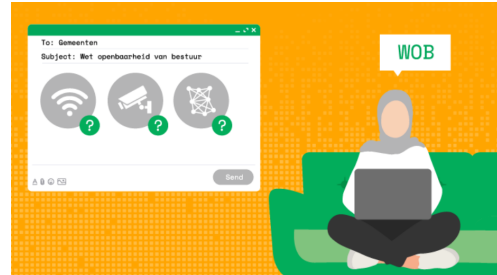


Date: March 2023



Bits of Freedom Annual Report 2022



PREFACE

Tech companies love to invoke urgency. On February 19, 2023, Sam Altman, CEO of the company developing ChatGPT, tweeted: “the adaptation to a world deeply integrated with AI tools is probably going to happen pretty quickly; the benefits (and fun!) have too much upside.” He concluded his thread with the words: “having time to understand what’s happening, how people want to use these tools, and how society can co-evolve is critical.”

The idea that society has to adjust to technological advancement is not new. Altman’s tweet was soon rightfully discredited by many as an outstanding example of tone-deaf technological determinism. This is the belief that technology follows its own set of laws and is a force outside our control. A force with its own will and timeline, which sooner or later society will have to adapt to.

Obviously, it is not technology, but the companies developing technology that hurtle forward at a solitary pace. They do so because there’s money to be made by speeding. Mega companies such as Altman’s, enrich themselves by exploiting vulnerabilities in our democratic processes and the rule of law. And by abusing laws and policies that aren’t *bully proof*. They seem to be able to act faster than anyone else, because they aren’t “encumbered” by democratic decision making. They take no responsibility for a collective and just future, nor show any concern for the victims of their reckless behavior.

Instead of condemning this conduct, governments surprisingly often replicate it. When the Dutch cabinet presents urgent measures, Parliament enters into urgent consultations, so that the urgent measures can be rolled out via an urgency procedure. Within a few weeks – or sometimes even a few days, regulatory bodies and NGOs issue urgent responses. But there is, of course, no time to process this feedback. Urgency rarely leads to strong legislation, let alone legislation that can count on broad support.

Or take this more concrete example. The Dutch police recently published their *framework for the deployment of facial-recognition technology*. *Fast* and related words feature four times in the half-page-long preface. And elsewhere in the document, the authors write: “Developments of both a societal and technological nature are occurring in rapid succession, often in a tempo that makes it difficult to keep pace with with formal legislation.” They conclude that, as long as society hasn’t “caught up”, the police must deploy facial recognition technology outside the law. But facial recognition technology isn’t a force of nature. Making use of potentially highly repressive technology, and doing so without a legal basis, is a choice. And the wrong one, if you ask us.

Urgency is a powerful weapon. When governments choose to mirror tech company’s extractive behavior, they not only become unpredictable and untrustworthy,

but they undermine their own legitimacy. The rule of law and our democratic processes are *by design* multivocal, and yes, in many ways sluggish. But these are strengths, not weaknesses. And it's high time the government starts regarding them as such.

For us, 2023 will be all about AI legislation, reclaiming an online space for civic discourse, and limiting government surveillance and censorship. We plan to invest in technological research, European campaigning and broad opposition to harmful digitization. But before speeding ahead, we'd like to take a moment to look back on the successes of the past year. *Kijk je mee?*

Bits of Freedom
March, 2023

TEAM

Evelyn Austin
Rejo Zenger
Inge Wannet
Lotte Houwing
Nadia Benaïssa
Bér Engels
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BOARD

Sophie Logothetis (chair)
Sahidah Somer (secretary)
Peter Rampertaap (treasurer)
Marjolein Lanzing
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1. HIGHLIGHTS OF 2022

When you ask us about our year, these are some of the things we like to talk about.

1. NEW EUROPEAN RULES PUT PRESSURE ON LARGE PLATFORMS

2022 saw the completion of the EU legislative procedures concerning the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act. The result is a set of rules we can use to protect people from the large online platforms and their toxic revenue model. Initial steps were also taken for implementing the rules across all EU member states.

Our advocacy contributed to significant improvements to the initial proposals. For example, a prohibition on advertising targeted at minors was included, chat services must become interoperable, and people will have more control over the recommendation systems feeding them information and the app stores on their devices.

In order to raise awareness, we combined our advocacy work with various big and small campaigns. We launched a newsletter about online platforms, developed 4 short video's explaining platform issues in an accessible manner, and came together with more than 20 civil society organizations to collectively organize against Big Tech. Armed with the new legislation, we look forward to continuing the fight in the coming years.

2. THE SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH OF OUR PODCAST MAKES OUR WORK EVEN MORE ACCESSIBLE

Following a successful Big Brother Awards podcast, we launched our bi-weekly [Bits of Freedom Podcast](#). We use it to make our work more accessible, and as a space for our wider-ranging interests and network.

In 2022, we chatted with artists Julia Janssen, Dries Depoorter and Eva Line de Boer about their work, with tech-expert Maarten den Braber about Mastodon and with member of parliament Lisa van Ginneken about her departure from Twitter. Robin Pocornie brought us up to speed on the complaint she submitted to the Netherlands Committee for Human Rights regarding discriminatory proctoring software, and Gerbrig Klos told us about Amnesty International's efforts to protect the right to demonstrate.

The podcast was well-received and each of the (seven) episodes was listened to ca. 1000 times. For each episode, a transcription was prepared by one of our volunteers.

3. WE PROTECTED THE RIGHT TO COMMUNICATION CONFIDENTIALLY

In 2022, the European Commission finally launched its long-awaited proposal for protecting children and young people from sexual abuse. Extremely important. But we worry the measures proposed by European legislators will actually **make people (including children) who communicate online even more vulnerable than they already were**. At the end of the year, the political battle really heated up. The European Parliament was still involved in negotiations concerning which working group was to preside. Simultaneously, member states were consulting behind closed doors, in search of compromises and interpretation.

To make sure that policy makers don't overlook fundamental human rights, we spoke with the representatives of the Dutch government in Brussels and with numerous European MEPs. We also met with the Ministry of Justice and Security, and made sure the legislative proposal was high on Parliament's agenda. Accompanied by our critical questions, preferably. Among others, we were very happy to see a motion calling on the cabinet not to accept any European proposals endangering end-to-end encryption being accepted by a large majority.

4. POLICY MAKERS LISTENED TO OUR CONCERNS ABOUT THE USE OF AI

In 2022, the European Parliament and the governments of the EU member states met frequently to discuss new rules for AI. We collaborated with our European sister organizations on writing amendments, and spoke to dozens of relevant officials, including the AI regulation co-rapporteur. We were also invited by the European Parliament to explain our position on biometric surveillance in the public space.

Back in The Hague, we were invited by the Senate to speak at a roundtable, delivered our message to the House of Representatives and, in order to influence the positions of other stakeholders, also spoke at several relevant conferences. All of this paid off. Increasingly, the legislative proposal reflects greater attention to the importance of transparency rights, and features more or stricter prohibitions on the use of AI, including predictive policing. Precisely the topics we've been fighting for!

5. WE REVEALED THAT DUTCH MUNICIPALITIES ARE NEGLIGENT WHEN IT COMES TO OUR PRIVACY

Dutch municipalities are head-over-heals in love with data. *The more, the better*, the motto seems to be. Be it complex criminality, youth care or combatting fraud: there's no problem that can't be solved with a bit of computation work – as long as we turn a blind eye to the fact that young people's fundamental rights are being violated and citizens are being used like test objects in municipal experiments.

We requested data from municipalities to investigate how the ten largest ones manage their privacy obligations. Our conclusion: municipalities don't comply well

at all with their legal requirements. Worse yet, only one municipality got a passing grade.

As a result of our investigation, the problem caught the attention of members of parliament. The government had to respond to parliamentary questions and the Minister for Digitization reached an agreement with the Association of Netherlands Municipalities to ensure that municipalities improve how they approach our privacy. To be continued!

6. IN FOUR VIDEOS, RAPPER FRESKU EXPLAINS THE INS AND OUTS OF ALGORITHMS AND PLATFORMS

In 2022, we launched the four-part video series [Data. Zo zit dat](#), in which rapper and Freedom Ambassador Fresku explores the ins and outs of data. For the project, we collaborated with Controle Alt Delete, the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL), the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) and Public Spaces. The topics of the video's were manipulative web design, data-driven profiling, platform monopolies and predictive policing.

During their launch, the videos reached more than fifty thousand people. The series was shown to an audience of 250 at the Amsterdam debating center, Pakhuis de Zwijger. The potential online reach of the videos via local broadcast AT5 is two million, and via [Cyberschool](#), three to four thousand young people.

7. MORE IN-HOUSE TECH-RESEARCH TO EXPOSE UNLAWFUL PRACTICES

Digitization has inherent risks. And unfortunately, those risks are increasingly becoming a reality. With the help of algorithms, companies are making us addicted to their exploitative platforms, and the government seems to have blind faith in discriminatory data. It is our aim to uncover proof of such unlawful practices and use it in legal actions and awareness campaigns and as part of our efforts to influence policy.

It was for this reason that, in 2022, we added a tech-researcher to our team. He immersed himself in the world of policy, created a research infrastructure (including tooling for obtaining Android app traffic) and began building a European network of tech researchers, lawyers and campaigners. We look forward with gusto to what this new role can mean for our European network!

8. DUTCH NGOS INVESTIGATE THE IMPACT OF BIG TECH ON CIVIL SOCIETY

We joined forces with more than 20 civil society organizations to investigate how Big Tech impacts NGOs in the Netherlands. In this way, we aim to help civil society understand and minimize manipulation and other harmful effects resulting from the use of Big Tech, and reclaim an online space for civic discourse.

We spoke with organizations fighting for climate-, migrant- and women's rights, and organizations fighting against racism. In the new year we'll explore courses of action together with Public Interest Litigation Project (PILP).

9. IMPROVING CAMPAIGN- AND RESEARCH TOOLING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Technology can and must help us move ahead in the fight for an open and just society. But it is clear to us that it can only do so if we use technology that is in line with our own values and message, and only if our use of it is progressive, inspiring and rewarding. As we see it, European digital rights organizations **must not only take the lead in this, but set the standard**. Imagine campaign tools that are privacy friendly and mobilize large numbers of people. Or donation software that contributes to the financial stability of NGOs and respects the dignity of donors.

It was for this reason that, in the past year, we analyzed how European NGOs presently utilize digital tools. We focused on three core areas: tooling for mobilization and campaigning; tooling for research and evidence gathering and tooling for running our offices.

Our first interim report, which touched on numerous points for improvement, was received very positively. To sum up, it is clear that we are not making optimum use of technology to achieve our objectives, and that, as a result, opportunities are being missed for converting increased interest in our work into greater engagement with our organizations and goals. *Werk aan de winkel!*

10. THANKS TO OUR ACTION, THE SECRET SERVICES DELETED THE DATA OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE

We filed a complaint against the secret services unlawfully storing large datasets. And with success! The Review Committee (CTIVD) ruled in our favor and ordered the intelligence services to delete the data in question. As a result, millions of people became better protected. Our action also sent an important signal about the (in)effectiveness of the regulatory system (which is in need of strengthening) and demonstrated that the intelligence and security services are not above the law.

Our complaint was mentioned frequently in Parliament and the media. We thus succeeded in shining a light on something that normally goes on in the shadows - particularly important, now that the limits to what the intelligence and security services may and may not do are again a topic of debate.

11. WE BLOCKED PLANS FOR A THIRD INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

In 2021, it came to light that the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) had secretly spied on people in the Netherlands. But instead of a good rap on the knuckles, the NCTV was rewarded by the minister for Justice and

Security with a bill to make such unlawful practices legal. This would have ushered in the Netherlands' third intelligence service.

We threw everything we had at preventing this from happening. For example, we played an important role in the organization of a parliamentary roundtable. In addition to ourselves, participants included Amnesty International Nederland and the Dutch Data Protection Authority. There was criticism from every quarter - except from the NCTV itself.

Members of Parliament took due notice. Since the roundtable, the bill has been dormant. Until it is withdrawn, or used to define the NCTV's coordinating tasks more clearly (and nothing more than that), we remain vigilant.

12. WE MADE SURE THE GOVERNMENT DIDN'T ABUSE ITS POWER TO CENSOR INFORMATION ONLINE

Even officials at the Ministry of Justice and Security have noticed that policy makers often react in an ad-hoc manner when it comes to information on the internet. And that brings with it unnecessary risks to human rights. But what is actually the role of the government with regard to online expression? When does the police have the right to request information be made inaccessible? And what is the role of mayors in maintaining public order? The Ministry wants to develop a framework that provides answers to questions like these.

This, of course, is our specialty. Which is why we were happy to be involved in the project in its early stages. This preparatory work ensures that, when the project really gets going in 2023, we can play a substantive role.

2. OUR FINANCES

Our annual financial report for 2022 was audited by WITH Accountants and can be downloaded from: <https://2022.bitsoffreedom.nl/>.

RESULTS 2022

INCOME

We had four unexpected windfalls this year. We received support from Stichting Sub3, as well as a large one-time gift from a company, and the police were (again) ordered to pay us a fifteen-thousand-euro penalty. Our umbrella organization, European Digital Rights, twice awarded us a small grant of ca. € 10,000 to support our European activities.

Our desired donor growth of ca. € 30,000 remained entirely unrealized. Although we succeeded in finding many new donors, an above-average number also left us. The increased costs of living and energy, inflation: some donors terminated their standing donation with pain in their hearts or found it necessary to reduce their contribution. Although, thanks to the above-mentioned windfalls, this won't cause problems in the short term, it is a worrying development for the longer term, one which could lead to forced down-sizing.

Table: Income 2022 (in euro)

	Realization 2022	Estimated 2022	Realization 2021
Individual donors	368,901	395,599	362,672
Foundations	574,000	412,000	408,161
Business supporters	139,157	95,000	90,423
Other	16,489	•	19,870
Subtotal	1,098,547	902,599	881,126
Project financing	258,893	255,108	137,383
Total	1,357,440	1,157,707	1,018,509

EXPENDITURES

On the expenditures side, four things stood out. After a number of years with fewer staff than anticipated, and therefore lower costs than budgeted for, we're finally at full force. Furthermore, we've been incrementally increasing our spending in the area of our communications, in order to increase the visibility of our organization and work among the general public. Aside from this, expenditures were overall somewhat lower, and it was luckily not necessary to dip into our long-term illness reserve.

Table: Expenditures 2022 (in euro)

	Realization 2022	Estimated 2022	Realization 2021
Personnel costs	718,479	740,669	478,800
Housing	29,508	32,418	26,720
Office	37,596	23,254	13,265
Communication	42,711	47,525	24,261
Building-up movement	16,005	26,850	3,705
General costs	32,408	52,282	35,297
Deductions	1,201	•	1,937
Subtotal	877,908	922,998	583,985
Projects	186,920	275,108	166,857
Total	1,064,828	1,198,106	750,842

All in all, this means that we close the year with a modest positive result which will be put to use in the coming years. It brings our special-purpose reserve to ca. € 600,000 and our continuity reserve to roughly 30% of our expected costs for the coming year.

In 2022, 7.1% of funds spent went to fundraising and 5.1% to administration. 85.9% was spent directly on achieving our objectives. This is in line with our principle of not spending more than 20% of our funds and our time on fundraising and administration.

SUPPORTED BY

FOUNDATIONS

For a portion of our work, it's difficult to obtain (sufficient) financial support from individual donors. For this reason, foundations are extremely important to us, both for the sustainability of our work and for the further development and growth of our organization. In some cases, foundations make it possible to take important steps at crucial moments, for instance by funding a new role in the team or research into a new work program.

In 2022, we received support for our core costs from:

- The [Adessium Foundation](#): works toward a society in which people live in harmony with one another and with their surroundings.
- The [Ford Foundation](#): works toward a fair and just society.
- The [Limelight Foundation](#): works toward a robust and free information ecosystem.
- [Open Society Foundations](#) (OSF): work toward robust and inclusive democracies.

- **Stichting Internet Domeinregistratie Nederland (SIDN)**: works toward a carefree digital world with opportunities for all.
- **Stichting Democratie & Media**: invests in independent, critical media and is dedicated to a robust democracy, based on the rule of law.
- **Stichting Sub3**: strives to provide people and organizations with opportunities for further development through the promotion of equality.

We received project financing from Aspiration Tech for our public-interest tech pilot, from Goeie Grutten for *Data. Zo zit dat*, from Luminare for *Litigating Big Tech* (in cooperation with PILP), from Gieskes-Strijbis Fonds for our work for a just society and for our partnership with Amnesty International, the Open State Foundation and Waag, and from Open Society Foundations within the context of the New Executives Fund.

DONORS

We concluded 2022 with 3,167 steady donors, from whom we receive funds on a monthly, quarterly or yearly basis. We also received donations from individuals 1,190 times via our website or by direct transfer. Donations from individual donors totaled € 368,901.

A strong and stable support base is indispensable to Bits of Freedom. Our donors not only enable us to work independently, but also play an essential role in amplifying our message and strengthening the legitimacy with which we can do our work. In 2022, we strengthened our connection to our support base by, among other things, expanding our quarterly donor update and involving donors more with our work. We also met up with many donors during an exclusive event at IMPAKT in Utrecht.

Something else we focused on in 2022 was tax deductible donating. We simplified the registration process by means of a special page on our website, to which we called attention during our *Ready-made Resolutions* year-end campaign. With success! Many steady donors re-registered as ANBI (public benefit organization) donors. On the one hand, this is financially beneficial to them and, on the other, it gives us the security of being able to count on their support for at least five years. Curious? You can read all about it on our website.

COMPANY DONORS

The following companies supported us in 2022:

With € 10,000 or more: Duckduckgo and Freedom Internet

With € 2,500 or more: BIT, Greenhost, IB-Vision, iunxi - serious ict infrastructure, Mollie, m7, Unc Inc, VoIPGRID and Voys

With € 1,000 or more: Cryptography in Context, Eureka Unlimited, Hunki Enterprises, Intermax Cloudsourcing, VBVB ICT and Yourhosting

With € 500 or more: Breedbandwinkel.nl, Considerati, CT&V advies, Easyswitch.nl, GeoCat, Green Mini host, Het Rooster B.V., iCulture, Mark Verhijde Advies & Projecten B.V., Mijndomein, NederHost, Nijweide BV, PrivacyLab, Prijs Vergelijken, Real-Connections, STRM Privacy, Sooda internetbureau B.V., Talksome, VPNGids.nl and Zygomatic

With € 250 or more as ZZP (independent worker without employees) donor: Charys, DevNomads, Digitaal Werktuig, Filosofie in actie, Game Changer Unltd., Leemshop, Lumifin Privacy Professionals, Mindshards

Finally, we received support in kind from: Bitonic, Blendle, Byte, CipherMail, Cyso / SQR.NL, DMARC Analyzer, Ekco, HAGENS, Jeroen Smeets, Mollie, Passbolt, Rick Pas-toor, Sentia and Xolphin.

BUDGET 2023

Projected expenditures 2023 (in euros)

	Budget 2023
Personnel costs	1,137,118
Housing	89,170
Office	21,204
Communication	118,648
Building-up movement	26,500
General costs	62,347
Subtotal	1,455,005
Projects	337,492
Total	1,792,479

Projected income 2023 (in euros)

	Budget 2023
Individual donors	424,000
Foundations	752,000
Company supporters	109,000
Other	-
Subtotal	1,285,000
Project financing	302,492
Total	1,587,492

In our expenditures, we allow for a staffing of 11.5 FTEs. A number of specific projects and events have already been budgeted at ca. € 340,000, with our own share set at € 25,000. Most of the income has already been promised.

We have multi-year arrangements for financial support with six foundations. Ad-essium Foundation is supporting us through 2025 with € 150,000 per year, Stichting Democratie & Media is supporting us through 2024 with € 35,000 per year and from Open Society Foundations (OSF) we received, in 2021, € 231,000 for the period 2022 through 2024. Limelight Foundation is supporting us through 2024 with € 85,000 per year, Stichting Internet Domeinregistratie Nederland (SIDN) is supporting us up to 2024 with € 30,000 per year and, finally, Sub3 is supporting us for the period from April, 2022 to April, 2024 with an amount totaling € 400,000. We hope to raise an additional € 175,000 in foundation support in 2023.

We hope to raise a total of € 424,000 from donors in 2023, which represents a substantial increase of ca. € 55,000 compared to last year. We hope to raise € 109,000 from companies.

Should we realize the above ambitions, the difference between our estimated income and expenditures will come to - € 204,987. This negative result will be supplemented with funds from the special-purpose reserve. Our continuity reserve will not be used in 2023.

OUR FINANCING IN THE COMING YEARS

DESIRED INCOME MIX

Bits of Freedom assigns great importance to having a sustainable financial situation, and it is our intention to remain fully independent. In drawing up our financial planning, we always try to look five years ahead. Our wish is for half of our income to come from individual donors. We would like to receive ca. 35% of our core funding from foundations and hope eventually to be able to receive ca. 15% from companies. At the present time, the share in income from donors (27% in 2023) and from company sponsoring (7% in 2023) is too low as compared to funding from foundations (47% in 2023). Finally, we see that the share in project financing (19% in 2023) is increasing each year. This involves risks in the areas of effectivity, durability, sustainability and good employment practice.

CHALLENGES

In 2023, we expect to realize our ambitions with regard to donor revenue through an extensive revamp of our own donation software and an enlargement of our shop, as well as through campaigns. Among others, we are currently developing a new donor flow in consultation with donors that will make donating to Bits of Freedom even simpler and more rewarding. Further, there will be a greater focus on micro-donations, and our donor portal will be expanded to include new functionality which simplifies tax deductible donations and gives donors greater control over their donation- and communication preferences. We are proud to be able to develop and offer this through our custom open-source donation software that gives top-priority to privacy.

We will invest in finding funding for our growing European ambitions in the areas of public campaigns and enforcement of the Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act. In part for this reason, we plan to give greater attention to our English-language communication and international visibility.

In the areas of asset management and financial reserves, we wish to maintain a continuity reserve of at least 25% of our annual costs for the coming year. That's on the low end of average for NGOs of our size. We expect to have a continuity reserve of ca. 30% at the end of 2023.

3. OUR REACH

In 2022, we reached millions of people via our own newsletters, social media channels and website. We also stimulated new interest through more than a hundred media appearances. We realized several micro-campaigns to further increase awareness about our activities and spoke at universities and on panels. We also wrote several blogs to keep our support base apprised of developments. Finally, we carried out more than a hundred lobby meetings and spoke three times as experts in the House of Representatives and once in the Senate.

Visit [our website](#) for a selection of video- and audio clips of our favorite media appearances.

4. PLANS FOR 2023

Looking ahead, these are the plans we are most excited about.

1. WE WILL DEVELOP A EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN TO SPOTLIGHT NEW PLATFORM USER RIGHTS

Europe-wide, new rights are going into force that better protect citizens from manipulation on the big platforms. That is fantastic news! But not everyone knows about it ... That's why in 2023 we'll be developing a national and European awareness campaign in cooperation with a broad coalition of civil society organizations. In particular, we want to strengthen the position of public-interest groups that rely on online tools to attain their goals. The campaign will launch at the beginning of 2024, when the new rules go into full effect.

2. WE WILL PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE AI REGULATION

In the past year, we substantially influenced the European proposal for rules around AI. The legislator shows increased focus on transparency rights and more or stricter prohibitions on AI applications, including predictive policing and biometric surveillance in the public space. Exactly what we have been fighting for! But there is still much to be done. That is why in 2023 we will continue to strive for a law that provides essential protection of human rights.

3. WE WILL ENCOURAGE THE GOVERNMENT TO MIND OUR PRIVACY (LAWS)

In 2022, we investigated the ten biggest Dutch municipalities and concluded that they don't comply well at all with privacy legislation. Worse yet, only one municipality got a passing grade. As a result of our investigation, the Minister of Digitization agreed with the Netherlands Municipalities on necessary improvements. This year, on the fifth anniversary of the General Data Protection Regulation, we will revisit the topic. What progress has been made in the past twelve months?

4. WE WILL CALL ATTENTION TO BIG TECH ON GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

Whether you need to contact Tax and Customs, your municipality, a care provider or your child's elementary school, there's a good chance that you'll need to use their websites. Unfortunately, many of these sites were not made with privacy in mind. In 2022, we began analyzing public and semi-public websites and the tracking that takes place on them. In the new year, we plan to call attention to the need for improvements. We will also make our tooling available to our European sister organizations so they can carry out the same research in their countries.

5. WE WILL USE THE OPEN GOVERNMENT ACT TO UNEARTH THE SOURCE CODE OF ALGORITHMS

How transparent should the government be about its use of algorithms? In our opinion, algorithms must be available on demand: the code, the context and possibly the input data, too. Certainly where algorithms are used to make decisions with a big impact on people's lives. The Netherlands wants to be digital frontrunner in Europe, so why not in the areas of transparency and verifiability? We're happy to help out!

6. WE WILL EXPOSE THE HIDDEN TRACKING IN CYCLE TRACKERS

Privacy violations on cycle tracking apps are rampant. People who menstruate and use such apps share a great deal of personal (medical) data, from which even pregnancy or abortion can be deduced. It's obvious that such data must be treated with care. Following a comprehensive investigation by Privacy International some years ago, we were curious: what is the current state of affairs? In 2023, we will be finalize legal and technical investigation into a number of widely used apps.

7. WE WILL IMPROVE EUROPEAN CAMPAIGNING CAPACITY

We're a small organization. But through smart use of advocacy and public pressure, we nevertheless get a lot done. We want to take the experience we've gained in the field of public communication and apply it to European campaigning challenges. Because more and more important legislation is made in Brussels, and national enforcement is increasingly taking on a European dimension. In the coming year, we plan to develop new tools and share these, along with our expertise, with our European partners. We're also currently working with other European organizations on a pilot campaign, whose central aim is raising awareness about the Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act and influencing how they are enforced. We hope that this pilot can serve as a model for future large-scale campaigns.

8. WE WILL CALL FOR STRONGER OVERSIGHT OF THE INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES

In 2022, the policy labyrinth of legislation for the intelligence and security services was further expanded, this time with a new, so-called temporary legislative supplement. The proposed Cyber Act is intended to give the intelligence and security services more room to collect and use data, and reduce oversight. A very bad move, as strong oversight is one of the few ways available to society for ensuring that these services do their work well, and in accordance with the law. In the coming year, we will do everything in our power to strengthen oversight of the intelligence and security services and to prevent them from being given expanded powers.

9. WE WILL FIGHT AGAINST PLANS FOR A THIRD INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

In 2021, it came to light that the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) had secretly spied on people in the Netherlands. Instead of a good rap on the knuckles, the NCTV was rewarded by the minister for justice and security with a bill to make such unlawful practices legal. This would have ushered-in the Netherlands' third intelligence service. We slowed down the minister's plans and in 2023, we will ensure that the bill intended to legalize the unlawful surveillance practices of the NCTV is used solely for the purpose of defining its existing tasks more clearly.

10. WE WILL MAKE SURE THAT WHEN GOVERNMENT USES ITS POWERS TO LIMIT OUR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, IT DOES SO RESPONSIBLY

The Ministry of Justice and Security is developing guidelines for determining when and how the government should have information removed from the internet. We were involved in the design process of the project last year, but the work won't really kick-off until 2023. What we'll be fighting for? Strict and clear guidelines that help government bodies understand the precise conditions under which they are allowed to impede on our freedom of expression. We will also engage to make sure the groups most affected by the measures are heard during the development of these guidelines.

11. WE WILL PROTECT THE RIGHT TO COMMUNICATE CONFIDENTIALLY

In the coming year, despite a disastrous and undermining proposal by the European Commission, we will see to it that the confidentiality of our online communications remains guaranteed.

12. WE WILL BUILD A EUROPEAN NETWORK OF TECH-RESEARCHERS AND POLICY ADVISORS

We need to increase our evidence gathering capacity in order to strengthen European civil society's litigation efforts, campaigns and policy work. That's why last year we added a tech-researcher to our team. He immersed himself in the world of policy, created a research infrastructure and began building a European network of tech researchers, lawyers and campaigners. In 2023 we will continue developing this network, and 'pilot' a few small-scale campaigns based on technical research.

13. WE WILL MOBILIZE WIDESPREAD AND DIVERSE RESISTANCE TO HARMFUL DIGITIZATION

Digitization is omnipresent. Those affected worst by it are not always well-represented in The Hague. We want all Dutch organizations that fight for an open and just society to be able to navigate the technological dimensions of the problems and developments they are confronting. We also want to ensure that civil society makes full

use of the advantages technology offers to attain its objectives. Only with a widespread and diverse movement championing the interests of everyone living in the Netherlands, will we be able to help keep digitization on the right path.

5. OUR ORGANIZATION

Bits of Freedom was founded in 1999. We shape internet policy in order to advance an open and just society. One in which people can hold power accountable and effectively question the status quo. We do this through advocacy, campaigning and litigation, in the Netherlands and Brussels.

Bits of Freedom has thirteen staff members, a board and an advisory committee. Hundreds of volunteers contribute their efforts each year. We are a founding and active member of European Digital Rights (EDRi). We receive financial support from thousands of donors and numerous company donors, foundations and project subsidies. To safeguard our independence, we do not accept money from governments.

Our team is composed of a mix of talented starters, experienced staff and promising trainees and interns. We are an inclusive workplace, with a diversity of perspectives. Our personnel policy promotes equal opportunities and aims to contribute to correcting inequalities in our organization, network and sector. Our employment policy is based on five pillars: socioeconomic security, equal opportunities, work autonomy, a healthy balance between work and private life, and professional development.

Last year, we welcomed Martijn de Heer, Joran van Apeldoorn and Ilja Schurink to our team. Our advisory committee said goodbye to Eleni Kosta and Antoinette Hertsensberg. They will be missed!

MORE ROOM FOR (YOUNG) TALENT

We adopted policy that encourages us to supervise a minimum of two interns and one trainee per year. One reason for this is our desire to shape our own field of work, including by increasing the influx of talented starters in civil society. But it is also because we believe that there is much that we can learn from trainees and interns. We consciously offer these positions to people who have less easy access to our field or are underrepresented in it.

INCREASING OUR PUBLIC-INTEREST TECHNOLOGY CAPACITY

In support of the European digital rights field, we hired two public interest technologists, namely a researcher and a web developer. Our technical researcher is tasked with collecting evidence of unlawful practices within Big Tech and our data-driven government. These findings are to be translated into policy demands, awareness campaigns and legal action. Our web developer investigated the state of play with regards to tooling use in the digital rights field. As digital rights organizations, it is imperative that our use of technology is in line with our values, convincing and inspirational. At present, that is not the case in a number of areas. The initial interim report is out and will be followed up on in 2023. We also designed a number of new

campaign tools and tested them within our organization. In the coming year, these will be further developed and made available to our European affiliates.

INVESTING IN EUROPEAN CAMPAIGNS

Over the past year we upped our European policy work, including developing new strategy to be as effective as possible in Brussels. During that process, we also saw a need to take the experience we've gained in the field of public communication and apply it to European campaigning challenges. In the coming year, we plan to develop new tools and share these, along with our expertise, with our European partners. We're also currently working with other European organizations on a pilot campaign, whose central aim is raising awareness about the Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act and influencing how they are enforced. We hope that this pilot can serve as a model for future large-scale campaigns.

STRENGTHENING ADVOCACY THROUGH COLLABORATION

In 2022 we met with over 20 civil society organizations to investigate the impact of Big Tech on civil society's ability to achieve its goals. We heard from organizations fighting against racism and for climate rights, and the rights of migrants, undocumented people and women. Different causes, but often with very similar problems: censorship, online hate and privacy concerns. In partnership with Controle Alt Delete, Digital Freedom Fund and EDRI, we organized the first European edition of the annual Color of Surveillance conference, which explores the interface between racism and surveillance. Also last year, we launched the four-part video series "Data. Zo zit" dat in cooperation with Controle Alt Delete, the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL), the Centre for research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) and Public Spaces. Finally, we joined forces with Amnesty International, Open State Foundation and Waag to better align and reinforce our advocacy work in The Hague. We look forward to building on our joint work, and continuing these collaborations in the upcoming year.

Bits of Freedom fights for your freedom and privacy on the internet.

These fundamental rights are essential for your development, for technological innovation and for the rule of law. But this freedom isn't self-evident. Your data is being stored and analysed. Your internet traffic is slowed down and blocked.

Bits of Freedom makes sure that your internet is your business.

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