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Bits of Freedom Annual Report 2024



PREFACE

Picture this: 2024 was the last year when we were reliant on American technology. The last year when the snaps of our summer vacations and Christmas dinners were shared on Big Tech, frame by frame. The last year when we granted Meta and Google unlimited licenses to use those pictures as they saw fit, while we pretended we had no idea that our photos were swallowed up into plagiarism machines, face recognition data bases and other surveillance infrastructure. The last year when all our email was sent via Google, and the last year when our government could not meet up without Microsoft. 2024 turned out to be the peak year for the Ring door bell, for X, the peak year for WhatsApp, before all those brands went downhill. Had we known, we could have truly enjoyed the nostalgia.

Impossible? In 1954 Roger Bannister, a British neurologist and athlete, ran the first sub-4 minute mile. A feat that scientists had always believed physiologically impossible. Over the next three years Bannister's achievement was followed by no less than sixteen others. Imagination is powerful. And so are good examples. Sometimes you just have to do something to know that you are capable of doing it. Dream big and let yourself be amazed about what is actually possible.

Our dependence on Big Tech is not solved with a simple switcheroo, of course. Simply replacing the million smart Amazon doorbells in our streets by homegrown models does not mean the race is won. Just like shifting our reliance to Signal for confidential communications is not a solution either. But do steps like that augment the power of the general public and the autonomy of our society? Most definitely. To win a race you don't need top-of-the-line running shoes - but you do have to lace up and run like there's no tomorrow.

Let's not use our dependence on Big Tech and the politics of spectacle in the United States as an excuse to ignore other issues closer to home. An upsurge in discrimination by the Dutch authorities, accompanied by more surveillance powers for those same authorities, to name a few. All against the background of a lack of political accountability and legislative bills that undermine a state under the rule of law.

Again, picture this: 2025 will be the year of change.

For 25 years Bits of Freedom has been committing itself to a just society. One of our main instruments is influencing legislation. We will continue to do so, but it is not enough. To put it bluntly: this government poses a risk to our state under the rule of law, and many government organizations and corporations care little about the law. Our resistance should grow, change, intensify. Reasons for Bits of Freedom to reinvent itself in this 25th milestone year. Our team is going through a process of growth and transformation, to enable us to campaign in new ways. This annual report gives you an overview of the goals we look forward to most. Plus, of course, our highlights and the chief developments in the past year. 2024: the olden days.

Happy reading!

Bits of Freedom

May 2025

TEAM

Evelyn Austin

Ilja Schurink

Inge Wannet

Isani Franzua Martinez

Joran van Apeldoorn

Lotje Beek

Lotte Houwing

Maartje Knaap

Martijn de Heer

Meri Urdaneta

Nadia Benaissa

Nico Voskamp

Rejo Zenger

Romée Postma

BOARD

Sophie Logothetis (chair)

Peter Rampertaap (treasurer)

Zusanna Leutscher (secretary)

Marjolein Lanzing

Rosien van Toor

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1. HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024

Just a few of the causes we championed this year.

1. WE TOOK A STAND AGAINST A SOCIAL MEDIA MINIMUM AGE

These days young adults spend an increasing amount of time on social media platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and TikTok. All this time online can have an effect on their physical, mental and social wellbeing. Not surprisingly there is a lively discussion going on worldwide about a social media age limit. In 2024 Norway and Australia introduced an age limit, which helped refuel the debate in the Netherlands.

We spoke out against an age limit as it does not address the underlying problem – i.e. that social media affects everyone’s mental health. Social media will get better only if you regulate the addictive and toxic effects.

We stuck to our guns, in the press [de Volkskrant], on the radio [Dit is de Dag], in our podcast and repeatedly in the Lower House’s Digital Affairs Committee, during round-table conversations on children’s rights online and manipulative influencers. And we succeeded: at this point the government will not introduce a strict social media minimum age.

2. WE MADE SURE THE ILLEGAL USE OF FACE RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY WAS PUNISHED BY A MULTIMILLION FINE

For years we have worked tirelessly to stop Clearview AI. Like an online vacuum cleaner this controversial American corporation has been hoovering up the faces of billions of people using face recognition technology. Those faces end up in a searchable database. Against a fee, Clearview AI then grants access to investigative services, including the Dutch police, so we suspect.

To us this was a major cause for concern. Not only because it is absurd that corporations make money out of databases stocked up with our faces. But also because it is plain illegal. In 2023 we tipped off the Dutch Data Protection Authority (DPA) asking them to take a closer look at Clearview AI.

In 2024 the DPA imposed a 30.5 million fine on Clearview plus penalties up to five million Euro. At the same time the DPA launched an investigation into the use by the police of this type of technology. And not a moment too soon. We look forward to the outcome of their investigation, which is due in 2025.

3. WE MOBILIZED FOR EUROPEAN AI LEGISLATION

Organizations and authorities increasingly use artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithms. They do not always use it the way they should and when they don’t, the impact on the general public can be dramatic. Mercifully, over the past years a

European law was in the pipeline regulating artificial intelligence. On 1 August 2024 this long-awaited AI regulation finally took effect.

During the drafting stage of the act we provided information. We analyzed numerous versions of the draft, spoke to organizations that could be stakeholders and of course we met with policy makers in The Hague and Brussels to draw attention to the interests of the general public.

With success! The act provides for stricter technical requirements for developers of AI systems, transparency rules for government agencies using those systems and accessibility criteria for high-risk systems. Other developments concern perspectives for legal action for victims of algorithmic systems, and a ban on certain applications. Is our work done? Definitely not. But we are proud of our achievements so far and see opportunities to further boost the protection of the general public.

4. WE HELPED PEOPLE STRENGTHEN THEIR DEFENSE AGAINST BIG TECH

Early 2024 two new European acts became fully effective: the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA). Acts that were drafted to halt the dominance and mechanisms of major online platforms.

To raise user awareness of these new rules and the possibilities to better defend their social media rights, we launched an international campaign together with communications agency KesselsKramer. We hooked up with activists and other (European) organizations to spread the message: 'Know your rights, be safe and stay loud'.

We created the website jouwplatformrechten.nl. The basic premise was that the website could be easily adopted and translated by other international organizations to optimize its reach (click [here](#) to see the Spanish version by the XNet organization). We also drew up a manifesto that was signed by nineteen organizations and activists, and assembled a toolkit that made it easier to share the message. Local news websites frequently ran advertisements for the message, obviously completely tracking-free. We thus succeeded in generating 460K impressions online. But offline, too, the campaign was hard to miss: we distributed flyers in activist locations throughout the Netherlands. The sum was that the campaign helped us make many users of online platforms put up and keep up a defense against Big Tech!

5. WE ADVOCATED THE RIGHT TO COMMUNICATE IN CONFIDENCE

For three years already European policy makers have been negotiating a bill that government agencies could use to force platforms to grant access to all user messages. Politicians want to use this so-called CSAM draft to protect children and young adults against online sexual abuse content. A commendable objective, but

the draft introduces untargeted surveillance, putting the confidentiality of communications at stake. This will hurt everyone, including the children and young adults the draft is meant to protect.

One of the more critical member states, the Netherlands played a decisive part in stopping the draft bill this past year. We met with the Ministry of Justice and Security on a regular basis but also with the Ministries of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, Economic Affairs and Foreign Affairs. We pointed out that there are many proven effective, technically feasible and legally tenable measures. Moreover, we informed other stakeholders like children's and human rights organizations, trade associations in the ICT and cyber security industries and academics, helping them to take a stance effectively.

Despite all signals and criticism, the Ministry of Justice and Security still wanted to adopt the draft. We contributed to public commotion, both directly and indirectly. For instance, we caused major media to highlight the risk to our freedom of communication. Succumbing to all external pressure the government finally decided not to adopt the draft as it would present too great a risk to our digital security. Although the draft is not yet off the table, its adoption seems farther away than ever. A solid win!

6. WE CALLED THE CITY OF AMSTERDAM TO ACCOUNT ABOUT THE PROFILING AND SURVEILLANCE OF CHILDREN

The objective of the City of Amsterdam's Top400 program (meanwhile also called 'Safe Alternative') is to prevent children from getting involved in serious and organized crime. From the moment an algorithm 'selects' children for the 'program', they are constantly monitored by various agencies. We were worrying about how children were selected and the dramatic consequences of selection, i.e. long-term sweeping surveillance.

Meanwhile the algorithm is no longer used. All well and good, but we want compensation for the 125 young adults who were selected by the algorithm. And we also want to make sure that in the future local authorities will not go back to using unjust algorithms to profile young adults. Represented by PILP, a pro bono law firm, and in consultation with the communities concerned we started a dialogue with the City of Amsterdam.

By the end of 2024 there were some early signs of success. Will we succeed in reaching a settlement with the city? Watch this space!

7. WE COORDINATED THE DUTCH CONTRIBUTION TO THE FREEDOM ON THE NET REPORT ON THE STATE OF INTERNET FREEDOM

Every year the international Freedom on the Net report describes the state of the internet. This project covers 72 countries, together representing 87 percent of internet users all over the world. In 2024, over 95 analysts and advisors contributed. This was the first year that the analysis included the Netherlands. Bits of Freedom acted as coordinator for the Netherlands.

Major developments were the implementation of the Digital Services Act, the position of the Netherlands on encryption and the new Cyber Operations (Temporary Provisions) Act [not really temporary] that was adopted in March. But we also brought to notice the online intimidation of journalists and the increased surveillance of activists, among others. High points were internet access and restricted website blockades.

These snapshots in time are significant. As 'objective' indicators of the status quo (also compared to other countries) and to identify unfavorable developments and points for action. We were happy to act as coordinator for the Netherlands.

8. WE MADE LINKEDIN STOP ITS TARGETED ADVERTISING BASED ON SENSITIVE USER DATA

The new European platform act, the Digital Services Act (DSA), which became fully effective early 2024, introduced stricter rules for major platforms and better protection of users. That calls for swift implementation and effective enforcement.

An issue at which we kept hammering away. We attended round table conversations of the European Commission on the progress of the new act. In The Hague we sat in as experts when the implementation act was discussed.

But it was not all talk and no action. Under the DSA it is possible to file a complaint if you suspect that online services or platforms do not play by the rules. Together with other European organizations we soon filed a complaint with the European Commission against LinkedIn. Advertisers could target advertisements at LinkedIn group names. Those group names are not personal data in themselves but indirectly contain sensitive information on the members of a group. Think of LinkedIn groups of political parties or groups based on themes like religion or LGT-BQIA+. We argued that this type of advertising was not permitted. And we were right! LinkedIn will amend its policy in that profiling based on such sensitive data is no longer possible. Here's to more victories in 2025!

9. WE BROUGHT ACTIVISTS AND EUROPEAN POLICY MAKERS TOGETHER

In 2024 European elections were held. The control and impact of the European Union on our daily lives is considerable. If the Union adopts strong legislation, everyone can benefit from digitization.

To encourage our freshly elected European representatives, we organized the Tech and Society Summit in Brussels together with 40 other organizations. Over 350 members of European Parliament attended this event, as well as other EU decision-makers, representatives of civic organizations and journalists. We brought activists and policy makers together to realize policies that would promote everyone's digital rights. Moreover, this was the very first summit on technology policies not financed by big technology corporations.

10. WE TURNED OUR BIG BROTHER AWARDS SPOTLIGHT ON THE WORST VIOLATORS OF OUR DIGITAL RIGHTS

The annual Big Brother Awards expose violations by corporations and authorities of our right to privacy and the freedom of communication. During the awards ceremony we call those violators to account.

In 2024 the public and a panel of experts chose the winners from four nominees, namely Dilan Yeşilgöz-Zegerius and Meta, X and Telegram combined. Yeşilgöz-Zegerius was nominated for leaving people unjustly included in a terror list to their fates. Meta, X and Telegram featured on the list of nominees for their roles in influencing and obstructing the public debate by removing the voices of innocent people in war zones from their platforms.

The 2024 ceremony's theme was counterpower, to inspire and motivate a broad public to join forces to defend our digital rights. We have no time to spare. The leaders must be kept in check. On a more positive note, for the first time we awarded the Felipe Rodriguez Award to not one but five deserving winners who fight for digital rights. Proof that counterpower comes in many shapes and forms. United we stand!

2. FINANCES

Our 2024 annual report has been audited by Coney Minds and can be downloaded [here](#).

2024 RESULTS

INCOME

Incidental larger donations from individual donors led to higher income than budgeted. By the end of 2024, we also saw a structural increase. However, attracting (new) corporate supporters and the associated income remains an important focus point.

Income 2024 (euros)

| | Actual 2024 | Budget 2024 | Actual 2023 |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Individual donors | 465,081 | 437,062 | 381,285 |
| Foundations | 868,877 | 971,792 | 683,973 |
| Corporate supporters | 111,050 | 130,000 | 112,333 |
| Other | 7,027 | - | 6,913 |
| Subtotal | 1,452,035 | 1,538,854 | 1,184,504 |
| Project funding | 317,447 | 259,758 | 314,884 |
| Net interest income | 16,110 | - | 6,611 |
| Total | 1,785,592 | 1,798,612 | 1,505,999 |

EXPENDITURES

We budgeted for 2024 with an expected negative result, planning to use our designated reserve. Reality turned out differently. Lower than planned personnel costs resulted in a better outcome. This deviation is due to evolving insights in the growth phase of the organization: a significant part of the planned staffing costs will shift to 2025.

To enable this growth, 2024 focused on future-proofing Bits of Freedom. Together with external advisors, we worked on a new organizational structure. From February 2025, we will switch to a co-director model. In Q1 of 2025, two new colleagues will start, followed by four additional hires later in the year. We also decided to reduce working hours from 40 to 36 hours per week. Combined, this explains the shift of personnel costs towards 2025. Finally, we reserved €50,000 for a move or renovation, which has (so far) not taken place.

Expenditures 2024 (euros)

| | Actual 2024 | Budget 2024 | Actual 2023 |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Personnel costs | 947,335 | 1,367,319 | 935,751 |
| Housing | 31,698 | 91,153 | 31,475 |
| Office | 19,818 | 24,204 | 20,021 |
| Communications | 46,992 | 141,602 | 102,011 |
| Movement building | 10,630 | 26,500 | 5,113 |
| General costs | 50,740 | 65,588 | 43,588 |
| Depreciation | 3,757 | - | 1,432 |
| Subtotal | 1,110,970 | 1,713,366 | 1,139,391 |
| Projects | 410,946 | 304,758 | 272,706 |
| Total | 1,521,916 | 2,018,124 | 1,412,097 |

We therefore close the year with a positive result, which will be used in the coming years. This brings our designated reserve to about €933K and our continuity reserve to about 25% of our costs for the coming year.

In 2024, we spent 6% of our expenditures on fundraising and about 4% on management and administration. 89.9% was spent directly on our mission. This aligns with our principle to spend no more than 20% of our budget and time on fundraising, management, and administration.

SUPPORTED BY

FOUNDATIONS

For some of our work, it is difficult to find (enough) financial support from individuals. Foundations therefore play an important role for us. They help secure the sustainability of our work and support the development and growth of the organization. Sometimes they make it possible to take a big step forward at a crucial moment, for example by funding a new role or research into a new work program.

In 2024, our core costs were supported by:

- [Adessium Foundation](#) – aims for a society in which people live in harmony with each other and their environment.
- [Internet4all](#) – supports activities that question, sharpen and develop the social position and significance of the internet.
- [Limelight Foundation](#) – advocates for a strong and free information ecosystem.
- [Open Society Foundations](#) (OSF) – works to strengthen resilient and inclusive democracies.
- [Stichting Internet Domeinregistratie Nederland](#) (SIDN) – works for an inclusive, worry-free digital life for everyone.
- [Stichting Democratie en Media](#) – invests in independent, critical media and a strong, fair democratic state.

We received project funding from Luminate for Litigating Big Tech (together with the Public Interest Litigation Project (PILP) and Nederland Wordt Beter), from Gieskes-Strijbis Fonds for our collaboration with Amnesty, Open State Foundation, Waag, Setup, and Public Spaces, and from Open Society Foundations as part of the New Executives Fund. We also received support from Goeie Grutten, SIDN fonds, Civitates, the Creative Industries Fund NL, and EDRI for our work on platform regulation and the Blijf Luid campaign.

DONORS

We closed 2024 with 3,228 regular donors whose contributions we collect monthly, quarterly or yearly. Additionally, we received 1,511 one-time donations through our website or via bank transfer. Altogether, individual donors contributed €440,835.

Especially in the second half of 2024, we saw a significant increase in new donors. This success is partly thanks to our long-running year-end campaign and increased visibility in national media. We also made [donating through our website](#) easier and faster, and launched new merchandise in our webshop.

We met our donors and corporate supporters at the Big Brother Awards and our anniversary celebration at Boogieland, where we unveiled a special 25 years pin for our donors.

CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

The following companies supported us in 2024:

With €10,000 or more:

Duckduckgo, team.blue, and Freedom Internet

With €2,500 or more:

BIT, Greenhost, IB-Vision, Unc Inc, and Voys

With €1,000 or more:

Cryptography in Context, Hunki Enterprises, Intermax Cloudsourcing, Root Legal, VBVB ICT, and Yourhosting

With €500 or more:

Breedbandwinkel.nl, Considerati, CT&V advies, GeoCat, Green Mini host, Het Rooster, iCulture, Mark Verhijde Advies en Projecten B.V., Mijndomein, NederHost, Nijweide BV, PrivacyLab, RealConnections, Talksme, and Zygomatic

With €250 or more:

Charys, DevNomads, Leemshop, and Mindshards

Finally, we received in-kind support from:

Byte, DMARC Analyzer, Ekco, Hosting.nl, Mollie, Passbolt, Rick Pastoor, Sentia, Smoose, Xolphin.

2025 BUDGET

Expected expenditures 2025 (euros)

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Personnel costs | 1,698,611 |
| Housing | 77,857 |
| Office | 41,984 |
| Communications | 87,307 |
| Movement building | 27,290 |
| General costs | 87,862 |
| Subtotal | 2,020,910 |
| Projects | 236,691 |
| Total | 2,257,601 |

Expected income 2025 (euros)

| | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Individual donors | 415,500 |
| Foundations | 959,792 |
| Corporate supporters | 115,000 |
| Subtotal | 1,490,292 |
| Project funding | 199,391 |
| Total | 1,689,683 |

In our expenditures, we plan for 16 FTE. A number of specific projects and events have already been budgeted, and the income largely pledged, for about €237K, of which we will contribute €47,000 ourselves.

We have multi-year agreements with six foundations. In 2025, our agreements with Adessium, Luminate, Goeie Grutten, Stichting Democratie en Media, and Stichting Internet Domeinregistratie Nederland (SIDN) will expire. We hope to extend these contracts. We aim to secure an additional €130,000 from foundations in 2025.

From donors, we aim to raise €415,000 in 2025. From companies, we hope to raise €115,000.

If we achieve these ambitions, the difference between budgeted income and expenses will be -€568,000. This negative result will be covered from our earmarked reserve. We will not use our continuity reserve in 2025.

OUR FUNDING IN THE COMING YEARS

FUNDING MIX

For Bits of Freedom, it is crucial to maintain a sustainable financial situation and remain fully independent. Our financial planning looks ahead five years. In recent

years, we have seen growing interest from private foundations in our work. Meanwhile, contributions from individual donors are growing more slowly. This means our funding mix is shifting slightly: the share of our income coming from foundations is increasing. In 2025, we expect to raise 25% of our income from donors, 7% from companies, 57% from foundations, and 12% will be allocated towards specific projects or programs, mostly from foundations. Since project funding carries risks for effectiveness, good employment practices, and safeguarding knowledge and expertise, it is not the ideal form of income.

RESERVE

Regarding asset management and financial reserves, Bits of Freedom aims to maintain a continuity reserve of at least 25% of our annual costs for the coming year. This is a common percentage for NGOs of our size. By the end of 2025, we expect to have a continuity reserve of about 25%.

3. OUR REACH

We were hard to miss in the national and international media: we had 171 media appearances. To further raise awareness of what we stand for, we spoke at universities and meetings. We held over 100 lobby meetings in Brussels and in The Hague, addressed the Lower House three times as experts, and our name came up 24 times in debates, Parliamentary questions, and in meeting and policy documents of the Lower House. In 2024 we reached millions of people through our own channels of communication (newsletters, social media, podcast and websites). Zooming in on specific topics, we wrote over 100 blogs to keep people informed of the latest developments. Each episode of our podcast had 1500 listeners on average.

Go to our website to see a selection of our favorite audio and video clips from our media appearances.

4. OUR PLANS FOR 2025

We are excited about our plans for the new year. Please get in touch if you'd like to know more.

1. WE INVESTIGATE THE MANIPULATIVE AND ADDICTIVE DESIGN OF ONLINE PLATFORMS

Together with design researcher Caroline Slinders and psychiatrist Dr Romaine Gadelrab we will conduct an in-depth investigation in 2025 into manipulative and addictive designs of online platforms. Not only will we draw up an unambiguous definition of what addictive design exactly is, we will identify the different forms. This investigation is different from earlier studies because of the interdisciplinary approach, combining the viewpoints of design, psychiatry and policy. The final research report will be the basis for our conversations with policymakers in the Netherlands and in the rest of Europe. This will give us the right tools to counter addictive design.

2. WE FILE A COMPLAINT ABOUT META'S PLATFORMS

In 2025 we will file a complaint about Meta's platforms. We strongly suspect Meta of making alterations to Facebook's and Instagrams interface and functioning, preventing users from fully benefiting from the rights and possibilities offered by the Digital Services Act (DSA), the new European platform act. Fortunately, the act contains legal safeguards that make it possible to contest violations by major platforms. After our successful claim against LinkedIn in 2024, we have high hopes for the impact of this complaint.

3. WE MAKE SURE THAT APPS HANDLE BODY DATA WITH DUE CARE

We feel that tracking your menstruation, ovulation and pregnancy with an app without your data being abused should be a given. But sadly that is not today's reality. Together with the pro bono law firm of PILP and the women's rights foundation Bureau Clara Wichmann we investigate popular apps that sell those data. Where necessary we will go to court to stop these apps. At the same time we will mobilize consumers to raise the pressure.

4. WE TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT HOW LOCAL AUTHORITIES USE ALGORITHMS

Once the government has its eyes on you, you risk unpredictable and unlawful treatment. A risk that seems to increase for people with low incomes, bicultural backgrounds and females. Examples are discrimination by the Tax Authorities, DUO (Education Executive Agency) and the City of Rotterdam. We say: only social algorithms in the social domain. The government should stop discriminating against people, intentionally or unintentionally. This is why we research algorithms used by local authorities. And this is why together with the general public we campaign to make local authorities stop.

5. WE EXAMINE HOW WE CAN MAKE THE GOVERNMENT ABIDE BY ITS DUTY OF CARE FOR A HEALTHY PUBLIC DEBATE

The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) spells it out: governments must allow for a healthy public debate. A debate that is extremely important because it fosters transparency, political participation and democratic decision-making. Such debate also affects the social positions of individuals and the economic opportunities of people and corporations. The current public debate, however, is strongly polarized, anything but accessible and imbalanced. Moreover, specific professions, like investigative reporters, are under increasing pressure. Together with experts we will investigate how the government can be compelled to fulfil its duty of care for a healthy public debate. A crucial issue!

6. WE PROTECT THE RIGHT TO COMMUNICATE IN CONFIDENCE

The right to confidential communication and the use of encryption are in heavy weather. The European Commission's proposal (the CSAM regulation), which aims at protecting children and young adults against sexual abuse, has still not been finalized. If no drastic amendments are made, the draft will clear the way for untargeted mass surveillance undermining encryption. We are fighting hard to get this draft off the table.

But this is not the only threat to the right to communicate in confidence: investigative services, politicians and authorities make the use of encryption increasingly and ever more explicitly difficult. They ask policy makers to come up with ways to make access to encrypted messages easier; even without any suspicions of specific criminal offenses. This is another development we try to halt. We keep committing ourselves to promoting government measures that have proven to be effective, technically feasible and legally tenable. Also in 2025.

7. WE DEDICATE OURSELVES TO A LEGISLATIVE DRAFT TO COMBAT ONLINE ADDICTION

Major online platforms are often designed specifically to influence user choices and to make users addicted to the platform. Starting in 2025 we will dedicate ourselves to a new European legislative draft that will regulate practices like this: the Digital Fairness Act. We expect a formidable corporate counter lobby, from Big Tech in particular. But this is not our first rodeo. We will make sure that policy makers will put the general public's interests first, and not Big Tech's deep pockets. We want clearly defined, enforceable rules that put a halt to addictive design. Our objective: a free and secure internet where people have control over their environment.

8. WE REACH OUT TO MORE PEOPLE AND INCREASE OUR VISIBILITY

Accessible communication about our work is our strong point. In 2025 we will take it a step further. We want to reach out to more people, become more visible and

leave an even more prominent mark in our areas of expertise. Our communications show our decisiveness: core messages that clearly explain what's going on, which specific steps we take and what you can do as an individual or organization. We pilot a data-driven campaign, to reach more people and quickly mobilize our followers and allies as events occur.

9. WE STEP UP CIVIL SOCIETY'S RESISTANCE TO THE DEVALUATION OF DEMOCRACY

We are convinced that a strong democracy under the rule of law is essential to live together in freedom and equality. Monitoring and fostering such democracy is a constant responsibility and requires sufficient civic space. Our legal and technological infrastructure should facilitate that space so public actors can freely move within that space.

For the first time we expect that we will have to work hard to guard the statutory framework within which we operate. What does that mean? There are many laws, regulations and policies that protect public actors like NGO's and journalists, and grant them (relative) powers. Examples are the Settling of Large-scale Losses or Damage (Class Actions) Act (WAMCA) and the Open Government Act (Woo). These are laws that make it easier to question and, where necessary, call to account the government. But now we see that the government tries to curtail these powers. Through new legislation like the Civil Society Organizations (Transparency) Act (Wtmo) the government seeks to thwart foundations and associations without involving the courts.

A good thing we are not alone. In 2025 we will join forces with some fifty organizations, activists and individuals from other areas like the judiciary and journalism, to monitor and foster our civic space.

10. WE ORGANIZE THE BIG BROTHER AWARDS

Every year the Big Brother Awards are presented to individuals, corporations and authorities that have committed gross violations of the general public's freedom of communication and privacy. Perhaps the least coveted prizes, these awards bring the crassest violators of our digital rights to the spotlight. 2025 sees the 20th anniversary of the Big Brother Awards. Reason for a special celebration and some extra bright lime light for the violators.

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 sixteen 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 corporate supporters, 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.

Developments in 2024

This past year we said goodbye to our tech investigator Joran van Apeldoorn and our working student Ramla Yusuuf. We welcomed Romée Postma as donor relations officer and Isani Franzua Martinez as HR and office manager. Daphne de Boer did an internship with us, and we worked with two freelancers, namely Zarlusht Zia and Sarah Berckenkamp. Zarlusht stood in as a designer, while Sarah helped us frame our new multiyear strategy and organizational structure. The Advisory Council took leave of Maxim Februari when his second term ended. Sahidah Somer left the board, which found a worthy successor in Zusanna Leutscher. Every member of the board and the team was very happy to see Sophie Logothetis, our incomparable chair, sign up for another term.

In 2024 we reduced our workweek from 40 hours to 36 hours. We also announced the switch to a co-director model, and meanwhile Nico Voskamp has started as managing director. Having joined us in 2021 in the department of partnerships and development, Nico is familiar with all the ins and outs of our organization. We adopted policies on short-term care leave and purchased leave. At the time of writing, everyone who has been with Bits of Freedom for more than a year has been appointed to the permanent staff. There are no freelancers working under long-term contracts.

Many partnerships were formed in 2024. We collaborated with Public Interest Litigation Project to take legal action against digital wrongs, and joined forces with Amnesty International Nederland, Open State Foundation, PublicSpaces, SETUP and

Waag for lobbying purposes in The Hague. In Brussels we established close working relationships within the umbrella organization European Digital Rights (EDRI). We look forward to continuing these partnerships in the coming year.

The Landelijke Vereniging van Klachtbehandelaars (LVKB) [Dutch Association of Complaints Officers] handles any complaints of misconduct against Bits of Freedom. In 2024 the LVKB did not receive any complaints against Bits of Freedom.

**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.

Bits of Freedom
bitsoffreedom.nl
🐦 [@bitsoffreedom](https://twitter.com/bitsoffreedom)
Prinseneiland 97HS
1013 LN Amsterdam

Contact:
Evelyn Austin
+31 20 261 8350
evelyn@bitsoffreedom.nl

B5EC 8503 1F6C BEC6 47E6
C0BA E7D0 CB5B 8803 65C9
(bitsoffreedom.nl/openpgp)

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