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FSFE Newsletter - September 2014

- 6- Webographie -

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FSFE Newsletter - September 2014 An Introduction to Free Software and the liberation of cyberspace

The freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, and privacy are essential preconditions for a Free Society. If it lacks one of those freedoms, it is difficult to maintain the others. As a society, it is important to defend those freedoms, especially in light of fundamental changes such as the one introduced by the ubiquity of computers. Such changes can threaten old freedoms and can create the need for new ones. So now software freedom is crucial to distribute and balance power in society. The FSFE is convinced that a free society needs the freedoms which only Free Software can offer. That is, why we advocate Free Software.

In 2010, we wrote the article ["Democracy requires Free Software"](), explaining the message above to politicians at the ceremony at which the Theodor-Heuss medal was awarded to the FSFE. Thanks to FSFE's translators team, the article is meanwhile available in 15 languages, and is shared widely.

Since last month, the message of the importance of Free Software is also featured in a short TEDx video ["Introduction to Free Software and the liberation of cyberspace"]() by Richard Stallman. It is a good way to make others aware of the significance of Free Software and why it matters. We need more people to understand why Free Software matters for a free society, as the following examples will show once again. Slovakia still forcing users to use non-free software

In 2012 â€" thanks to our former intern Martin Husovec â€" the FSFE got engaged in [a case against the Slovak Tax Authorities]() together with the European Information Society Institute (EISi). As current FSFE intern [Matej Gera writes in his blog]() the problem of Slovak authorities forcing people to use non-free software is still ongoing : According to a new regulation in Slovakia, people who own agricultural land and want to sell it must make an offer on web page of the Ministry of Agriculture first. In order to submit an offer to the Ministry's web page, you need to use additional software. The software in question is proprietary and only available for Microsoft Windows, and it is the only way â€" there is no paper form. If you would try to sell the land otherwise, you would break the law.

This practice is not only unacceptable for Free Software users, but also unlawful itself in Slovakia. Since 2008, there is a binding regulation which forbids public authorities to request users to use a specific operating system. But the website of Ministry clearly does not comply with this rule. Now, the Slovak non-profit organisation EISi sent a letter to Ministry of Agriculture, calling to end this practice. If they will not comply with the letter and will not provide an interoperable solution until October, EISi will go to court to protect rights of Slovak software users. Forced by Internet Service Provider to use certain hardware

It should go without saying that in our society, we should be able to freely choose technical devices for use in our homes like we choose the furniture or the books in our shelves. But besides authorities forcing us to to use non-free software, the FSFE currently also has to counter companies who want to force us to use certain computers in our home. In this case even one of the most important computers : the router, which should act as the gatekeeper between our private network and the public internet.

In Germany, Internet service providers (ISPs) force their customers to use certain types of hardware in order to connect to the internet. Users of alternative devices, instead, are not able to connect to the internet by those ISPs. Together with other members of the Free Software community, our German team wrote several comments on this case and we entered talks with government agencies, corporations, and other organisations about compulsory routers.

As this topic was mainly covered in Germany and in German, our German team member Max Mehl summarised [this]()

case and made a timeline of the most important events which lead to the current state. We hope that with this information we can support other Free Software activists around the world, who might face similar problems. Something completely different FSFE has received television coverage twice in the last months. First, our legal coordinator Matija `uklje was interviewed for the RTV Slovenia to point out the challenges for the newly appointed Information Commissioner of Slovenia related to cloud computing. Although they translated the FSFE into "Foundation for unrestricted programming", it was the first time for the FSFE to appear on Slovenian television. Thereafter, our Austrian coordinator Peter Bubestinger was in Mexico City at an archiving seminar, where he presented use cases for file-formats and long-term storage implemented in Free Software. The whole seminar was translated live into Spanish and broadcasted on Televison Educativa, a nation-wide education TV channel. They also uploaded the videos to youtube. Peter's interview can be found at 3h50m. Guido Arnold published some education news covering a hacking contest to find security holes in Moodle, Free Software activists visiting schools in Slovakia, and other education related news. GNU community members and collaborators have discovered details about a five-country government surveillance program codenamed HACIENDA. Those same hackers have already worked out a Free Software countermeasure to thwart the program. Equipped with free GNU Radio software, a group of citizen scientists has contacted, controlled, and is attempting to recapture a 1970s-era satellite and bring it back into an orbit close to Earth. The story behind this demonstrates the importance of developing, maintaining, and promoting Free Software. From the planet aggregation : Hugo Roy takes a look at what is featured in the European Court of Justice's "right to be forgotten". As he found it difficult to read, he wrote an alternate version of the directive. In another post he explains why he helped the Free Software search engine developer Pablo Joubert to publish a defensive publication around search engines making use of distributed hash tables. Our former intern Lucile Falgueyrac writes about why TTIP & CETA entails a few reasons for Free Software advocates to get angry. She argues that now, there is a good moment to send a strong message to the European Commission, the governments and states that policy laundering is not a legitimate way to legislate, and never should be. Our current intern Bela Seeger wrote a blog post about Off-The-Record (OTR) Messaging, clarifying the meaning and technicalities of "off-the-record" (OTR) messaging and giving insight into the possibilities of implementing it in various devices. (You might have noticed in this edition, that current and former interns of FSFE are quite active !) Our Fellows participated at many events. Nikos Roussos writes about his personal highlights of the Fedora Contributor Conference 2014. He also mentioned the keynote about the Novena laptop project, which was summarised on LWN. Mario Fux and Mirko Böhm report from the KDE meeting in Randa, with around 50 Free Software activists improving KDE. To get some impressions from the meeting, Mirko posted a short video from the meeting in Switzerland. André Ockers, who is currently updating and translating almost all FSFE materials into Dutch, started blogging. He writes in English, Dutch, German, and French. Kevin Keijzer, also from the Netherlands, gives a detailed overview of Free Software he is using. Daniel Pocock gives an update on WebRTC, explaining what works, what does not. Matija reports from his free music expirement, highlighting his favourite artists who are using Creative Commons licenses for their music. Get active : Spread the word on Software Freedom Day

On 20 September 2014, people around the world celebrate Free Software. The organisers from Software Freedom International announced that the registration for events is now open. They provide a start guide with tips and pointers for organising your own SFD team event. If you organise an event, or just want to spread information about Free Software on Software Freedom Day you can also : order printed information materials from us send around the FSF's e-mail self defence guide which is now available in 11 languages. (At the "Freedom not Fear" demonstration our Berlin Fellowship group handed out a hundreds of printed leaflet of the German version, which you can also order from us.) share Richard Stallman's video, or the article mentioned above to explain your friends Free Software.

Thanks to all the volunteers, Fellows and corporate donors who enable our work, Matthias Kirschner - FSFE

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