *Adbusters*, a Canadian magazine and non-profit organization that bills itself as, "a global network of artists, activists, writers, pranksters, students, educators, and entrepreneurs who want to advance the new social activist movement of the information age."



One side of the ad had a white background and featured a blue Pepsi can with an image of an elephant on it (the symbol of the Republican Party) and a red Coca-Cola can with an image of a donkey on it (the symbol of the Democratic Party). Above the two cans was the statement, "Can you taste the difference?" Below the two cans was the statement, "America's political system is dominated by two brands and 99% of blind taste testers can't tell the difference."

Below this was the Twitter hashtag [#piratepartyusa](#).

The next page of the ad featured a blue background. At the top of the page was the hashtag [#piratepartyusa](#). Below it, under two paragraphs of text, was a skull and crossbones, reminiscent of the Jolly Roger flag.

The text reads:

Our skull & Crossbones will pop up everywhere... every Mitt and Barack poster, every lawnsign will have a blackspot... our videos will go viral and our 30-second mindbombs will detonate on CNN, MTV, and FOX. Pirate mayhem will engulf both conventions.

Between now and November, we will create a ruckus bigger than any ruckus America has ever seen before. We will occupy this election with our revolutionary third party meme. We will let America know the Coke/Pepsi Challenge is over and 4 years from now there will be a third choice. This is a mutiny for a new America. Will you join us?

Below this is a website link, to piratepartyusa.org. Then, as now, this link takes a visitor to [a separate link](#) which features nothing more than a list of Occupy Wall Street events. OWS was created by Adbusters.

As the chairman of the Florida Pirate Party, I was interested. One of the main worries I had was that laypeople might view their message and misinterpret it as our message. One of the last things I wanted was for the Department of Elections (and others) to knock on my door asking why it seemed as though we were trying to incite a hostile takeover of the country and possibly threatening to bomb several television stations (does anyone even watch MTV anymore?).

Naturally, myself, as well as several other people trying to kick start the Pirate Party in the United States were wary. What was Adbusters' ultimate goal?

To that end, I contacted Adbusters via several contact addresses on August 18th. A few days later, on August 23rd, I received a reply from a person named Erin Flegg who said the following:

Adbusters' interest lies more in the concepts behind pirate parties, primarily those of the original European organizations, and bringing them together with ideas behind North American green politics. The idea is to push for a unified, "Blue-Green" party. I've included a link to a recent piece on our website that goes into a little more detail.

Glad to see the message is getting out,

Erin Flegg

The linked blog post did nothing to further explain this 'Blue-Green' party. So on August 28th, I sent a reply stating that I did not fully understand. It is currently the middle of September and I have yet to receive a response, nor has anything else materialized on the Adbusters side of things.

Fearful of losing the overall Pirate Party message to these interlopers, the New York Pirate Party, Florida Pirate Party, and others began trying to 'hijack the hijack' and started using the #piratepartyusa hashtag to redirect those who had seen the Adbusters ad toward our cause.

The main point of contention among Pirates in the US regarding this is the fact that we were left in the dark while an outsider organization decided to start a campaign using our name without even telling us first. Since it has been several weeks since Adbusters has started this campaign and has not moved forward with any kind of further material, have they abandoned this campaign?

Lindsay-Anne Brunner, leader of the New York Pirate Party had this to say, 'Two minutes of research on their part would have led them to our site and information; why were we not informed of this 'campaign' prior to launch? This appears to be nothing more than haphazard work on their end, or they don't care about results after they've launched their 'meme campaigns.''

Is Adbusters trying to create their own Pirate Party in the United States? If so, why supersede all of the pre-existing US Pirate Parties? While the Florida and Massachusetts Pirate Parties are officially registered within their states, there are far more smaller Pirate Parties in the US that are working toward gaining traction. Wouldn't it be easier to link up with those who are already trying to gain traction in their respective states and also work toward initiating progress in the states that do not currently have a Pirate Party?

Of course, there is a silver lining in all of this. Adbusters does have the ability to reach many people via their website and magazine. Nearly every day since these images started making the rounds, the #piratepartyusa hashtag has been seen, and shared, by many people and organizations. People have been following the various Pirate Party Twitter feeds and Facebook groups. Our numbers have been growing stronger with each passing day. So no matter what Adbusters' ultimate goal is, we have benefited; are still benefiting. And that's not a bad thing.

All pictures by: [Adbusters](#)

Written by Brad Hall published at September 18, 2012

Who Votes For Pirates?

German study on voting behaviour gives insights on Pirates' target demographic



Who is likely to vote Pirate? Previously, there have been mostly educated guesses about the target demographic of the Pirates, tending to name young technology affiniados.

A recent representative study, carried out by Prof. Elmar Brähler and Dr. Oliver Decker from the University of Leipzig [1], examined all political parties, including for the first time the Pirate Party of Germany. It shows that the general assumptions about pirate voters aren't completely wrong, but incomplete. There are several more aspects as to what makes a voter of the PPDE.

Starting out with basic socio-economic factors, the study finds that someone who votes Pirate is generally not wealthy. 10.8% of Pirate voters have a low household income of less than 1000 Euro, more than the followers of any other democratic party. 30% have, what the study considers a high income, 2500 Euro or more. This value is a little less than the median.

Also, many Pirate voters are highly educated. Almost a third of them have gained Abitur, the

highest diploma that German secondary education can award. This quota is higher than for the followers of almost all other German parties, with only one political competitor having a marginally higher number.

Unemployed people are not more likely to vote for the Pirates than for most of the other parties (in fact, a relative majority of them don't vote at all). When it comes to fear of becoming unemployed, however, Pirate voters rank the highest. One might speculate that the relatively low paid jobs they tend to have are usually insecure or temporary jobs.

Not surprisingly, the average age of the Pirate voter is the youngest across the board, and almost 10 years less than that of the next youngest group of party supporters. Challenging the stereotype that Pirates are nerds and therefore predominantly male is the fact that the voter base is split almost equally between the sexes (55% male, 45% female).

When looking for differences in voting behaviour between urban and rural areas, the researchers found hardly any difference for voters of the Pirate Party. There is, however, a marked difference when considering the vote of Germans with foreign heritage. The German Pirate Party gets more than three additional percentage points, when only considering the voting preferences of this group. This is more than any other party of the political spectrum, almost all of which tend to be shunned by them in favour of not voting at all. A possible reason for this might be, that the grass-roots democratic approach and indiscriminatory rights of participation, which the Pirates propagate, might be attractive for a group who is generally having a hard time to gain ground in the traditional political elites made up by the other parties. Pirate voters also have the most contact with foreigners in their daily lives. Only 6.5% said that they did not have any foreigners in their peer groups, be it family, friends, acquaintances, neighbours or in the workplace.

Pirate voters tend to be unaffiliated with any religion (33%), at least slightly more so than followers of most other parties (right-wing extremists and socialists have a much higher

percentage). Still, more than 65% say that they are either Catholic or Protestant. The reverse numbers show the same picture: Non-denominational voters are more likely to vote Pirate than those identifying as Catholic or Protestant.

Regarding subjective health issues, the researchers found out that the Pirates' voters have the highest subjective level of health. They are also the voter group with the lowest tendency to feel depressed. In a related question about general anxiousness or fearfulness, Pirate voters ended up in the middle of the field, within very close range of most other parties.

The study also asked about media usage. Here, followers of the Pirates match their stereotype quite well. They have a slightly lower usage of classical media, such as printed press, radio and television, than all other voter groups. In turn, they have a much higher usage of new media than the others, and also come out above all the others on general online usage (gaming excluded), with an even clearer margin.

The PPDE's election manifestos do of course, by now, cover issues that are beyond the very central and core values that all Pirate Parties share, including a social policy that has been interpreted, by some media outlets, as leaning toward the left. Nonetheless, the common core values are communicated often and loudly, and should weigh in heavily on the voters' decision.

The overall results therefore do include the young and tech-savvy, but also show much more. Some of the results may be interpreted as interesting insights into who the Pirates' voters are, and what motivates them. It can therefore be concluded that while local differences might play a certain role, overall the results of the study make up some of the most thorough and comprehensive scientific research done on the target demographic for Pirate values and aims to date.

[1]

http://medpsy.uniklinikum-leipzig.de/red_tools/dl_document.php?PHPSESSID=fkg77jlhmtjbt40lu

Written by Paul Wardenga published at September 17, 2012

Plastic Pirates Putin to Prison

One more attempt was made to get hold of the cat. The lasso was thrown, it caught on one of the candles, the chandelier fell down. (Mikhail Bulgakov, [The Master and Margarita](#))

We heard that after failing to arrest the cat the Russian police turned to Margarita and some four plastic pirates. Reason - unlawful assembly.

On September 14th, 2012, Margarita Bashilova from Kaliningrad, Russia, wanted to protest against cessation of the publication of local government documents on the Internet. She started her demo with setting up plastic copies of real members of the Pirate Party from Kaliningrad. With the help of her colleagues she assembled the four pirate copies near the Kaliningrad Duma (Parliament) building.

The eyewitnesses told us that the plastic pirates remained calm and did not disturb the peace, silently presenting boards with their protest slogans. They stood there for 7 minutes when the police approached Mrs Bashilova and accused her of organizing unlawful assembly. (Mind you, an assembly occurs when four or more people assemble together). She was detained on the spot.

Neither she nor the plastic pirates resisted arresting, but it might be that the police force just outnumbered them. Mrs Bashilova was released after an hour although she may face a heavy fine or 40 hours mandatory labour. The plastic pirates may face much more serious charges - could be burned at the stake, put into a shredder or send to a labour camp together with Pussy

Riot, as we learned off the record. Meanwhile, they are still under arrest and a rumour says they refuse to testify. No one knows how long they can remain silent under the good old KGB methods.

-Auntie Underground

Written by Auntie Underground published at September 16, 2012

The Pirate spirit detouring around politicians and stereotypes

?Greece, what is really happening?? was the subject of the meeting of German and Greek Pirates, just 2 days before the German Chancellor and the Greek Prime Minister met officially in Berlin. Detouring politicians and stereotypes the German and Greek Pirates, full of enthusiasm and curiosity gathered in Mumble, the Internet platform that hosts most of the Pirate Parties of the world, to talk about the crisis: when it began, how things are now and what the common future will be like.

The politics today should not be shaped the traditional way and as Kai G?dde, activist and member of the economic committee of the Pirate Party of Germany, put it: if you want information, you have to go and talk directly to the person that has it.

?A lot of things aren?t mentioned on the media. For me it was a very interesting evening, I learnt more about Greece?s position?, Kai said.

The unemployment problem and the illegal immigration make for an explosive mixture and feed the xenophobia present. Everyday wages are going down, there are more cuts in social expenses, such as health and education and more taxes for the majority of the Greek people that can?t see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Greek Pirates mentioned that most of the people feel they are at war, or living in a scientific experiment where they are asked to live with little or no money. Shops are closing down like

dominoes, teachers see children in schools starving. All the measures that have been taken by the Greek governments, E.U. and I.M.F., since 2009, have led and still lead to greater depression and poverty of the social fabric of the country. Austerity does not work.

During the meeting, the participating pirates expressed their feelings with messages they sent to the Mumble text column, writing "Greece ought to lead our E.U. revolution! Kill Capitalism?" or "the banking system has to be abolished?". This is what happens when people come together. They pull down the curtain and see each other in the eyes invoking common problems to emerge to the surface.

Aside from popular "but not always true" - stereotypes that exist for each country, problems of survival, the feeling of insecurity and uncertainty, anxiety, oppression and violation of vested rights are more or less the same for simple citizens in Germany and Greece. This was the first of hopefully many Mumble conferences and its success, about 80 Pirates participated, led to a second meeting planned in September with the Italian Pirates. Where politicians fail to find a solution, ordinary people make the difference in digital meetings where everybody has a voice. That is the spirit of the Pirates and that is today's politics via participatory governance.

The Pirate Party of Germany, in its sixth year, has a great experience in making modern politics. The Pirate Party of Greece, in its 7th month, is the only pirate party in Europe that has compiled an economic programme. Both sides agreed that it is necessary for the Pirates to go with a common programme in the elections for the European Parliament in 2014.

Written by Stathis Leivaditis published at September 15, 2012

TrapWire "Big Business Brother Is Watching You"

On 10 August 2012 operators of the notorious whistleblower site Wikileaks reported that they had been hit by a cyber attack. 10GB of data were supposedly fired at their servers in a pretty severe DDoS-attack. One reason for the attack could have been the publishing of a large number of files related to a project called "TrapWire". The German online news portal "Spiegel

Online? reported that New York is in talks to test a new surveillance system that is capable of tracking movement patterns as well as license plates. Internal documents of the global intelligence company Stratfor, however, reveal that it is not only New York that would be affected by such a new surveillance system. The leaked files, that have so far not been verified, are supposedly contents of internal Stratfor emails. Should the files be verified, an American INDECT is all but already up and running, without the population's consent or even awareness.

TrapWire is a Sales Hit

So what exactly is Trapwire capable of? Its operational system is mainly made up of its infrastructure, which can be connected to video cameras that are already installed in many cities and public spaces. In essence, much like INDECT, it operates as an intelligent system that automatically identifies "suspicious behavior? - whatever that might entail ? and pushes the proverbial panic button. In addition, it utilizes radiation detectors, face recognition software, and license plate scans that can keep track of everyone and everything 24/7. Especially the face-recognition component is supposedly many times more accurate than its predecessors. TrapWire Inc., a subsidiary of Abraxas, sells different versions of this infrastructure. Version ?TrapWire Law Enforcement? provides, according to the company, the "ability to gather, analyze and disseminate information about surveillance and logistical activities occurring across an entire geographic region?. This version also has the possibility to be connected to other "packets?. The "proactive surveillance? system, in which the camera-systems and platforms to over which people can call in suspicious behavior, can be synchronized, is another example.

Aside from New York, other private and public buyers for the all-encompassing surveillance systems have been found. The leaked documents reveal, for example, that the State of Texas has signed contracts with "TrapWire?. In an email dated April 2010, it says that ?TrapWire? will be installed the following Monday. Another document (Feb. 2011) states that TrapWire has

already been installed in High Value Targets (HVTs), such as New York, Washington D.C., London, Ottawa and Los Angeles. The public was not informed about this.

Every step you make, every bond you break ? I'll be watching you

In order to market TrapWire, Abraxas has created a subsidiary company TrapWire Inc. Abraxas, on the other hand, has close business ties to Stratfor. All these companies share an exceptionally high staff-rate of former intelligence service employees, police and military personnel. You are amongst friends, so to speak. Fear sells: the released documents reveal, that in order to market the product, references to terrorist attacks and social unrests were made. What is especially troublesome, is the aggressive marketing that is contained in the documents: "Regarding SF landmarks of interest--they need something like Trapwire more for threats from activists than from terror threats. Both are useful, but the activists are ever present around here."

The contract between Abraxas and Stratfor clearly states that Stratfor was supposed to receive 8% provision for the marketing of TrapWire. Another document states that sales pitches to the US Army, the Pentagon and the Marines were successful. In case of the US Army, this is was confirmed by a public announcement regarding surveillance systems. According to the documents, sales talks with the Navy were about to begin. This was in 2011.

Civil Rights Activists sound the Alarms

On Pastebin, Justin Ferguson collected information about TrapWire, which resulted in an increase of public awareness. On 10 August 2012 #TrapWire was a trending topic on Twitter. So far, we do not know if the Stratfor files are authentic. If they are, it is scandalous. For one, it is terrifying to imagine that such an all-encompassing surveillance system is managed by a private business. Secondly, the emails reveal how large the number of former CIA employees within

Abraxas is, how often they meet for lunch and with whom, and how it is virtually impossible to separate corruption and "revolving-door" issues here. Not to mention the fact that none of this has been made public.

Last week, I attended an interview and was asked if surveillance systems, such as the one in the movie "Minority Report", were possible. While I had not seen the movie, I replied that by now face-recognition software is available that can distinguish between identical twins. I also replied that it would be unlikely that private businesses would employ such surveillance methods, due to financial constraints. If I was asked the same question again today, I would point to the TrapWire website.

This article can be found in its original German form on www.kattascha.de, where it was published on 11 August 2012 (CC BY-SA)

Written by: [Katharina Nocun](#) (CC BY-SA)

Featured Image: CC-BY Frédéric BISSON

Written by Felicitas Steinhoff published at September 14, 2012

PPNL Did Not Get a Seat But the Future is Looking Bright

Update: PPNL just passed 30 000 votes and has now a total of 30 438 votes with four regions left to count. One of these "regions" left is the postal votes.

Pirate Times have [been following](#) the Dutch elections today. With the counting of the regions very close to done: 411 Final Results (98.1%), 1 Partial results (0.2%) and 7 Waiting for results (1.7%) we can see that the Dutch Pirate Party (PPNL) did not make it into the national parliament. They currently stand on [0.3% with 29 930 votes](#), hopefully breaching 30 000 votes with the last 8 districts being counted. To reach the parliament PPNL needed about 63 000 votes to gain the necessary 0.67% for one seat.

Even though the Pirates did not make it into the parliament the results improved significantly from the elections in 2010. Overall they tripled their number of voters from 10 471 in the last

election (2010) to about 30 000 votes this election. Many regions saw a significant increase of voters and the best results were 0.7% in Delft and 0.6% in Eindhoven, Groningen and Zandvoort.

"I will say this, I've not seen any area that has shown a reduction in votes for the pirate party, and only a handful with no growth at all" - Andrew "K'tetch" Norton, USPP / PPUK member [reporting live](#) about election

The future success of the Pirates seems inevitable. Only in the past six months their membership has grown [from 372 to 1192 members](#). Pirates have always had a higher support from the younger generation and they grow up fast. The school pre-elections, which were held a few days ago, gave the Pirates 10 773 votes (9.35%) which would have corresponded to 14 seats if it had been a real election. The next elections will happen in 2014 and will hopefully bring at least another tripling of results.

"The pirate party is the largest party of those not yet represented in parliament (except for 50Plus, which is [already] represented in Senate). We at least tripled in size since 2010. Even if we don't get a seat now, I am sure our popularity keeps growing" - Gerrit "Antior" Sanders, PPNL

The supporters of Pirate Parties is clearly growing, not only in the Netherlands or Europe but throughout the world. This election was the closest a pirate party has been to enter the national parliament. Next month will not bring any more national elections but several interesting regional ones, the first one being in Czech Republic on 12-13 October followed by Belgium, Australia, Switzerland and Finland.

Written by Josef Ohlsson Collentine published at September 13, 2012

Introduction of the Pirate Party of Catalonia

At the last General Assembly of the Pirate Parties International three new parties received full membership status. One of them was the [Pirate Party of Catalonia](#), which we will introduce at this point. For the Pirate Party of Catalonia Muriel Rovira Esteva answered our questions.

Pirate Times: How is it possible that the Pirate Party of Spain and the Pirate Party of Catalonia

are members of the Pirate Party International? Tell us also how you could rise from being an observer membership to a full membership in the Pirate Party International.

Muriel: Historically, Catalonia has been an independent and self-governed territory like Bavaria in Germany and in fact we have similar rights as German Länder have nowadays. It is common for non-separatist political parties in Spain to have an independent brother party in Catalonia, since this is the only way to be deemed as neutral by the voters in this regard, thus, the Pirate Party of Catalonia is completely independent from the Pirate Party of Spain. Additionally, both parties don't overlap during the elections, because the Pirate Party of Catalonia does not run outside this territory and the Pirate Party of Spain does not run inside it.

PPI statutes clearly say that there can be only one ordinary member per country, however, as you can see in any dictionary, country doesn't always mean sovereign state. Currently, Catalonia is considered a country without being a sovereign state, so the Pirate Party of Catalonia is running in one country and the Pirate Party of Spain is running in a different one.

Pirate Times: How is the relation of the Pirate Party of Catalonia to the Pirate Party of Spain?

Muriel: As the pirate movement is still in construction, there are three pirate parties established in Spain, with the intention to confederate. There is wide communication between the different Spanish territory pirates to bring this issue ahead. The pirate parties in Spain do not compete for votes, but collaborate. We carry out joint campaigns, and share material as well as contacts.

Pirate Times: Will the Pirate Party of Catalonia participate in any upcoming elections? Please tell us about your expectations for the next elections you will participate in.

Muriel: There won't be any elections in Catalonia until the European Parliament ones (as long as

there are no surprises and the elections for the Catalan Parliament are not advanced). And we would like to run together with Piratas de Galicia and Partido Pirata, as well as cooperate with the other European pirate parties in order to have both a common campaign and programme.

Pirate Times: What are the core topics of the Pirate Party of Catalonia? Are there topics that are unique to the Pirate Party of Catalonia, something that distinguishes them from other Pirate Parties?

Muriel: This question gives us the possibility to present our basic course of action summarized in what we have called the Three Pirate Laws:

- First Law: A pirate representative will always vote in favour of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Second Law: A pirate representative will always vote in favour of the **Pirate ideology**, except where such vote would conflict with the First Law.
- Third Law: A pirate representative will always obey the decisions taken, through direct democracy, by the Assembly, as long as these decisions do not conflict with the First or the Second Laws.

This allows us to prevent a hypothetical vote, from the Assembly, that might go against the basic rights of individuals to be passed on.

Pirate Times: Tell us more about the inner structure of the Pirate Party of Catalonia.

Muriel: On the one hand we have work groups (communication, international, legal...) and on the other hand we have also territorial structures. Each has a coordinator and uses mailing lists, pads, and Mumble.

To take decisions we use an internet based tool, where any member can post proposals and

then these are voted by all members. The voting results of the proposals are thereafter binding to the party.

The General Assembly meets once every three months and the board once per month, and all meetings are open to participation physically or through Mumble.

Pirate Times: If you think 5 years ahead, what will be different compared to today's situation?

Muriel: We will be well known! As we are learning and growing day by day, we will be involved in political responsibility. Due to the experience that the first elected pirates are gaining for us nowadays, we will be able to give better answers to important questions regarding policies in all issues. Additionally, also thanks to the pioneer efforts of the first pirates in governments, liquid democracy and open government will start to be seen by the general public not only as achievable down-to-earth objectives, but also as reasonable and necessary ones.

Pirate Times: How do you manage to keep your financial balance? Do you have any special fund-raising methods? How can people support the Pirate Party of Catalonia?

Muriel: The Pirate Party of Catalonia doesn't have any membership fee because we think that democracy should be for everyone and that participation in the party shouldn't be limited to those who have the financial resources. Besides, we reject owing money to any entity to prevent our decisions being influenced and to make sure we remain independent. Therefore, the funding comes solely from individual donations and merchandising. In the first year of existence, with three different elections, we managed to raise from 1,000 to 3,000 Euro per campaign.

Right now we are preparing a system of optional membership fee, so that members can choose to donate a periodic amount and the available income of the party is more easily predicted, but without excluding any members for financial reasons.

Pirate Times: How many members does the Pirate Party of Catalonia have at the moment? Can foreigners become members of the Pirate Party of Catalonia?

Muriel: We have 800 members, and foreigners are welcome as long as they are residents, since they can vote in the local elections. In fact, at least 3% of us were born abroad (no official figures), 2% are foreigner residents, and 1% are German citizens.

We abide by the human rights interpretation that no one is illegal and that everyone has the same rights, regardless of where were they born.

Pirate Times: How long has the Pirate Party of Catalonia existed?

Muriel: It got official registration on the 4th of October of 2010. However, we started working on our statutes in June 2010.

Pirate Times: Something Else?

Muriel: Salut i rom!

This article is: CC BY-SA [Flaschenpost](#)

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Written by Daniel Ebbert published at September 11, 2012

Lower Saxony Pirates in a Turbulent Sea

It took the Pirates of Lower Saxony in Germany three meetings and a lot of pain and anguish to select a list of candidates for their elections to the state parliament, Landtag, due in January 2013. A combination of factors led to a long torturous process to accomplish what most political parties can accomplish in a few hours. See Pirate Times [article](#).

Dr. Meinhart Ramaswamy (the leading candidate for the coming elections), in a conversation with the author, identified some of the problems which stem from a variety of sources.

Complexity

German laws are not consistent at federal, state and local levels. An EU citizen can vote in a local election but not in a state or federal one. The same is true for German citizens living in Lower Saxony, who are between 16 and 18 years of age.

Persons who are in the above categories but are non-EU citizens can become members of the Lower Saxony Pirate Party and can vote on elements of the manifesto but must not partake in any vote concerning candidates for elections. This means accreditation must be carefully controlled to avoid mix ups.

Human error

The German Pirate Party members are volunteers who work long hours in their spare time and mistakes always possible if not probable.

Trolls

Every organization has them with both good and evil but very definitely their own agendas. They will even subvert the democratic process to get their way.

Time

A party that is based on open democracy will find time to get things done a valuable commodity.

The campaign will begin 22 September 2012 in the "constituency of the minister-president"
David McAllister and the Lower Saxony Pirates are ready for a hard and piratic campaign.

What can pirates around the world learn from all this?

Think ahead

We pirates are human and we pirates are volunteers. We can and do make mistakes. Parties need to be mindful to set up systems to catch errors as they occur and to make provisions to be able to correct problems that, despite all the efforts to prevent them, slip through the net. We stand for transparency in politics but we are vulnerable when we practice the same. Our opponents will look for any excuse to criticize and ridicule so thicken that skin.

If you are organizing a decision making meeting then:

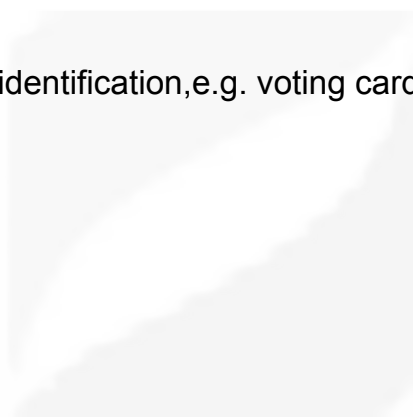
Think Ahead

Make sure you have a system for settling disputes that is agreed on before hand. If there is no Court of Arbitration or similar, in your parent organization, then create your own - have a minimum of 3 people (always an odd number) elected to that office.

Create check lists for each step of the organization process.

Proof read all documents by at least two people who are not the authors.

Have separate accreditation and identification, e.g. voting cards, if people are not allowed to partake in some votes.



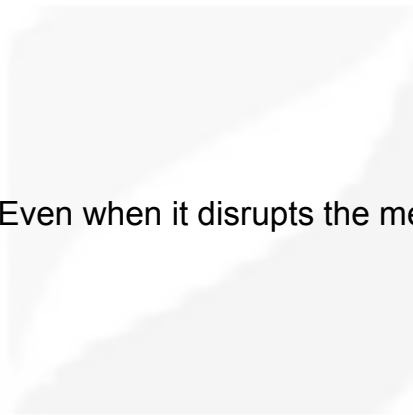
Have printing facilities on hand in case documents are found to be falsely printed.

School all helpers in what they are expected to do before hand. Discuss what to do if something goes wrong and what to do if they discover a problem.

Ensure that critical helpers, such as election staff, are approved of by the delegates before the voting starts.

Take Time

Repeatedly ask delegates to point out any suspected problems.



Sort out problems as they occur. Even when it disrupts the meeting.

Trolls will always be in our midst - they are annoying but they can provide a service. If they can find a weak point in your procedures then your political opponents will find them for sure. If you can identify them and put them to use identifying potential problems then do so.

If you are a troll or have troll like tendencies then offer your services to the party before critical meetings and help the party to save time and money instead of disrupting everything afterward.

More generally: ask your local authorities to help you identify any pitfalls and traps in setting up your organization and preparing for elections. Read the wikis of other pirate parties and ask for advice in forums. They will not always apply to your situation but being aware is better. Get in contact with pirate parties in your near and share resources.

Share everything - it is a pirate principle.

<http://www.piratenpartei-niedersachsen.de/> (German)

Featured Image: CC BY Pirate Times

Written by Andrew Reitemeyer published at September 6, 2012

Do the Pirates stand a chance in the US?

Brad Hall's first encounter with the Pirate Party happened when he happened across a post on Boingboing.net regarding the party. Intrigued, Brad decided to ingratiate himself in the US movement, aiming to become an embedded journalist. While supporting the cause, he tried to distance himself from it. He failed and became one of its top US members.

Felicitas Steinhoff, whose first encounter with the Pirate Party took place when she attended a meeting of the Pirate Party Massachusetts in Boston this spring, quickly became an involved member of the Pirate Party Germany after she moved to Hildesheim, Lower Saxony.

The two of them sat down to chat about the success of the Pirate movement in Germany and the US Pirate Parties in general with regards to their chances within the American political system.

Felicitas:

Although founded in Sweden in 2006, the Pirate Party movement has seen its most successful rise to political power in Germany, where it is now represented in three state parliaments and is projected to pass the 5% hurdle in next September's national election.

In addition, all over Germany, Pirate Party members have been elected into city and county councils, where they work hard to make administrative processes more transparent and to enable citizens to participate in direct democracy through Liquid Feedback Software.

Now, between our election campaign here, leading to the election of state parliament in Lower Saxony this coming January, and the upcoming US election, I want to ask: Do you see the US

Pirate Parties capable of achieving an equally large momentum?

Brad:

I believe it's possible. The main problems facing the US party are that hardly anyone knows of us, we're currently a small minority, and ballot access varies from state to state. Contrary to popular thought, there isn't just one Democratic Party, there's fifty individual state parties that join together as the Democratic Party. In Florida, where I live, it's relatively easy to establish a political party. Whereas somewhere like Washington state, their laws seem to be written to exclude third parties. In New York several thousand signatures must be gathered. You live in Germany, how are political parties created and maintained there? Do they have national parties or do they have the equivalent of state parties?

Felicitas:

Germany makes it easier for people to form a party on a national, but also on a state level. There are a few strictly state-level parties. Individual state and national elections are stacked, just like in the US. The difficulty comes, much like in the US, with the need to collect signatures, when you actually want to stand for elections on any level - cities, state parliaments and nationally. The biggest difference, I think, is that the Pirate Party here was established as a national party first, which then worked on a state level to create structures in order to first get in state parliaments or city councils.

I think what really works in our favor in Germany is the election system where any party that gets above 5% of the vote will get seats in parliament, whether state, or national. This made it easy for the Pirate Party to quickly translate its popularity into political influence.

In terms of the chicken-egg metaphor: Over here, the chicken laid the eggs (we first had the national Party, which organized itself due to the election cycle primarily on a state level at first), whereas in the US you have the eggs (the different state Pirate Parties) but have to wait for them to hatch.

I'm afraid US Pirates will have a much harder time and it will take much longer. What I'm

struggling with, in terms of the Pirate movement in the US, is related to that: Do you think that there is chance for you to go beyond the strictly local level within the American two party system?

Brad:

There's always a chance. The problem with the US Pirate Party's platform is that for them to really be able to work, they would have to be implemented or at least started from a high level, such as governor, senator, or even President. Of course, there is plenty a Pirate can do in a local capacity as a mayor or other county commissioner-type position. Being able to advocate certain changes can go a long way to making those changes happen. In order for change to happen, someone has to speak up.

How does it go over in Germany? From what I hear they have a President and a Chancellor, how does that work?

Felicitas:

Regardless of the people very high up, such as the Chancellor or President, the fact that there is that 5% hurdle that I mentioned before makes it easier for us to be elected. What I find fascinating with regard to the US is that, because of the Patriot Act and the increasing government surveillance in the US, e.g. wiretapping, surveillance drones, you name it, the Pirate Party could become such a strong voice in your country. In Germany, people who are older are not yet as aware of these things as in the US. I think that's a huge opportunity for the US Pirates.

To be provocative: I think the US Pirates will never stand Presidents, or Senators or Governors, but if you get people into city councils or even just into the streets with information and protests, as you have been, you can really influence the discourse on these topics already. I find that people in the US are much more easily motivated to participate in such events. Maybe that's enough? What if the US Pirates would focus on local issues and city councils and then also stage large statewide protests and info-blasts on civil rights, renewable energy, gay rights, etc?

Brad:

I think you're right in that regard. Even if we never have a person in public office, just making people aware of the situation would help sway public opinion enough that the top two parties would have to make mention of our aims. But, every political party, no matter how small, always wants to win elections and eventually make their way to the White House.

Felicitas:

I think this sort of thinking is irrelevant, as far as the political system in the US is concerned. It's, in my opinion, a system that actively prohibits more than the major two parties from participating. The Pirates in the US have the unique chance of questioning this system from the outside, by adopting the participatory structures the party uses in Europe. Would you agree that this should be your main focus: To kick off a national debate about the flawed political system?

Brad:

Absolutely. By shining light on the inefficiencies of the current system, we can hope to be able to introduce systems that would work better for this country.

Felicitas:

So, no run for the White House, but being the voice that advocates an overhaul of the American political system as such?

Brad:

Oh, we'll definitely run for the White House, when we're big enough to be able to do that.

Felicitas:

:) Spoken like a true American;) Keep me posted! It was nice chatting with you!

Brad:

Thank you, see you at the polls.

Featured image:

Original: [CC BY-NC](#) John Shao

Adapted by Andrew Reitemeyer

Written by Felicitas Steinhoff published at September 5, 2012

Belgium Pirates struggled entering elections

The new and small parties in Belgium [are upset](#). In a letter addressed to Paul Furlan, Minister of Local Government and City Policy, they complained about two procedural errors in organizing provincial and local elections that hamper the preparation thereof.

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The first problem was that an application document for the provincial elections necessary to gather signatures did not yet exist. The other problem was that the [official site](#) of the ministry had two contradictory rules. On one page it was stated that people could only register as a candidate in the constituency where they were also resident. On another page it was clearly stated that it was not obligatory to be registered in the voting district concerned. Meanwhile, this has been corrected with the help of the community and protesting pirates. The twitter hashtag : #helloworldpaul was used as a [campaign](#) to get these necessities [fixed](#).

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By the way, did you know that Belgium has six different governments running their country? The Federal government, the combined Flanders and Dutch speaking government, the Wallonian government, the French speaking government, the German speaking government and last but not least the capital Brussels government.

Written by Anouk Neeteson published at September 4, 2012

PPEU Conference Barcelona

On this weekend there will be an international [pirate conference](#) in Barcelona. Apart from the final discussion and drafting of statutes for founding of a [European Pirate Party](#) there is also a panel planned on broader, more [general topics](#). Pirate Times was able to ask Muriel Rovira Esteva, international coordinator from the [Catalonian Pirate Party](#), a few questions.

Pirate Times: Muriel, thank you for your time. After the drafting of the conference text at the last PPI conference in Prague, and the meetings in Aarau and Potsdam the upcoming conference is taking place in Barcelona. What was the motivation of the Catalan Pirates for volunteering for hosting such a conference?

Muriel: When we were preparing for the PPI General Assembly, and knowing that the European Pirates would be one of the important issues to be covered in that meeting, we set up a poll asking our members whether they wanted Pirates de Catalunya to have an active role in this project, participating and getting involved in the work groups. As you can see, [the answer](#) was unanimous.

This is quite remarkable. If you take a look at other poll in our participation system, you'll notice that it's very rare that all voters agree on something in such a way.

The following vote concerning the ratification of the Prague declaration was also remarkably categorical with only a single ["indifferent" vote](#).

Taking into account that there won't be any elections in Catalonia until the European Elections (unless there's a surprise call for regular elections), and what we knew our members thought, it just made all the sense to commit to the project and help carrying it out.

Therefore, when the statutes work group in Aarau started discussing the need for an additional conference before the founding one, I got in touch with the rest of the party to confirm they thought it was a good idea, too. And so we offered ourselves to host the event.

Of course, an event like this is very good to draw media attention, so we also thought it would be a very nice way to promote the pirate ideas among the citizens, which is one of our main objectives.

Pirate Times: Hosting such a conference certainly is no easy task. Could you tell us how many pirates were involved with the logistics behind it, and maybe give a short sketch of the planning process?

Muriel: During the first weeks we were just a few from the most active group of pirates but, as we needed help on this or that, we asked our members and the conference work group has been steadily growing. Right now there are roughly 40 volunteers covering the different aspects of the conference.

First and most important was finding the right venue, which was especially difficult due to the fact that we don't have that many funds and that we had August in the middle, a month when everything stops here. Then, we had a meeting to determine what would be needed and sent a call for help to the members in our periodic newsletter. We've been assigning tasks since then to the volunteers that have been showing up, and in the last days we have divided ourselves in several specialised teams, so that we can work independently and everyone knows what to do. Apart from that, the regular work groups and the board have also been lending a hand. For instance, Communication has helped with some translations and Creatives with design work.

Pirate Times: Brigitta Jónsdóttir, Aleks Lessmann and Josep Jover are very interesting guests for a panel. How did the decision to go beyond PPEU as a topic come about?

Muriel: On the one hand, we knew that it's very difficult for a large number of the international delegates to stay until late on Sunday, because they have to return to their countries, so we wanted to avoid having working sessions after a certain time to respect that.

And on the other hand, we wanted to motivate the general public to get involved in the pirate movement and convey to them the importance of funding the European Parties to coordinate our efforts at an European level.

That's why we thought of a series of talks as the closing session. The three speakers will be talking about important issues which have an international dimension, but in particular which are interesting for citizens Europe-wide:

Many countries are facing now the same problems that Iceland faced a few years ago,

something that is affecting all EU countries. The solutions they applied, which have proven quite successful, involved many pirate ideas which are now being disregarded by other governments, and that should be put forward for consideration.

□The vision of Europe of the German Pirate Party, which is the party with the potential to get more MEP seats in the coming European Parliament Elections, will certainly play an important role in the following years, influencing future European policies.

□Fighting law abuses carried out by some countries, through the coordination of European Pirate Parties, can be a very powerful tool to defend citizens rights.

Pirate Times: The conference is not meant to be the founding conference for PPEU (even though some Pirates disagree). Can you tell us a little bit more concerning the future of PPEU?

Muriel: I think (and hope) that bringing together such large number of official delegates to discuss the European Pirates Statutes will give a definitive momentum to the project. Hopefully, it will encourage European Pirate Parties to push this issue to higher positions of their agendas so that the European Pirates will be ready when the time comes.

After these work sessions we will be able to deliver these draft statutes to all the involved Pirate Parties, so they will have some months to review them and we'll be able to reach a high consensus before the foundational assembly.

With the pirate movement growing internationally, the list of reasons to coordinate our efforts grows with it. My dream is that the European Pirates will draw pirates from different countries together to make them stronger and more effective in our fight to change society.

Pirate Times: Are there any other upcoming conferences for internationally interested Pirates in Europe?

Muriel: There is a conference planned in Rome the 17th and 18th of November to start coordinating the election campaigns for the European Parliament between the different parties. And there will also be the big event of the European Pirates founding conference, once the parties grass roots have had time to thoroughly discuss the draft statutes . The founding conference will most likely take place early next year and will probably be held in Luxembourg. Although we'll have to wait a bit to know for sure the date and place.

Pirate Times: Muriel, thank you very much for the interview!

Written by Justus RÄ¶meth published at September 1, 2012

Overview over the PP NDS convention

After the successes the German pirates had in the state elections in Berlin, Saarland, Schleswig-Holstein and North-Rhine-Westfalia, it has become a bit quieter, resulting in them dropping back to 6% in **recent election polls**. A lot hinges therefore on the **Pirate Party of Lower Saxony**, which will ring in the 2013 election year on January 20th. Later in 2013 we will have elections in Bavaria and for the German Bundestag, the national parliament. A **success** in Lower Saxony (last polls: 7%) would help tremendously to make 2013 an overall success.

On the weekend of 25th and 26th of August this year the Lower Saxony Pirates met in the town of Delmenhorst (near Bremen) to finalize the order of their candidates for the 2013 Lower Saxony Parliament elections and to start working on their election program. This was a big deviation from the original plan, where the candidates were supposed to be elected in Nienburg on April 21 and 22, and the following conventions in Wolfenbüttel (July 21 and 22), Delmenhorst (August 25 and 26) and Celle (probably October 27 and 28) were supposed to be used for broad discussions on the election programme. This would have mirrored the slogan Themen statt Köpfe (Topics instead of faces/heads). So the question is: What went wrong?

A number of members announced that they would fight against the Nienburg results in court, and it turned out that two EU-citizens living in Lower Saxony voted on the candidates as well. While German law is pretty lenient on parties developing their program, and, subsequently, the German Pirate Party allows non-Germans with residency (you can't become a member of a German political party without either German citizenship or residency in Germany) to vote on the programme as well as to occupy internal positions, for example on the boards. However, parties have to abide to stricter rules when putting forward candidates for an actual election. German law states clearly that you need to have the right to vote on election day (ie be 18 or older and hold German citizenship for state and federal parliament elections) in order to vote for

candidates, and it seems that this was overlooked by the accreditation team in Nienburg and two non-German members of Piratenpartei Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony Pirate Party).

As a result, in Wolfenbüttel, the first day of the weekend-long convention was used to discuss the voting system, resulting in the pirates first selecting 30 candidates to be on the list and then voting on their order afterwards. At midday on Sunday however it turned out that two party members had been accredited that would not have reached the age of 18 by January 20. In the hours left, it was only possible to vote for the 30 candidates, but it was no longer possible to also vote on their order due to the time restraints.

The result reached in Delmenhorst is not vastly different from the one reached in Nienburg (also the numbers of votes reached by the candidates in Wolfenbüttel is very similar). This supports what Meinhard Ramaswamy, who topped the list both in Nienburg and Wolfenbüttel said: "This is not the result of the Lower Saxon pirates only fighting with each other, but the result of 20 pirates making life hard for the rest of the Lower Saxony Pirates."

Pirate Times will publish an article giving tips on how to avoid unnecessary commotion like this in the future later this week. This is to make sure that not only the Lower Saxony Pirates can learn from their mistakes, but that this knowledge can be shared with all Pirates out there.

Written by Justus RÄ¶meth published at August 31, 2012

The CETA IPR-Chapter Controversy

When discussing the aftermath of **ACTA**, another acronym tends to pop up: CETA.

CETA stands for 'Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement' and it is a bilateral international contract, in the making since 2008, between Canada and the European Union. These types of bilateral agreements, to foster trade and economic ties between the EU and

other countries, are a rather typical thing in EU foreign relations. It is also not unprecedented that these trade agreements contain provisions for issues not directly related to their primary goals of reciprocally increasing economic benefits through free trade. A more recent example was the European Union - South Korea Free Trade Agreement from 2009 which, among others, included provisions concerning worker's rights, environmental protection and intellectual property rights (IPR).

What makes CETA stand out are certain details coming from a leak of the draft agreement dated February 2012, which was widely publicised and criticised by Canadian law professor Michael Geist^[1]. Several IPR related articles of CETA bear a striking resemblance to the corresponding articles in ACTA, including the much criticized involvement of private businesses in the copyright enforcement process. Another example is the "digital lock" rule, which aims to effectively make backup copies of legally bought CDs or the act of copying tracks to an mp3 player illegal. An additional concern, that is frequently voiced by Canadian CETA critics, is the potential increase of drug prices due to patent law harmonisation, an issue which also played a minor role in the anti-ACTA protests. The European Commission has since commented that the current draft of CETA is significantly different from the leaked version and supposedly takes the rejection of ACTA into account. It might, however, prove problematic for the Commission to convince the public of this without publishing the current draft, which it thus far has refused to do. It is true that a draft publication would be uncommon for an international negotiation of this kind. Democratic control in such cases is generally warranted solely by parliamentary approval as well as democratic legitimisation through elected governments of the participating countries. Due to the overwhelming public concern with these issues, the process is nonetheless perceived as lacking transparency. Furthermore, the appeasing statements from the European Commission concentrated on the inclusion of businesses in copyright enforcement, but made no

mention of other subjects of criticism, such as digital locks, which further fuels suspicions about the controversial passages remaining in the text.

It is therefore not surprising that arguments against CETA are being voiced by many prominent anti-ACTA protesters. One example being the French net freedom organisation La Quadrature Du Net going as far as calling for a complete cancellation of CETA, or at the very least an exclusion of the controversial chapters from the treaty text.[2] The German NGO Digitale Gesellschaft has released a statement in the same spirit, including an appeal to the European Parliament to stand strong on its previous opposition to the corresponding ACTA articles.[3] These organisations can probably count on the support of all concerned Pirate Parties, on both sides of the Atlantic, for their protests.

Without a solution for these issues, it is likely that CETA will face a similar fate to ACTA. As with all international agreements the EU negotiates, CETA has to be approved by the European Parliament. If it, at that point, still contains phrases that were core reasons for rejecting ACTA, a ratification is unlikely to happen. The Members of the European Parliament will certainly not approve of being once again served the same paragraphs that they just rejected and which net activists and Pirate Parties will be sure to remind them of in the coming months. If it actually comes to this depends on the Canadian government and the European Commission. One option would be that they are willing to risk a failure of the whole agreement over provisions which were not even part of its original core intentions. Alternatively, they might consider the facilitation of trade a superior goal over affirming the status quo of the international copyright regime, which is drawing criticism from a growing number of people. After ACTA, which was also primarily aimed at preventing the counterfeiting of tangible goods, the danger of an otherwise relatively uncontroversial (apart from the drug price issue) international agreement failing completely, because of highly controversial internet and IPR chapters, will definitely seem very real.

[1] <http://www.michaelgeist.ca/content/view/6580/135/>

[2] <http://www.laquadrature.net/en/ceta-the-zombie-acta-must-face-the-same-fate>

[3] <https://digitalegesellschaft.de/2012/07/nach-acta-kommt-ceta/> (German)

Written by Paul Wardenga published at August 29, 2012

General elections in the Netherlands

You may have missed it, but Holland is slowly but surely being gripped by election fever as election night creeps closer. It is still a while away though, as they're being held on 12th of September. Yet the electioneering battle has already **started**, still low key, as the various parties position themselves.

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The Dutch 'Piratenpartij' recently entered the political arena in a multi-party system, meaning it is difficult to get noticed. A **recent poll** still puts them at 2/150 seats at the house of representatives.

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With another three weeks before elections take place to get noticed even more this is a **promising election** for the pirate movement.

Written by Anouk Neeteson published at August 24, 2012

Introduction of the Norwegian Pirate Party

Piratpartiet, the Norwegian Pirate Party, started up this July, after years as an unofficial group. They have already released a political platform, and are getting ready for next year's national

election. The Pirate Times had a sit-down with party spokesman Sturla Ellingvåg. We discussed the challenges so far, the future, and thoughts about broadening their Pirate Party platform.

Pirate Times: What are the most important topics for the Norwegian Pirate Party? What do you focus on, and where do you find you are most needed?

Sturla Ellingvåg: We only started up this July and for now we have drafted eleven topics close to our core values. I say it's a draft, because we are currently only a few pirates and it is important for us that many are able to take part in the democratic process of establishing our program. (editor's note: the draft can be read in Norwegian [here](#)) At the moment, we are building our organisation and it is going very good. It's great to be a part of it!

Pirate Times: What has been the greatest challenge so far? Has the beginning been easy enough or have you had to face any big problems?

Sturla Ellingvåg: Our first challenge now is to gather 5 000 signatures in order to be registered in the general elections next year. This has to be done by 1 January 2013 and we are making good progress. We have been fortunate to get many resourceful and good people aboard up until now. But we do need more people who can help in gathering signatures around the country, so this is a challenge that we are working on at the moment.

Pirate Times: What is the next big challenge for the party?

Sturla Ellingvåg: The election next year will be a thriller. The red-green coalition, headed by the Labour Party for the past seven years, has been under much criticism but it will be a close race and hopefully Piratpartiet will play a part.

Pirate Times: What do you realistically think lies in your future? Where will the party be in five years?

Sturla Ellingvåg: We are aiming for the elections next year and are working hard on building a party at the moment. It is of course difficult to predict the future, so we're comfortable aiming for these two goals at the moment. However, it is clear that Norway really needs a party like Piratpartiet, and there are many, many voters all around Norway who are very tired of our political "establishment". So if chance favours us and we work good and hard together, well then we might just end up giving Norway and Norwegians a much brighter future.

Pirate Times: While most Pirate Parties started out with only a handful of issues to tackle, several - including the German Piratenpartei and the Swedish Piratpartiet - have started broadening their platforms. Are there any plans in the Norwegian party to do the same? What are the thoughts within the party?

Sturla Ellingvåg: We have discussed this issue quite much and I for one believe we will follow Sweden and Germany here. But we are a flat organisation with full transparency, so this is certainly not only up to me.

Pirate Times: How do you manage economically? Are you getting any state support, are you accepting donations? How can any interested readers help you?

Sturla Ellingvåg: We are in need of more financial support. So far we have received some support from good helpers, which has been important. For those interested in helping, contact us at post@piratpartietnorge.org

Featured picture: Screenshot of piratpartietnorge.org.

Written by Anton Nordenfur published at August 21, 2012

PP UK Sysadmin Wins OpenDNS Award

The OpenDNS SysAdmin Awards **were just handed out**. The awards are annually given out to: "elite network managers who persevere great challenges, oversee epic rollouts, hack creative work-arounds and manage limited budgets? all without much appreciation. The winner this year, in the prestigious "Flying Solo" category, is **the UK Pirate Party's** system administrator Steve Wilson.

The SysAdmin Awards of 2012 are the sixth annual, and according to OpenDNS this year they received more than triple last year's entries. Wilson and the other winners in respective categories are receiving **custom made awards** with built-in LCD screens a worthy sysadmin should be able to change through their network.

Wilson became the sole administrator of the PP UK's complicated and undocumented Django implementation. He managed to fix it with many improvements in only 18 months, all this as an

unpaid volunteer whilst working full-time for his normal job. The network is today serving an estimated 10 000 users a day. Before Wilson took over the IT role, the party website wasn't near any top million website rankings. Today it ranks in the global top 11 000, and it is the 300th most visited website in the UK.

"When [Wilson] took on [our] systems they would buckle if mass mail was sent or if visitor numbers increased unexpectedly. It would fall over randomly whenever changes were made, even if those changes were cosmetic. I think I am right in saying that backups existed, but restoring from them was something that involved a number of chants and rituals involving candles."

- Andy Halsall, PPUK campaign manager

Not only did Wilson fix the existing system, he also implemented [the UK's proxy for the Pirate Bay](#). The proxy quickly became the country's most used, with millions of users. According to Wilson, however, it's not all good - the popularity has also led to two separate denial of service attacks in as many months. These problems and others have been dealt with in a calm and professional manner from Wilson who keeps handling every problem the PPUK has thrown at him.

The definition of the "Flying Solo" category is "a (true) story of the heroic SysAdmin who saved the world (or did something awesome) to save the day (or company) all by his or herself". This certainly fits Steve Wilson and his work like a glove. His work as SysAdmin for PPUK has inspired several other members to join their IT team. It seems like Wilson will have to run for another award next year now that he has gotten some help with the IT.

Featured image: [CC BY-NC-SA Anton Nordenfur](#), [CC BY-NC-SA Pirate Party UK](#)

Written by Anton Nordenfur published at August 19, 2012

The Progress of the PPI Board After 122 Days of Work

The PPI board has now served one third of their elected time and it is a good time to summarize what they have accomplished. This might also be a good opportunity to give the board praise for

accomplished tasks as well as point on things they are still behind on. With two thirds of their time left, the future reports from the board will hopefully indicate further improvements and progress made.

The current Board was elected April 15th 2012 at the PPI Conference in Prague. The board has held eleven **board meetings** up until now (latest one being on August 14th). The attendance of the board at the meetings have been high, most people having only two to three meetings that they have not been able to attend and therefore been excused from. The two people that stand out are Nuno (who hasn't missed a single meeting) and Jelena who only managed to attend less than half of the eleven meetings. Important to remember is that these numbers only account for excuses made at the time of writing the protocol, urgencies and excuses made afterwards are not accounted for in the following meeting statistics of the board:

- 10/11 (1 excused) Co-Chairman - Gregory Engels / PP-DE
- 8/11 (2 excused) Co-Chairman - Lola Voronina /PP-RU
- 7/11 (3 excused) Chief Administrative Officer - Travis McCrea / PP-CA
- 8/11 (3 excused) Treasurer - Ed Geraghty / PP-UK
- 5/11 (2 excused) Board Member - Jelena Jovanovic / PP-RS
- 8/11 (2 excused) Board Member - Denis Simonet / PP-CH
- 11/11 (0 missed) Board Member - Nuno Cardoso / PP-PT

One of the main tasks for PPI is to help new pirate parties to form and get started. During the time of this PPI board there have been registration attempts in Hungary, Iceland and Israel (there were also two attempts in Poland - the papers have been filed in the court for Polska Partia Piratów on 23rd of July, and for Partia Piratów on 24th of July, but this is not exactly something to brag about). There has also been contact with people interested in trying to start up their own pirate parties in the following countries: Andorra, Armenia, Dominican Republic, FYR Macedonia, India, Iraq, Mali, Mauritius, Mongolia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Qatar, Thailand, and Uganda. Hopefully we will be able to cover these countries with an article once they get organized enough to start up pirate parties.

The main problem the PPI board has had in this term is that they still, after one third of their term, have not been able to gain access to the assets in their bank account. The failure of this task can be explained in three parts. The first is a badly prepared hand-over from the previous board, making the task of getting access a slow and arduous process. The second part of the failure lies in difficulties in communicating with the bank, the current account has been closed (not explained why in board protocols) and the current treasurer has no legal proof that he is indeed the treasurer of PPI (the board mentions that they might have to wait until PPI gets a headquarter to solve this). The last part of the blame for this fail lies with the current board who have acted upon this task very slowly. A treasurer was not elected until the second meeting (1 May) where Ed Geraghty volunteered as a last resort. The next mention of the bank account happens at the meeting a month later (29 May) "Still waiting to talk with previous treasurer, when he gets back from holiday" -Ed. The first contact with the previous treasurer is mentioned in the meeting that took place two months after the board was elected (19 June) but there is still a lot of information missing. The next mention is at end of July (31 July) where some troubles with the bank are disclosed. The issue was mentioned again in this last meeting (14 August) and seems to be prioritized now but not being closer than they are to get access to their own account is a failure of this board.

Besides this, the board has progressed and accomplished a lot of other tasks during this first part of their elected time. Gregory does a good job summarizing everything in a nice report quoted below. The only additional points to mention are that the possibilities of an Internet GA(General Assembly) is being worked on and that the calls for arranging the GA 2013 are worked on but delayed (the board originally agreed to ask for applications for the beginning of [June](#)).

A good summary of the other progress the PPI board has made can be found in [the report](#) that Gregory sent out a few days ago.

Photo Credits: Mike Herbst

The Life and Death of ACTA

In early 2012, the Internet was becoming an increasingly dark place. The word had started to spread ACTA, a dark monster looming in the darkest corner of the net, and then both [SOPA](#) and [PIPA](#) were revealed, even more creatures of the night accompanying ACTA. For vast numbers of internet activists and regular users, these beasts seemed impossible to beat.

Yet only six months later, ACTA, SOPA and PIPA were all effectively dead. On January 20, US representatives decided to postpone SOPA and PIPA. And on July 4, the European Union voted against ACTA with a decapitating 92 percent majority, marking it globally dead.

How could this sudden change happen? How could a few Internet activists lead a movement defeating ACTA? And is ACTA truly dead?

The Rise of ACTA

ACTA, the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement, was a multinational treaty with its foundation laid in 2006 by politicians in Japan and the United States. Its aim was to fight counterfeiting and copyright infringements, both in the physical world - fake bags, clothes, et cetera - as well as online - illegal downloads of music, films et cetera. ACTA came before the public eye in May of 2008, when WikiLeaks [uploaded a discussion paper](#) on the previously unknown agreement. During this time both Canada and the European Union had joined the discussion. Australia, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, South Korea and Singapore would join when the negotiations officially began in June of 2008.

From the very start, ACTA was severely criticised on a number of points. One of these points was that it had been kept secret for too long, consciously excluding the citizens of the negotiating states, and denying the European Parliament access to documents that was granted

to the United States.

Concerning its content, ACTA was criticised as being too broad. It covered both physical counterfeit and digital file sharing under a single treaty. Many of the actual suggestions of ACTA were also criticised. One example being the original version of ACTA, that proposed a three-strike system where Internet service providers would be given police-like rights to shut off users from the Internet without a fair trial. In [an open letter](#) from the Free Knowledge Institute, it was argued that "the current draft of ACTA would profoundly restrict the fundamental rights and freedoms of European citizens, most notably the freedom of expression and communication privacy."

The Fight Against ACTA

Six months before the European Parliamentarians would vote on ACTA, large groups of protesters started to rally throughout Europe. Before the rallies became large more immediate threats emerged that needed to be defeated first. Huge protests erupted simultaneously, both online and offline, against SOPA and PIPA (two other treaties that would greatly harm Internet freedom). On January 18, several thousand websites, including Google and Wikipedia, collaborated in the largest Internet protest to this date by temporarily blacking out their websites. This effectively showed what the Internet would look like if the treaties were passed. As a result of these protests SOPA was officially postponed on January 20, allowing energy to be focused on protesting ACTA again.

In late January, the Polish Parliament signed the ACTA treaty. This spurred protests both in the streets and in the parliament, where even [politicians wore Guy Fawkes masks in protest](#). As information about this spread on the internet, the protests grew further. Several large protests got planned throughout Europe for February. On February 4, many protest rallies occurred throughout Europe, including [several thousands taking to the streets in Sweden](#).

On February 11, protests had been scheduled throughout most of Europe. The protests took place simultaneously in over 200 cities located in Germany, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Denmark, Poland, France, Italy and several other countries.

On February 22, [the European Commission asked](#) for the European Court of Justice to analyse whether ACTA was compatible with fundamental human rights. This delayed the European Parliament's ratification vote further. Even with this doubt about ACTA maybe breaking fundamental human rights the International Trade Committee decided to hold the vote in early July as planned, choosing to not wait for the Court's ruling.

The decision has been despised and cheered by both promoters and critics of ACTA. When the treaty had started facing more and more criticism, it had been argued that a delayed vote could have led to ACTA passing unnoticed after mass media had tired of the "spectacle". The activist group La Quadrature du Net were among those [welcoming the early vote](#), arguing that "the door remains open to a swift rejection of ACTA". At the same time, a court ruling against ACTA would clearly have hindered the treaty's passing, while a ruling for ACTA might have helped it pass.

The Death of ACTA

With the European vote of ACTA coming closer, political commentators argued that a defeat in the parliament would lead to its very death. Many states participated in the negotiations, but the European Union was clearly one of the most important potential signers of the treaty, alongside the United States and Canada. It was therefore essential that the European Union signed the ACTA treaty if it was to have an effect. In June, original Pirate Party founder Rick Falkvinge called the July 4 vote "[where ACTA lives or dies](#)".

On July 4, the European Union [voted against ACTA](#) with a decapitating 92 percent majority, 478 votes against and 39 for the treaty. In Europe, as well as most other negotiating countries voting

against ACTA, the treaty is now effectively dead.

Or is ACTA Really Dead?

Before the final EU vote, Canada and the European Union started drafting a new treaty. The treaty was called CETA, Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, and compared to ACTA it **covers very similar grounds** when it comes to copyright. CETA could very well become the next big threat to an open and free Internet. Still, as commentators are careful to point out, the alarm bells concerning CETA are probably **premature**.

The latest leaked CETA documents are from February, a time when ACTA was expected to pass without any problems. CETA was constructed not as a replacement for ACTA, but as a separate treaty. This assumed that ACTA would already be in effect when CETA was to be voted on. Since ACTA was met with such enormous criticism and was ultimately voted against, it is still unclear how this will affect the outcomes and creation of CETA. It is possible that it might be rewritten to exclude the criticised sections, or CETA might simply be voted against by the same crowd opposing ACTA.

Regardless of the ultimate outcome, politics is a complex game without easy answers. For now, let us continue celebrating the global and eternal death of ACTA, and the rise of human freedom.

Featured Image: **Stop ACTA** Screenshot | CC BY-NC-SA Anonymous

Written by Anton Nordenfur published at August 17, 2012

Introduction of the Pirate Party Croatia

At the last General Assembly of the Pirate Parties International three new parties received full membership status. One of them was the Pirate Party of Croatia, which we will introduce at this point. For the Pirate Party of Croatia Ivan Voras answered our questions.

Interviewer: Will the Pirate Party of Croatia participate in any upcoming elections? Please tell us

about your expectations for the next elections you will participate in.

Ivan Voras: The next elections in Croatia will be local elections in about a year from now. We will be present in the areas where we can muster a sizable and effective local branch. We expect a mild success, but hope to profit greatly from the publicity the elections will generate for us.

Interviewer: What are the core topics of the Pirate Party of Croatia? Are there topics that are unique to the Pirate Party of Croatia, something that distinguishes them from other Pirate Parties?

Ivan Voras: Probably not unique, but surely with differently-weighted emphasis. In Croatia, the main points of our platform will be on introducing more transparency into all aspects of the government - from politics to daily operation, and on expanding the use of modern technologies into politics and the society at large. There are still areas in Croatia with poor or no broadband access, which needs to be addressed, as well as the question of metro-wide free WiFi access.

Interviewer: Tell us more about the inner structure of the Pirate Party of Croatia.

Ivan Voras: The current structure is mostly ad-hoc and based on the contributions of individual members, with little formal structure (except that required by the government for all political parties). We are planning to implement a decentralized structure based on strong local branches, composed of members which can perform actual useful work for the branch and are currently successfully beginning this process.

Interviewer: If you think 5 years ahead, what will be different compared to today's situation?

Ivan Voras: We must be realistic - the success of the German Pirate party will be hard to duplicate in an underdeveloped country like Croatia, but we hope to gain popularity with students and the educated layers of population, as well as with disgruntled but progressive-thinking population, who are aware of the potential which can be realized from better integration of technology and the society.

Though we hope that we could have some seats in local and (eventually) state-level offices, we

would actually also be happy if the problems we point out get solved in any way possible. If we can force our traditional political competitors, with our existence or actions, to solve these problems, we would also be happy with the outcome.

We intend to be a party which focuses on results which can be achieved either within or without government positions, not on promises and talk.

Interviewer: How do you manage to keep your financial balance? Do you have any special fund-raising methods? How can people support the Pirate Party of Croatia?

Ivan Voras: At the time of the writing of this text we have been officially registered as a political party for less than a month. Our current assets have exclusively come from donations of enthusiastic members, and we are hoping to rely on the donations for some time in the future. Our donations are transparent and targeted for specific, published purposes, and we hope that this will be a real reflection of our popularity.

Interviewer: How many members does the Pirate Party of Croatia have at the moment? Can foreigners become members of the Pirate Party of Croatia?

Ivan Voras: We currently only accept members willing to invest time in working on specific tasks which are needed to establish a real, functional political party. This means that there are relatively few official and active members - around 40, but there are also around 200 potential members "in waiting" and whom we will probably have join as "inactive" supporters once we are ready for such a thing. We have a couple of thousand people following our Facebook and Twitter pages, whom we consider sympathizers. Due to constraints in Croatian law on political parties, foreigners can be engaged as active observers, supporters, or honorary members while being engaged in specific activities, such as open-source initiatives.

Interviewer: How long does has the Pirate Party of Croatia existed?

Ivan Voras: We consider that the birthday of our Party was on the 13th of April, so we are really young. Even so, it is always surprising to watch how much support and interest we have collected in this short amount of time.

For this article: CC BY-SA Flaschenpost

Featured Image: [CC BY-SA Juraj Fleiss](#)

Written by Daniel Ebbert published at August 16, 2012

The Pirate Movement on Facebook and Twitter – August 2012

The pirate movement has a total of 536.794 followers on facebook + twitter today! This is a very impressive number and shows that it is indeed a movement that is here to stay. Important to remember is that it's not only the number of followers that counts but more importantly the level of interaction and impact the posts might have on followers. This is harder to measure than just focusing on the numbers of followers.

Inspired by what [Piraten-Statistiken](#) (Pirate's Statistics) used to do, we will be reporting monthly about facebook and twitter followers for different pirate parties. These numbers become interesting when you start looking at the changes and analyze why there was a decrease or increase. Another aspect that will be interesting to follow is which pirate parties pass others in follower count. Adjusted to the country population it can give an indication about which country is doing good or getting a lot of exposure during that period of time.

The first month it is hard to do comparative analysis since the old data that exists is indeed very old. Therefore, for now, we will only present the two following charts and let you make your own observations. What we can observe is that most pirate parties have a good following on facebook making it an important communication channel.

What would you like to see next month when we will do more number crunching and comparisons? followers/capita, percentage-changes, top-climber, others?

Written by Josef Ohlsson Collentine published at August 15, 2012

A program for the EU Pirates

The idea of a Pirate Party for Europe and the European Union has been underway for some time. And even though its organisation and agenda have yet to be determined, the work to create it **has already been started**. The main issue is, of course, the diversity of Pirate Parties in this geographical area and the coordination of their respective agendas.

The next European Parliament Elections will be held in 2014. A common program for all the national PPs, or at least a coordination between their individual programs, would greatly improve our chances to be a force on our own in the European Parliament. So we need a program that is acceptable for every European PP.

Hence, the PP-EU Programs working group is now compiling and translating the programs of the European Pirate Parties. The **work in progress** is available and a **detailed status overview** can also be found. PP-DE and PP-CAT have already translated their programs, but translations are still to be done for the others PPs.

When this documentation work is completed, a common program will be written that all the participating parties will review and vote on.

For more insights on the European PPs programs, see:

<http://wiki.ppeu.net/doku.php?id=programme:sources>

For further information on the PP-EU process, see: <http://ppeu.net/> and <http://wiki.ppeu.net>

Featured Image: European Parliament, Bruxelles | [CC-BY-NC-ND John & Mel Kots](#)

Written by Loïc Grobol published at August 14, 2012

You can participate in European politics

In the last week of June, a group of 20 young pirates from Germany traveled to Brussels for a visit to the European Parliament and the European Commission. The group had many meetings with lobbyists and representatives of different organizations during their stay in Brussels.

One of the meetings was an hour of discussion with Joachim Ott, who is responsible for citizen participation in the European Commission. He opened with the statement, "If you see the European Union as more democratic at the end of the hour than now, I won". The meeting contained a presentation about the structure of the European Union as well as the ways in which citizens and NGOs can participate in the legislative process. After this presentation the discussion started. It soon turned out that the most participation from outside the Commission is done by NGOs and not citizens.

After pointing this out, there was a discussion on how the citizens can be included in a better way. It was agreed that one of the main issues is the lack of information about how everyone of us can already join in the process. Mr. Ott asked us to spread the information about the [consultations for the European Commission](#). These consultations are surveys the European Commission publishes to get feedback on topics they're working on at the moment. One example of a current consultation is: "[A clean and open Internet](#)". I'm pretty sure many of you want to give feedback on this issue. ;)

The group of young pirates also had a meeting with Joe McNamee from EDRi (European Digital Rights) who works as a lobbyist in Brussels to fight for our civil rights in the digital age. EDRi is an association of civil right organizations from all over Europe and non-European countries, such as Bits of Freedom (The Netherlands), Digitale Gesellschaft (Germany), Electronic Frontier Foundation (USA) and many others. Some people in the European Commission actually try to

push for an improvement in digital rights, but they will have a hard time doing this if nobody is speaking for the people's interest in the consultation.

According to Joe McNamee, the problem with lobbying in the European Union are not the closed doors but "too many open doors". Lobbyists have plenty of possibilities to talk with MEPs, Commission Members and other actors in the European Union. There's a structural disadvantage for smaller lobby groups such as EDRi (who can't rely on the industry to finance them) to reach all of these "open doors". If you want to help EDRi, [you can donate some money](#) to them or help them with publicity for their actions. With [EDRi-gram](#) there is a newsletter about their work. It's a good news source for everyone interested in digital rights on the European level.

Article written by: Florian Stascheck

Featured Image: JuPis, Bingen (Germany) | [CC-BY-SA](#): Tobias M. Eckrich

Written by Daniel Ebbert published at August 13, 2012

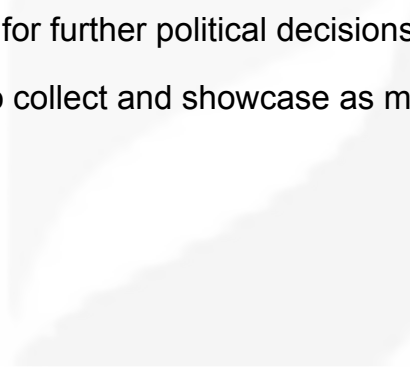
How Sweden Found an Effective Way of Broadening their Politics

In less than two years the Swedish Pirate Party has grown from a single-issue movement to an all-encompassing party with a growing political platform. All of this was achieved through a democratic process of crowdsourcing, mostly thanks to the party's new official "broadening blog".

The Swedish Pirate Party started out in 2006 as a single-issue political party, focusing on only a handful of issues concerning copyright, patents and privacy. In the early years, most members agreed that this was the way to go - they would sail into parliament, change the world and leave content.

After the national election in 2010, in which the party only **increased its votes** by 0.02 %, more and more members realised that for the party to succeed in the long term, it would have to encompass a broader spectrum of political issues. In 2011 the party board started on a new declaration of principles, which was accepted by members in the spring meeting of 2012. The spring meeting also saw the first new decisions outside of the original focus areas.

In the wake of the spring meeting, party leader Anna Troberg alongside board member Henrik Brändén **launched a WordPress blog** with the heading of "Nu breddar vi Piratpartiet!" - "Let's broaden the Pirate Party!". The blog was opened up for anyone interested - party member or not - to send in posts with suggestions for further political decisions, no matter the relevance to previous positions. The idea was to collect and showcase as many ideas as possible, allowing for discussion in the comments.



According to Troberg, the choice of a WordPress blog has helped in letting anyone join in the conversation. "It's very simple and yes, sometimes you wish you had something more tailor made for the task, but the brilliant thing is that everybody can use it. No one is left to view the discussions from the sidelines. Sometimes the perfect tool is not the most fancy one, but the one people feel comfortable using." Members or non-members with political suggestions are free to e-mail these to the administrators, who cue them up for posting.

The blog was met with a hugely positive response, and immediately started updating on a daily basis, with comments per post ranging from just a few to several hundred. A few months in, over a hundred posts and several thousands comments had been posted on the blog. The contributors vary, from our party's representative in the European Parliament Amelia Andersdotter, to party board members, blogger activists and just regular members or supporters who wish to discuss their idea. All they have in common is a shared will to change the party for

the better.

"To my surprise, most submissions to the blog have come from pirates that usually do not make themselves heard", says Troberg. "I think that's great. It shows that we have much more brain power than we thought we had."

As would be expected, the content of the posts themselves can be of varied quality, and vary in the amount of support they receive. Posts such as one asking to [throw foreign criminals out of the country](#) because "you don't commit crimes if you risk having to return to a potential war zone" were heavily criticised but were, nonetheless, kept by the moderators as they wished to let all opinions breathe, good or bad, and let the members sort controversies out democratically. Other posts, such as one on [legalising the use of cannabis](#), divided commentators and bloggers, becoming the blog's most commented post with over 200 comments.

According to Troberg, no texts have been rejected and no comments have been deleted: "You can express any view you like, as long as you express it nicely. Sometimes we have to tell people to be a little bit nicer to each other, but so far that has been enough. No comment has been deleted and no commentator banned. I'm very happy about this as I feel it's very important that our new, broader political platform is born out of positivity and agreement and not out of anger and fighting."

The first results of the blog in the party's platform are likely to showcase in the member meeting in October, where new political decisions can be suggested and voted on by members.

Featured Image: Pirates Sweden | [CC BY-SA 3.0](#) Kent Holmblad

Written by Anton Nordenfur published at August 13, 2012

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