



BITS OF FREEDOM

Annual Report 2020

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PREFACE

The rule of law was severely tested last year. In response to the global pandemic, the government took measures that resulted in far-reaching violations of our rights and liberties. Examples of this are our right to education, our freedom to conduct a business and our right to demonstrate. Our right to privacy was also examined and weighed. As we wrote on March 20th, restricting liberties ‘can serve a greater interest than that which the right to exercise these seeks to protect. In that sense, policy is always a balancing of interests. If done correctly, the government will do this with care and transparency.’

We also have a role to play in this. We believe it to be threefold. We must ensure that consideration is given not only to the opportunities offered by new technologies, but also to the risks that their use might entail. At the same time, we constructively engage with policy makers and politicians who have to act quickly under a tremendous amount of pressure. Finally, we inform people about the measures that are being taken and their possible courses of action.

The primary measures we occupied ourselves with last year were the contact tracing app, and the proposal to oblige telecom providers to share the location data of their customers. But that is not all that happened: healthcare providers were given easier

access to medical records, the hospitality industry was forced to ask customers for their health status and contact details, and we have all become much more dependent on digital tools.

We are proud of the contribution we made to how these (proposed) measures were developed and the scrutiny they were subjected to. We did this with a constructive attitude wherever possible, and with decisive action where necessary. Sometimes we played an important role in driving the discussion and on other occasions we took on an advisory role.

Taking on the responsibility of advocating for people’s rights with regard to these measures, meant other work had to be abandoned. We would have liked to make a greater contribution to new European regulation looking at platform power, and we postponed the launch of our ‘platform literacy’ project, ‘A Crash Course in Manipulation’, until 2021. Our work on the use of data and algorithms by the government and the dangers this poses to the rule of law has also met with delay. And just like so many other organisations, our events were cancelled this year: you were sorely missed at the Big Brother Awards and the Godwin Lecture.

Therefore, we will be starting the new year with a full calendar. But if we aim to have an impact in the years ahead, we must ensure that the core of our organisation remains strong and resilient. Therefore, we would like to conclude by drawing your attention to two important developments.

First, we want to talk about healthy working conditions. Unfortunately, burnout is all too common in our field and in the past year the importance of good employment practices and healthy working conditions became more clear than ever. The topic has been on our radar for a number of years and will receive even more attention in the years to come.

Second, we would like to provide some insight into our finances. Ever since our reestablishment just over ten years ago, obtaining structural support from individual donors has been a major focus point. Regular donors keep you on your toes (thanks to everyone who shared their concerns, criticisms and kudos with us last year) and their donations enable us to make long-term plans. 2020 was a difficult year financially for many people, of which we took note at the turn of the year. We lost considerably more donors than in any previous year. Thanks to solid financial management and the support of hundreds of new donors who joined us last year, this isn't an immediate cause for concern. However, if this trend were to continue, we may have to scale down

our ambitions in the next couple of years – and that when there is so much work to be done. This, too, will be an important concern for us in the coming year.

But first we would like to dwell on 2020 a bit longer. This annual report focuses on the most important events of the past year. These are the activities in which we take the greatest pride, and which have produced the greatest impact. We would like to thank everyone who has supported us – whether this is through a donation or through the contribution of time or knowledge. We look forward to making 2021 a year of many highlights, and we look forward to doing that with you.

Bits of Freedom, February 2021

Team

| | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Evelyn Austin | Lotte Houwing |
| Rejo Zenger | Nadia Benaissa |
| Inge Wannet | Bér Engels |
| Esther Crabbendam | |

Board

| |
|---------------------------------------|
| Sophie Logothetis (<i>chair</i>) |
| Judith Blijden (<i>secretary</i>) |
| Wiens van Asselt (<i>treasurer</i>) |
| Marjolein Lanzing |
| Janine Huizenga |

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We contributed to a safer contact tracing app

On the evening of Tuesday 7 April, Minister of Health Hugo de Jonge announced during a press conference that he wanted to explore the use of contact tracing apps. As soon as we heard the news, we took the initiative for what was soon called the Veilig Tegen Corona-coalitie (the ‘Safe Against Covid-19 Coalition’). Less than 24 hours later, together with Amnesty International Netherlands, the Dutch Platform for the Protection of Civil Rights and Waag society, among others, we published the preconditions and basic principles that such an app would have to satisfy: *if* an app like this has to be launched, we said, this is how it should be done. At the request of the Ministry of Health, we worked out these basic principles in more detail that very same week. Thanks to this quick response and the collaboration with top experts, we were able, to a large extent, to influence the discussion and development of the app. We were on the news regularly to comment on the latest developments, were invited to a [hearing](#) of the House of Representatives, provided the Ministry of Health with input in public and behind the scenes, and were one of the parties invited to take part in the official assessment of the Covid-19 measures organised by the Ministry.

With results! When we took stock at the end of the summer, we concluded that many of the basic principles of ‘[veiligtegen corona.nl](#)’ had been satisfied. Technically, the

app met almost all of our requirements for privacy and information security, and the development process was exceptionally open and transparent. Our most important demands were also met from a legal point of view: use of the app (or not) is always voluntary, and the law that legally facilitates its use is valid for a maximum of three months before it has to be renewed. Although some of our fundamental concerns remain, such as society’s increasing dependence on Google and Apple, we look back at a process in which the government, the House of Representatives, the technological community and civil society arrived at a good result under great pressure.

We protected your location data

We were not surprised when Minister of Health Hugo de Jonge announced that he wanted to force telecom providers to provide the traffic and location data of their customers. The Dutch Telecommunications Act was to be amended through a fast-tracked legislative process. The breakneck pace at which such a process takes place, makes it difficult for actors like Bits of Freedom to provide input. That is why we shared our concerns about the use of location data with Members of the House of Representatives even before the bill was introduced. We also shared our concerns in the media. Once the bill was introduced, it turned out that the Ministry of Economic Affairs could not sufficiently justify the proposed infringement of our fundamental rights. The bill is thus indicative of a larger problem: in a rush to embrace technological miracle cures, the protection of our rights and liberties is being pushed aside all too easily.

We continued to offer solicited and unsolicited advice, including during a hearing in the Dutch House of Representatives. After much criticism (the Council of State, the Dutch House of Representatives and the Dutch Data Protection Authority, among others, shared many of our concerns), the bill was amended on various points. However, the text continued to meet with resistance. It was therefore hardly surprising that with the fall of the government, the bill was declared controversial. To be continued...

We gave people practical advice on Fixjeprivacy.nl (Fix Your Privacy)

Since 2015, our volunteers have maintained the Internet Freedom Toolbox, a collection of advice, tools and manuals to help answer people's questions about privacy, freedom and security online. The website was given a gigantic makeover this year. For this update, we focused specifically on accessibility. You will find tips on safe video conferencing, how to use a password manager, adjust the privacy settings of your social media accounts and much more. We also introduced 'Toolkits', in which experts with specific roles or professions explain how they equip themselves online. Contributions were made by Daniël Verlaan (against hackers), Hadjar Benmiloud (for journalists) and Milou Deelen (against online harassment), among others. We are enormously grateful to the editorial team of just over 30 volunteers who made this website possible.

We gained access to the analysis of the police's 36 'high-risk' applications

The police cannot do their job properly if they lack the public's trust and confidence. It is therefore important that the police handle citizens' data with due care. In 2019, we submitted a FOIA request asking for the assessment reports of the police's 36 high-risk applications. We got our hands on the report (approx. 750 pages) almost a year later. What did we learn? Of the 36 'mission-critical' systems used by the police, not one complies with the rules on privacy and information security. Our analysis made the news: daily newspaper Trouw opened with it on the front page, and it was covered by the Dutch television news broadcaster NOS Journaal, as well as the daily newspapers NRC, Volkskrant and NU.nl, among others.

The large-scale violation by the police of law and policy in the field of privacy and information security is not new. The country's best-known law enforcer has a long history of breaking the law. Our conclusion therefore was twofold. Firstly, it is time that the police's failures have real consequences. In other words, the Dutch Data Protection Authority must enforce the law. In fact, this is long overdue. Secondly, the renewal of the Dutch Police Data Act (Wet politiegegevens, Wpg) should not only focus on what new rules are needed with regard to the changing use of data by the police. Attention must also be paid to the implementation and enforcement of these rules. Otherwise, we may have a lovely set of shiny new rules, but not a single police officer that complies with them. And for that everyone, including the police, will pay the price.

We launched a European campaign against biometric surveillance

Biometric surveillance technology is on the rise. By the end of 2019, at least fifteen European countries were already experimenting with this technology in public spaces. We believe that this is not appropriate in an open and free society. Biometric mass surveillance systems can exacerbate existing structural inequalities, accelerate unlawful profiling and inhibit freedom of expression and assembly. Mass surveillance on the streets prevents all people from participating in social and civic activities.

The social costs, in other words, are great. Too great. We therefore believe that the use of biometric mass surveillance in public spaces should be prohibited through legislation. Together with European Digital Rights (EDRi), we called on the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Member States of the European Union to act. We also launched the European 'Reclaim Your Face' coalition through which we aim to kindle the discussion on the deployment of biometric surveillance in public spaces and mobilise Europeans for legislation that protects our rights and freedoms.

We helped 10 organisations launch My Data Done Right in their countries

The General Data Protection Regulation has been in force since 2018. The GDPR gives you various rights which, in theory, enable you to have more agency over your personal data. Nevertheless, your rights should not remain a paper reality. That's why we launched My Data Done Right at the end of 2018: a tool that makes your rights come to life. My Data Done Right helps you to ask companies and institutions what data they have about you, and to have that data corrected, deleted or transferred. Tens of thousands of requests have been generated via the tool.

At the end of 2019, we launched a European partnership to ensure that the tool is accessible to as many people as possible. In 2020, we updated the functionality and design of the tool and as many as ten organisations localised and launched My Data Done Right in their own countries. From now on, residents of Portugal, Serbia, Spain and Sweden, among others, will be able to generate GDPR requests in their own language via mydatadoneright.eu. That's great news!

We browsed the Internet for 12 hours during the Internet Marathon

After we had to cancel the event in March due to Covid-19, the Internet Marathon finally took place in September at the Amsterdam debate center De Balie. For 12 hours we took a deep dive into the state of the Internet, together with scientists, experts and activists. We spoke to activist Renata Ávila and researcher Holly Robbins about manipulation on platforms and of elections, heard from Internet artists Rafael Rozendaal and Constant Dullaart, and asked Charlotte Bouwman ("Lijm de Zorg" or "Fix (Mental) Health Care) about the difference between online and offline campaigning. Green politician Kathalijne Buitenweg shared her experiences with misogyny on the Internet, Zawadi Done spoke about being an ethical hacker, and academic Tamar Sharon helped advance our thinking about big tech and the health industry. We had more than thirty guests in all and bade seventy visitors a warm yet Covid-19-proof welcome to De Balie. It was a remarkable exploration of fifty years of internet. We could easily talk about it for another twelve hours.

We built an online portal for our regular donors

Bits of Freedom receives financial support from thousands of donors. Over 3,000 of them contribute to our organisation by direct debit. Having regular donors is of crucial importance: their donations enable us to make long-term plans. They are the cornerstone of our work.

This year, we built an online portal for these regular donors that makes it possible for donors to manage their own data. From now on, you can, for example, change your account number, increase the amount of your donation or change the frequency of your donation all by yourself. And yes, you can also cancel your donation without our involvement. After all, that should be just as easy as becoming a donor.

We made regular appearances in the media

Our work made the headlines numerous times. We published several opinion pieces in newspapers and magazines and featured on radio and TV dozens of times. Here is a small selection of our A/V public appearances.

| | |
|--|--|
| Anticipating corona measures @ Iedereen Live | On location data @ the Dutch Parliament |
| About contact tracing apps @ national news broadcast NOS | Exploring Covid-19 surveillance @ podcast Radio Rechtsstaat |
| About contact tracing apps @ the Dutch Parliament | On GDPR violations @ Radio 1 |
| About online censorship and Fix Your Privacy @ podcast Damn, Honey | Explaining the data industry @ consumer rights show Kassa |
| On political micro-targeting @ Pointer | Our concerns about camera's and face recognition @ Business News Radio |

And...

We wrote about [platform power](#) and the [need](#) for [regulation](#). We provided the [government](#) and the [European Commission](#) with advice on regulating online content and also formed an opinion of the European Commission's plans for new [platform regulation](#). We participated in a meeting organized by ECP on cookie walls and personal data as a means of payment, and were, once again, engaged in [the protection of encryption](#).

In addition, we interpreted various [reports](#) that were published about the implementation of the 2017 Intelligence and Security Services Act ([Wet op de inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten](#)). We contributed to the position of our umbrella organisation, European Digital Rights (EDRi), on AI and provided input on the European Commission's AI White Paper. We also contributed to the EDRi positions on [immunity passports](#) and [biometric surveillance](#). In the Netherlands, we repeatedly called for more capacity for the [Dutch Data Protection Authority](#). Last but not least, Sarah Stapel completed an internship with us: she researched various measures taken to contain the coronavirus and [the data involved in this](#).

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ABOUT BITS OF FREEDOM

The statutory objective of Bits of Freedom is “to defend and promote digital civil rights in the information society, including the fundamental right to privacy and freedom of communication, and all related rights, in the broadest sense of the word.”

Team

We welcomed three new colleagues last year: Jason van der Leeuw (system administrator), Nadia Benaissa (policy officer) and Bér Engels (communication strategist). Nadia has a background as a GDPR lawyer and previously worked for a large municipality as a data protection officer. In addition to being a true activist at heart, she brings with her interesting experience from the public sector. Nadia will be working with us on a new dossier on data, algorithms and justice (formerly ‘Profiling’). Bér has a background in the music and events industry and previously worked at Cineville. Last but not least, Jason is a self-taught system administrator with a background in philosophy. Unfortunately, we decided to part ways at the end of the year.

Esther Crabbendam was our campaigner and has become our new movement builder. From 2021 onwards, she will focus on mobilising people in the battle for digital rights. The role of campaigner will be exchanged for that of a fundraiser. This person will be recruited in the year ahead and will be responsible for attracting individual and corporate donors.

Finally, the end of 2020 marked the departure of our graphic designer Karim Khamis. Karim joined Bits of Freedom in 2017 and had a big positive impact on our (visual) communications and on our team. Adjacent to his work for Bits of Freedom, Karim stayed on as art director for Cablai, the design agency he founded with George Adegite. From 2021 onwards Cablai is going to receive Karim’s full attention. He will sorely be missed, but we are excitedly awaiting the great projects Cablai will no doubt be churning out.

Board

We said goodbye to our treasurer Clemens la Lau and to Hermine Masmeyer, general board member with a focus on HR. We found two great successors in Wiens van Asselt (treasurer) and Janine Huizenga (general board member). Wiens has a long career behind him as a civil servant for the City of Amsterdam, and Janine is Department Head of Interactive Design at the Hague Royal Academy of Art.

One of the year's focus points for the board was finding a successor for our chair, Lonneke van der Velden. After having Lonneke aboard for nine years, the board will not only lose a passionate activist, academic and field expert, but also a board member with a great institutional memory. We are therefore very pleased that, after an extensive search, we were able to welcome Sophie Logothetis as chair and that Lonneke was able to help her make a smooth transition into her new role. Sophie works as a programme manager for the EU grant programme Europe for Citizens, which supports projects for civic participation and democratic engagement. She is also the liaison for a European cultural network called EUNIC. We look forward to the expertise and new perspectives Sophie will bring to the organisation!

Finally, the board and the director drew up a new multi-annual strategy for 2021-2025 and were in frequent contact concerning the impact of Covid-19 on the organisation and the team.

Volunteers

Covid-19, in combination with the lack of a movement builder, made this a rather uneventful year for our volunteers. The most important volunteer project we were engaged in in 2020 was the relaunch of the Internet Freedom Toolbox. In addition, our translation volunteers were as busy as ever, and we now have an impressive new group of creatives who will help us with our communications. We are very grateful to everyone who helped us last year!

Advisory Board

The advisory board is composed of prominent figures with expertise in the fields of law, politics, media/communication, art, technology, and business. In 2020, the advisory board consisted of the following members: Jaap-Henk Hoepman (chairman), Amade M'charek, Anneke Jansen, Antoinette Hertsenberg, Eleni Kosta, Linda Duits, Lineke Sneller, Maxim Februari, Mohamed el Maslouhi, Olaf Kolkman, Ot van Daalen and Sarah Hagens. The members of the advisory board do not receive any form of compensation, for expenses or otherwise.

More information on the staff, board members and advisory board members is available [at our website](#).

Our international network

We are one of the founders and active members of European Digital Rights (EDRi), a network of over 40 organisations fighting for internet freedom. We contributed to EDRi's new multi-year strategy and attended the General Assembly, which was held online this year. We also provided input to the Digital Freedom Fund and EDRi in the context of decolonising the digital rights field. Finally, we helped 13 organisations

localise My Data Done Right (translations and building a database of local organisations) and consolidated the way these organisations work together.

Our role as an employer

The health of our employees is deserving of even greater attention during a pandemic. A few times a week, we took stock of how everyone was doing, and took steps to help the team cope with the unusually stressful situation and changing working conditions. We also found ways to see each other safely face-to-face on a regular basis, even managing to get the whole team together in a Covid-19-proof situation twice.

As an employer, we have identified five areas of focus: offering livelihood security, offering equal opportunities, investing in professional development, setting up staff members so they can be in control of their work, and supporting staff in maintaining a proper work-life balance. Four policy documents will be completed in the coming year in regard of these five points: for the engagement of a confidential adviser and the establishment of a complaints committee, an update of our partner leave policy, a sabbatical policy and a pension policy. We will also regularly evaluate the workload of our staff and our working habits, and we will have an external assessment conducted of our remuneration policy and salary structure.

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OUR FINANCES

Our income in 2020

Bits of Freedom’s income in 2020 amounted to € 862,246. 37% of this came from individual donors, 43% from large funds, and 11% from business supporters. The remaining 9% came from project financing and the sale of merchandise.

Income 2020 (x € 1,000)

| | Realisation 2020 | Budgeted 2020 | Realisation 2019 |
|-------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Individual donors | 315 | 324 | 297 |
| Foundations | 372 | 293 | 208 |
| Corporate donors | 98 | 95 | 80 |
| Other | 6 | 0 | 3 |
| Subtotal | 791 | 712 | 588 |
| Project-based | 71 | 40 | 67 |
| Total | 862 | 752 | 655 |

We received € 18,649 more in support from individual donors than in 2019. We found 598 new regular donors and lost 454, which means a net growth of 144 donors. This means that we started 2021 with 3,178 regular donors.

In 2020 we received financial support for our core expenses from Adessium Foundation, Internet4all, Ford Foundation, Open Society Foundations, SIDN, and the Democracy and Media Foundation. We received project funding from Adessium and the SIDN Fund for Fixjeprivacy.nl and the Short Course on Manipulation.

We received support from the following companies in 2020.

€ 10,000 or more

Bitonic, Duckduckgo and Freedom Internet.

Supporting us in kind: Bitonic, Blendle, Byte, CipherMail, Cyso, Ekco, Leaseweb, Mollie, Passbolt, Rick Pastoor, Rootgamer, Sentia and Xolphin.

€ 2,500 or more

BIT, Greenhost, IB-Vision, iunxi - serious ict infrastructure, Mollie, m7, Startmail, Unc Inc, VoIPGRID and Voys.

€ 1,000 or more

Argeweb, Cryptography in Context, Eureka Unlimited, Hunki Enterprises, Intermax Cloudsourcing, Pcextreme, Root Legal and VBVV ICT.

€ 500 or more

Allekabels, Autoverzekering.nl, Considerati, CT&V Advies, Easyswitch.nl, GeoCat, Green Mini host, Het Rooster, iCulture, Independer, iPerity, Mijndomein, NederHost, Nijweide BV, PrivacyLab, Compare Price, RealConnections, Balance Management, Sooda internetbureau B.V., Telefoon Abonnement, Tifkap Enterprises, VPN services, VPN Gids and Zygomatic.

€ 250 or more

Philosophy in action, KennemerWeb - Alkmaars Webdesign, Leemshop, Lumifin Privacy Professionals, Mindshards.

Our expenses in 2020

Our expenditures in 2020 amounted to € 586,461:

Spending 2020 (x € 1,000)

| | Realisation 2020 | Budgeted 2020 | Realisation 2019 |
|-------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Staff | 431 | 618 | 503 |
| Housing | 26 | 29 | 32 |
| Office | 6 | 11 | 4 |
| Communication | 23 | 17 | 6 |
| Movement building | 17 | 22 | 17 |
| General expenses | 28 | 45 | 25 |
| Subtotal | 531 | 742 | 587 |
| Project-based | 55 | 45 | 44 |
| Total | 586 | 787 | 631 |

Result for 2020

In response to the global pandemic, we outlined various scenarios in March 2020, based on which we took measures to minimise the long-term risks to the organisation. We chose to anticipate disappointing revenues. The only cost item that can be substantially reduced is personnel costs. We therefore partially postponed the hiring of new employees: of the three new recruits who were to join us last year, we hired only one. This had an immediate impact on our expenditures.

In terms of income, too, 2020 was a very different year than planned. Although we welcomed an above-average number of new donors, an above-average number of donors cancelled their donations at the same time. This means that our donor numbers did not grow as anticipated, and that donor income was lower than budgeted. On the other hand, we derived more income than anticipated from foundations and corporate donors.

At the end of the day, it means that we end the year with a positive result. By the end of 2020, our continuity reserve had increased to € 605,185. We will be tapping into this reserve to strengthen the organisation again in the year ahead.

On a concluding note: we seek to work as efficiently as possible. The guiding principle is that no more than 20% of our resources is spent on fundraising, management and administration. In 2020, approximately 7.2% of our resources was spent on fundraising. The most important fundraising activity in 2020 was the organisation of two donor drives: one in August and one in November. In addition, about 7.8% of our expenditures were used for management and administration. Almost 85% of the available funds were directly spent on Bits of Freedom's primary objective: defending digital civil rights and internet freedom.

The Annual Financial Report for 2020 has been audited by WITH Accountants and is [available for download here](#).

Our budget for 2021

We expect to receive € 892,567 in income in 2021.

Budgeted income 2021 (x € 1,000)

| | Budgeted 2021 |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Individual donors | 314 |
| Foundations | 410 |
| Corporate donors | 85 |
| Other | 0 |
| Subtotal | 809 |
| Project-based | 84 |
| Total | 893 |

We want to find 400 new regular donors who contribute an average of € 65 per year. A number of foundations (Adessium, Internet4All, Ford Foundation, OSF, SIDN and the Democracy and Media Foundation) have already pledged their support for 2021, and it is our ambition to find a new fund that will support us in the form of structural funding (for about € 60,000). We believe that our income from corporate donations will remain more or less unchanged in the coming year. Our project income depends on funds granted for specific projects and events, and is expected to be around € 84,000.

The core expenses of Bits of Freedom are expected to amount to € 817,510 in 2021, taking into account a staff of six working four or more days a week and four part-time employees (8.25 FTE) as well as unforeseen costs. A number of specific projects and events have already been budgeted for an amount of € 104,200. These include the Big Brother Awards, the Crash Course in Online Manipulation and the further development of My Data Done Right. The actual project costs (and therefore the decision as to whether projects will be carried out) also depend on how many project grants are awarded. This brings the sum total of our anticipated expenditures to € 921,710.

Budgeted spending 2021 (x € 1,000)

| Budgeted 2021 | |
|-------------------|------------|
| Staff | 680 |
| Housing | 31 |
| Office | 13 |
| Communication | 26 |
| Movement building | 27 |
| General expenses | 41 |
| Subtotal | 818 |
| Project-based | 104 |
| Total | 922 |

Our budgeted spending exceeds our income by € 29,143. This deficit will be supplemented from the continuity reserve, which will then amount to approximately 49% of the expected costs for the next financial year.

Our finances in the coming years

A sustainable financial situation is of the utmost importance to Bits of Freedom, and we aim to remain completely independent. We always try to look five years ahead in our financial planning. We want half of our income to be generated by individual donors. With regard to the remaining percentage, we would like to receive about 35% from funds and foundations (preferably on a structural basis rather than on a project basis) and about 15% from corporate donors in due course. No corporate supporter may donate more than 10% of our continuity reserve.

It will be a challenge to realise our ambitions in the coming years. We will develop a new donor strategy in 2021 and hope, among other things, to close the year with 400 new donors through a donor campaign.

Most of the foundations that support our work, fund us for multiple years. In 2021, we will work on renewing a number of contracts that are due to expire. This leaves a gap in our budget of between € 60,000 and € 150,000 every year for the next few years. We aim partly to fill this gap by attracting new foundations. For the other part, we are using our reserve to strengthen the organisation so that we can meet the challenges of the years ahead.

In the field of asset management and financial reserves, Bits of Freedom aims to maintain a continuity reserve of at least a quarter of its annual costs for the coming year. We are currently well above that. This is a common percentage for NGOs of our size. This reserve can be tapped into in the event of unexpectedly high expenditures and unexpectedly disappointing or late income and allows us to guarantee the continuity of the foundation for several months. It also makes it possible to take responsible risks with the budget.

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OUR PLANS FOR 2021

It will be a challenging year, but we see many opportunities. These include opportunities to influence policy, to raise awareness and, by doing so, have a positive impact on the rights and freedoms of everyone in Europe, starting here in the Netherlands. Here is a preview of our plans for 2021.

We will stand up for your rights and liberties in the event of new Covid-19 measures

In 2020, we established the conditions for a good, substantive debate on the bill that would oblige telecom providers to share your location data. If the proposal is reconsidered, we will make sure that our views are heard by members of the House of Representatives and in the media. We will remain alert to the assessment and possible extension of the use of the Dutch contact tracing app and monitor the developments concerning ‘health passports’.

We will raise awareness about digital rights

Concurrent to the Dutch national elections, we aim to draw attention to digital rights via a ballot agreement and an election debate. We will also be launching the Crash Course on Manipulation to inform people about manipulation on YouTube, Instagram and Facebook. We are looking into supporting people who want to become active locally in the run-up to the municipal elections in 2022. An editorial team will keep fixjeprivacy.nl up to date to ensure there’s an independent place to go with questions about privacy and security online. We also look forward to hosting the 2021 Big Brother Awards at the end of the year.

We will outline the preconditions of a pluralistic online ecosystem

A small handful of multinationals dominate the online information landscape. It seems as if these platforms are getting more and more powerful and the position of citizens is becoming weaker and weaker. What will Bits of Freedom do about this? We aim to provide input to the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Dutch government on legislative proposals directed at the regulation of platforms. In this, we will focus primarily on interventions aimed at bringing about changes to the ecosystem, such as enforcing interoperability. Apart from this, we will ensure that the dominance of platforms and the importance of platform regulation is brought to the attention of the media and the Dutch parliament on a regular basis.

We will call attention to the irresponsible use of data and algorithms by the government

We aim to ensure that the possible risks of the use of data and algorithms are well-known to press and politicians. Together with EDRI, we will endeavour to make sure that new European AI regulation protects the rights and freedoms of citizens.

We will contribute to new rules for the police

We aim to draw the attention of the media and parliament to the structural violation of the Police Data Act by the police. We will provide input towards the modernisation of this Act and will encourage the Dutch Data Protection Authority to enforce it visibly and effectively.

We will fight for a ban on biometric surveillance in public space

We will advocate in The Hague and Brussels for a ban on biometric mass surveillance in public space. As part of the European ‘Reclaim Your Face’ coalition, we will raise awareness on this issue and launch a European Citizens’ Initiative.

We will call for better safeguards for the Intelligence and Security Services Act

The official Evaluation Committee has evaluated the Intelligence and Security Services Act. The committee arrived at a conclusion of which we were already aware: when the secret services collect and process data in bulk, our civil rights are insufficiently protected. Although the report was clear, nothing has changed in practice. The legislation itself must be improved. The current Amendment Proposal does not provide an answer to the problems outlined by the Evaluation Committee. So, more needs to be done. Until there is a sufficient level of protection in the Act itself, we will continue to provide solicited and unsolicited advice.

We will protect the limitless use of encryption

If you forget your laptop on the train, you don't want someone else to get hold of your files. And if you send an intimate message to your partner, you don't want others to read it. We use encryption to protect information online. Governments all over the world want investigative and secret services to have access to this encrypted information. However, this is at the expense of security. We will work to ensure that the Dutch government will do nothing to place any restrictions on the availability and use of encryption.

COLOPHON

Stichting Bits of Freedom (BoF) is based in Amsterdam and is registered with the Dutch Chamber of Commerce under number 34121286. The organisation consists of the board and the bureau, itself consisting of the director and the other employees. An independent advisory board assists the director with substantive strategic issues. The director is responsible for day-to-day and strategic management.

Bits of Freedom is a public welfare organisation (ANBI).

[Statutes](#)

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