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German Pirates debate Europe, Economics and Eurocrisis



On 29 and 30 September 2012, over 100 Pirates from the Pirate Party of Germany met to

discuss Economic and European Policy at the Conference for Europe, Economics and Finance (or EuWiKon, as the German acronym goes) in Essen, North Rhine-Westphalia.

The meeting was a preparatory measure for the upcoming 2013 German national elections. The German Pirates previously had been criticised for having little substance in their manifesto beyond the International Pirate consensus. Last weekend they set out to fill in some of the blanks in two important policy fields.

The goal of the conference was to put forth motions for approval by the national party convention in the end of November this year. In the run-up to the conference the PPDE's permanent working groups, as well as individual pirates, had already done a lot of preparatory work. The task for EuWiKon was to determine the best of those drafts and refine them. Or, as Laura Dornheim of the Working Group Economics put it in her opening keynote: "Let's dig for gold!"

The participants entered into very lively discussions about an abundance of issues. Wherever possible, they were joined by external commentators who followed the conference via teleconferencing or video stream.

The trolls, who often plague mailing lists and the Twittersphere, mostly seemed to have stayed at home. Because of this, even though debates were very thorough and some controversial arguments were brought up, the discussions did produce an impressive list of results.

The working group for European topics debated and finished several draft motions. This included a preamble with a clear pro-European stance. The text acknowledges the achievements of European integration, but calls for increased democratic legitimacy.

There was also a draft, for part of the election manifesto, which states some clear demands with which to tackle this problem. This included a strengthening of the European Parliament as well

as facilitative measures for starting a European Citizen's Initiative. They also drafted a motion about which requirements, in terms of democratic legitimation and transparency, the German Pirates should demand for the process of a European Constitutional Convention, when the time comes.

The EuWiKon Pirates also debated a wide array of economic topics. A working group, which was originally founded to discuss the European Stability Mechanism, prepared a motion to help Europe's ailing economies by allowing another haircut on debt, while protecting smaller investors. Another discussion about European economics ended up producing a draft motion about a strict separation of commercial and investment banks.

The working group on taxes and a guaranteed basic income further discussed one perspective of implementing such a basic income. A motion on this has already been entered into PPDE's internal online voting system, LiquidFeedback (LQFB), to assess how it would function at the party convention. Another group discussed whether the party manifesto should include a chapter on entrepreneurship and self-employment. Yet another working group worked on a motion on fighting lobbying through greater transparency. These groups were also testing the waters in LQFB.

Besides the fixed schedule there were so-called "Bar Camps" on additional topics related to EuWiKon's core subject. Most of these groups did not produce finished draft texts, as they were merely meant to be entry-points into certain topics and did not have the same preparatory backing as the fixed events. Even though the Pirate's debates on these issues is in a very early stage, some very interesting ideas have been brought up there.

Topics included what is called the 3rd Industrial Revolution, a concept that predicts economic

prosperity from decentralized and renewable electric power generation, backed by an internet-powered smart grid. In the words of Anke Domscheit-Berg, who introduced the topic, the aim is "power to the people, with a double meaning".

Another group discussed the impact of European agricultural policy on development, and discussed whether abolishing import tariffs on agricultural products might be an effective way of development aid. They formulated an aim for European agriculture to consist of sustainable and organic farming.

All in all, EuWiKon was a very productive working session for the German Pirates, which complemented their usual online working methods. Anders Bernhard, one of the three coordinators of the Working Group Europe, when asked to give his overall impression of the conference, said "[EuWiKon] is a damn good method to [...] really get some work done."

Laura Dornheim of the Working Group Economics stated in a summary interview about the whole weekend that "Now nobody should say we had no clue about Euro[pean], Economic or Finance policy. We have a lot of super smart and committed people [on these topics]."

The deadline for submitting motions for the national convention is still a few weeks away, so PPDE's working groups can now concentrate on putting the final touches on the drafts, before subjecting them to the scrutiny of the whole party. It is expected that at least some of the motions will make it into the PPDE's manifesto, thereby strengthening their profile and making good on the party's announcement to fill in the blanks.

Some quotes were kindly provided by the "Krähennest" Pirate Podcast.

Further reading:

EuWiKon Homepage (German)

<http://euwikon.de/>

Pages of Working Groups Economics and Europe in the PPDE party wiki (German)

http://wiki.piratenpartei.de/AG_Wirtschaft

http://wiki.piratenpartei.de/AG_Europa

Krähenest Podcasts about the conference, includes a large number of interviews (German)

<https://blog.piratenpartei-nrw.de/kraehennest/tag/euwikon/>

Image Source: One of the discussion groups of the PPDE's EuWiKon conference at work.

CC-BY Paul Wardenga

Written by Paul Wardenga published at October 6, 2012

PPI blocked from becoming observer members of WIPO



In its General Assembly meeting of October, 3, 2012, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has chosen to wait until 2013 to take a decision on the observer membership application of the PPI. Torn between the recent evidences of the Pirate Parties influence in several national elections and the objections of several of its member states, the UN

agency chose to take no side and wait for a future ruling about political parties applications.

The **application** made by PPI meet all the requirements by WIPO for observer membership and the Secretary General of WIPO supported the application and proposed that "the Assemblies include the said NGOs in the category of international NGOs". Despite this, the General Assembly of WIPO decided to wait with taking a vote on accepting PPI as observer members until next meeting in 2013. Denis Simonet, who sent the application on behalf of the board of PPI, just found out about the result through **the same source** we did and has nothing to add about the decision until he gets more formal replies from WIPO.

When an international NGO becomes an observer they are allowed to attend committee and working group meetings if "their subject matter seems to be of direct interest to that NGO". Concerning their observers WIPO "**seeks to involve** NGOs, IGOs, industry groups and all other stakeholders as widely as possible in consultation processes and debates about current issues". Though WIPO itself doesn't follow a dogma of enforcing restrictive intellectual property, and is actually quite open to alternatives, the main part of its observers consists of association related to the music and film industry. The majority of them being supporters of strengthening the intellectual property protection, this being contrary to what PPI stands for, might have been part of the reasons for not accepting PPI as an observer member at this General Assembly. Within the current observers there are only a few exceptions, like the Electronic Frontier Foundation and IP Justice, who might have a different view on intellectual property than the majority.

The pirate movement was considered important enough for some countries to go against WIPO's recommendation of accepting PPI as observer members.

"the US, Switzerland [and] France raised objections in the informal consultations, and [...] some other European countries wanted to raise objections, but found it awkward given the recent success of domestic Pirate Parties in national elections. The USA said it asked for a hold on the decision until WIPO could decide if it wanted to accept political parties as WIPO observers. One

delegate said European countries were concerned that the Pirate Parties would take "political action" back home when they disagreed with positions taken by the official delegates at the WIPO meetings" ([source](#))

An opposing view on intellectual property from PPI would probably make WIPO debates more deep and useful. From the application to WIPO we can see some of the main discussions that PPI wants to take part of inside WIPO meetings: "Intellectual property issues of particular interest to PPI include copying monopoly and related issues, users' freedoms on the internet, developing laws and standards, economics of copying and new business methods, and enforcement of copying monopoly." ([source](#))

WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) is the agency of the United Nations dedicated to the protection of intellectual property on a global scale. It administers most of the international intellectual property regulation services, examples include the Patent Cooperation Treaty, the Madrid system for Trademark Registration and the Hague system for Design Registration. It counts 184 member states and about 350 observers.

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Featured image: CC-BY-NC-ND, United Nations - Geneva

Image Source: Featured image is CC-BY-NC-ND, United Nations - Geneva

Written by Josef Ohlsson Collentine published at October 3, 2012

Open Source Textbooks: Learning Was Meant to be Free



On Friday, 28 September 2012, a small group of Finnish math teachers decided to have a **hackathon**, no, not the normal software type of hackathon. This group of teachers decided to hack together a math textbook. In three days.

Version 0.9 of the textbook was made available via Github on the 30th as a downloadable PDF. The book only needs a cover, a few illustrations, and proofreading to be considered complete.

Not only was this book **written over a long weekend**, the authors have decided to release it under a Creative Commons Attribution license, which means that anyone who wants to is able to adapt the textbook to suit their needs, distribute the work, or use it commercially, as long as the work is attributed to the original creator and the same license is applied to whatever derivative creations emerge.

Many school districts around the world are strapped financially. Income is down and costs are up. One of the costs that schools are constantly confronted with are textbook costs. Whether through overuse or obsolescence, school districts go through many textbooks every year.

The problem with textbooks is that the vast majority of them are made by a small number of companies, these companies then charge school districts between 50 dollars to upwards of 200 dollars or more per book, not to mention the prices college students have to pay each semester.

Open source textbooks have started gaining traction in helping alleviate costs. Since 2001, California has been working on the California Open Source Textbook Project. This project's goal

is to create free, open source, e-textbooks for California's school systems. Currently, California has over 6 million students in public K-12 schools and spends over 400 million dollars for textbooks, each year. Open source textbooks can seriously reduce, and possibly eliminate, that cost.

Earlier this year, Poland started an initiative aimed at creating open source textbooks for 9 to 11 year olds. Ostensibly this would most likely be a pilot program that would later be spread to all other grades and ages if successful.

Currently, a school district can opt to either write their own textbooks, which would be easy to do with a subject like math or English, especially if they stick to public domain stories for reading exercises or purchase books from an outfit such as [Flat World Knowledge](#).

Flat World Knowledge offers all of their textbooks for free to read on their website. Professors or teachers can opt to use one of their books as-is or alter it as needed for their course. Students are then able to use the book either from the website or they can be purchased in several formats, such as a printed book, PDF, or Amazon Kindle format. The vast majority of books on FWK's website cost less than 45 dollars. More books and subjects are being added all the time.

The difference between FWK's approach and that of the Finnish teachers' is in which Creative Commons license they use. FWK uses the BY-NC-SA license, which is the Attribution, Non-Commercial, Share-Alike license, which means purchasers are free to distribute the PDF or Kindle file to as many people as they like, so, for example, a group of students could chip in a few dollars each and purchase a Kindle format file that can be shared amongst themselves.

When a child is home doing their homework, another problem emerges: If a student has trouble grasping a mathematical formula, the student can use the free Khan Academy website to watch educational videos recorded by Salman Khan.

Salman Khan started Khan Academy to help students master their educational goals. The site features over 3000 videos narrated by Khan in which he talks about whichever subject the student needs. There are many videos devoted to math, the humanities, computer science, and more. He even has a section devoted to problems on the 2004 SAT math section.

Granted, [Khan Academy](#) was not designed to replace the standard model of education, but it does help when a flesh and blood teacher is unavailable.

We are living in an age when all of the world's knowledge, from the time of Socrates to today is available, and easily accessible, by any and all. There is no reason why there should be illiteracy or a lack of education of any kind in the world today.

Written by Brad Hall published at October 2, 2012

Pirate Lost Mayoral Election in Saarlouis, Germany



In Sunday's mayoral election in Saarlouis, Germany, the Pirate candidate ended up with 3.2 % of the votes, losing to the incumbent mayor.

The Pirate candidate was [Thomas Brockmann](#), 50, a freelance journalist who was seeking to bring more transparency and citizen participation to Saarlouis. Brockmann also suggested city projects for the citizens, such as a public swimming pool.

Due to low funds, Brockmann's campaign was **much smaller** than those of his opponents, costing about ?1,000 in total. In comparison, Christian democrat candidate Marion Jost's campaign cost ?15,000, while incumbent mayor, social democrat Roland Henz spent ?25,000.

Mayoral elections in Saarlouis have seen declining turnouts since the 1980's, which the incumbent mayor **acknowledged** in a post earlier this week, in which he encouraged citizens to vote. At the Saarland state elections earlier this year (at which the Pirate Party gained four seats), only 61 % voted. The turnout at Sunday's elections was a mere 43 % according to **SR Online**.

Featured image is CC BY Piratenpartei Deutschland.

Written by Anton Nordenfur published at September 30, 2012

Send a Friend to NDAA Jail



The screenshot shows a Facebook app interface with a black header containing a barbed wire graphic and the text "SHARE Tweet". The main heading is "PUT YOUR FRIENDS IN JAIL". Below this, there is a paragraph explaining the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act and a call to action: "1. Use this Facebook app to 'jail' your friends and spread word about the NDAA!". A visual shows a man's photo being transformed into a photo with jail bars. A second paragraph explains how the app works: it integrates with a Facebook account to post a friend's photo with jail bars and a link to the app.

Icelandic Pirate **Birgitta Jónsdóttir** is working against the 2012 NDAA (National Defence Authorisation Act) that allows the US military to detain citizens from any country, including US citizens, without limit and without trial. She recently tweeted about an app from **DemandProgress** that aims to spread awareness and opposition to the act.

The app takes a picture of a Facebook friend and superimposes prison bars over it. This is then posted to the friend's wall for them and all their friends to see and a link learn about NDAA and

how to oppose it is offered. There are a number of points about this action that are of interest to Pirates.

Firstly there is the question about privacy. Should one, as a Pirate, simply copy, manipulate and post a picture without their express permission? Well it is Facebook, and if the friend was that worried about privacy then they would probably not be there. But in general one should only do this to friends who are open to a bit of fun for a political cause.

Then there is the matter of the NDAA act itself. There cannot be much doubt that the act contravenes basic human rights, international law, habeas corpus and the right to a fair trial. Also, the bill was negotiated in secret by a select few members of Congress and has not had the proper review by Congress let alone been subject to the transparency of public consultation. It has been ruled unconstitutional by a United States court but the Obama administration is appealing that decision. Pirates and activists around the world are dismayed and determined to work against another example of the loss of freedom for a perceived increase in security.

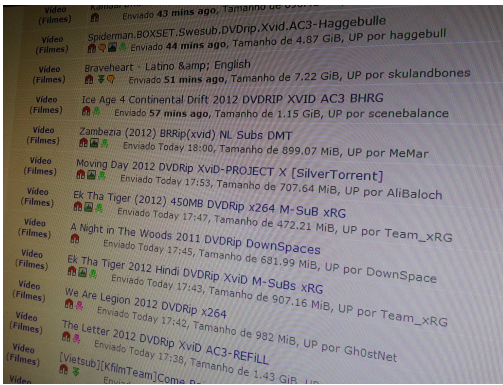
Lastly there is the question of how we can use this clever kind of guerilla marketing for the Pirate cause? That is in your hands. We do not and never will probably have the access to funds that the mainstream parties have as we abjure donations from commercial entities. But we do have a wealth of creative energy and talent. Let's get those creative juices flowing.

You can find the app [here](#).

Image Source: Put your friends in jail.

Written by Andrew Reitemeyer published at September 29, 2012

Portugal Declares File-Sharing for Personal Use Legal



After the anti-piracy group ACAPOR reported IP addresses of 2,000 suspected file sharers, the Portuguese Department of Investigation and Penal Action (DIAP) has come to a somewhat surprising conclusion: not only will these file sharers not be prosecuted, but it seems that file sharing for personal use is not illegal in Portugal.

The DIAP prosecutor argues that copyright should not restrict the "right to education, culture, and freedom in cyberspace". While the report doesn't specifically cover uploading original content, it is legal to both download and to share the content, for example via torrent seeding. Quoted in [Exame Informática](#), the report says:

"Furthermore, from a legal point of view, even in these networks where a user both uploads and downloads files, the act is lawful [...] even if they don't cease sharing after having finished downloading."

The prosecutor further praises the actions taken in reporting these suspected file-sharers, as this has enabled a re-invigoration of a much needed reform of copyright law in the digital age. The report also points out that an IP address does not represent a human being, but a computer network. It also claims that the ACAPOR were required to give proof that the media shared was declared as not to be shared publicly.

The ACAPOR are not happy with the result. Director Nuno Pereira claims that as many of the files were films which at the time were running in cinema, "it would be common knowledge" that they were not to be shared. They severely criticise the DIAP outcome, arguing that "the prosecutors just found a way to adapt the law to their interest - and that interest is not having to send 2000 letters, hear 2000 people and investigate 2000 computers."

Featured image is CC BY Anton Nordenfur.

Written by Anton Nordenfur published at September 28, 2012

Running an Information Stand



This is the first in a series of Pirate Times articles aimed at helping Pirates get the message to people in their community - even when they are short of funds.

An information stand can be a very effective way to let people know that the Pirate Party exists and is active in their area. It can also be a way to recruit new members to the party, get signatures for a petition or promote a candidate for an election. You don't need much to run a successful stand, just some time, some enthusiasm and the following. It can be inside or outside but we will concentrate on the outside version as the inside version is just the outside version without a sky.

Permission: Check with your local authorities about laws and by-laws and make sure you have any required permits to place an Information Stand on the site you want, if it is in a public place or the owner's consent, if it is on private land. You want to meet the public and not the police.

A Good Site: You want a place where plenty of people will be passing by but not where you will be causing an obstruction. Also, choose a place where people will spend some time. Near a

park or a market and during a street festival are both good examples. You should also be prepared to postpone the action if the weather is not conducive to people stopping and chatting for a while.

People: One person can do it but it is preferable to have more people - and more fun. Extroverts shine in this role but if you are a bit shy ? try dressing up a bit. A pirate hat, an eye patch or simply a Pirate Party t-shirt will help you adopt a more outgoing persona, even if it's just for the day. Make sure all participants know when and where to be well in advance.

Furniture: This is what makes an information stand different from a leafleting action. The minimum is a table. A folding table will do fine and you can even make one from cardboard boxes ? see this [Instructables.com](https://www.instructables.com) for example. Better still is either a garden umbrella or pavilion in your party's colour. Just make sure you have a way to anchor them against any wind - chasing a pavilion that's trying to use the street as a runway may be fun for the public to watch but not really for the one chasing it.

Information: That is what your are there for. Get leaflets et cetera from your party's head office or print them yourself (we will do a separate article on leaflets). A card or pamphlet that has contact details for your local and national Party.

Have some paper weights handy so that gusts of wind don't start distributing them for you. Know your party's manifesto and stand ready to discuss it. Know what is relevant to your local population and be able to listen and talk about it even if your party does not have a position ? tell people if they want the Pirates to take a position on something then they can join and work to get it done.

Attention Getters: A large poster is the minimum, people need to know who you are and use the logo ? a hand made one is fine. Better still are flags and, if you have a pavilion, banners. A pavement poster board is also a good way to get people to notice you. Other big attention getters are give-aways. Coffee can be done fairly cheaply. Food as well, if laws allow and your

budget can accommodate it. A cheaper alternative yet is candy, and while some will grab it and move on without a second look, they might get a more positive view of your party. Children love to get gifts and parents are happy to have their kids being entertained. Colourful folded paper ?pirate? boats, and balloon swords, parrots and hats are things that you can use to get into a conversation with parents and grandparents (this will also be the subject of a later article).

Clean up: Be responsible citizens and clean up afterwards. Check around for discarded leaflets and any other litter that came from your stand. It's impossible to police over your give-aways, and there will always be some who take leaflets and throw them on the ground. Try to pick up everything you find, or future bypassers will get a negative impression of the party.

A Debriefing Meeting: Hold a post mortem. Get everyone who took part to give their impressions and ideas about what went well and what didn't and how you can improve for the next one. Write a report and share it on your mailing list, wiki or website so that others can benefit from your experiences.

If you have been involved with the organising or participated in an information stand action and have ideas to contribute, please tell us in the comments section below.

Featured Image: CC BY-NC [Jing Zhou](#)

Image Source: CC BY-NY [Jing Zhou](http://www.jingz.de)

Written by Andrew Reitemeyer published at September 28, 2012

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