

Board Member Report

Koen De Voegt

Co-chair of PPI – From April 13th 2014 until July 5th 2015

Running for PPI co-chairperson was not something I planned a long time ahead. It literally only came to fruition the last few days before last years GA. Masa, Anders and I were spending some time leading up to that GA in Paris together. We knew there were some problems within PPI and believed the three of us together could help fix some issues and push PPI back in the right direction. And with some luck we did all get elected.

The first things I planned to tackle were the administrative issues that plagued PPI and after that clean up the online presence of PPI. Sadly I didn't manage to complete these basic things. Regardless progress was made and some nice things were organised.

Every time the PPI board changes these changes needs to be registered with the Registry of the Chamber of Commerce. This procedure has in the past always taken considerably longer than is needed. And although it could have been even faster we took the least amount of time compared to any previous board. The procedure is now documented on the wiki so I'm confident this will no longer pose a problem for future boards.

Every Belgian A(I)SBL needs to annually deposit an overview of it finances also at the Registry of the Chamber of Commerce. PPI had never done this before so we had to prepare and deposit the financial statements not only for 2014 but also for 2013 and 2012. The same documents can also be found on our wiki. The procedure and an extract of the relevant laws can also be found on the wiki now.

Although PPI is tax exempt it is not exempt from filing an annual tax return. This had also never been done before by PPI. PPI also received a fine for not filing taxes (625 euro). Me and Anders visited the tax office in Brussels in person to rectify the situation and file the tax returns for 2012 and 2013. By doing so we also got the fine favoured, but future lenience in this regard cannot be expected. Taxes for 2014 still need to be filed but we still have several months to do that.

There is also a hardcopy of all the afore mentioned documents at the seat of the organisation in Rue Gérard, Brussels.

PPI also organised it's second Think Twice conference. The date and place were already pretty much agreed upon by the previous board, date was set so it would be right before the Internet Governance Forum. The conference was in my opinion the most professional Conference PPI has ever organised, despite limited time and at that time no working bank account. Attendance was a less then we would have hoped for. Great thanks go to Arif Yildirim and PPNO. Without their contributions the conference would not have been possible. Also for the first time there was a publication made with the proceedings of the event. I took care of getting an ISSN number registered for PPI.

Calls from PPI members to organise an online GA were regularly heard, especially from non-European members. After a failed attempt to organise by the PPI board to organise an online GA

in October of 2014. I supported the proposal from PPAU to organise an online GA and worked actively with a few members of their board. Sadly this online GA did not take place because I was outmanoeuvred by certain people in our own PPI board.

As many of you know the original bank account of PPI, an account that was opened before the foundation of PPI HQ (the legal entity that is responsible for all PPI finances) is currently blocked. I've made two in person visits to our bank (the ethical bank TRIODOS in Brussels). The main problem is that PPI never managed to get all old and new signatories to that account to sign the same piece of paper and provide the necessary copies of ID cards to the bank. My approach was to gather all this documents with me personally and deliver them to the bank in person. I've never managed to get all that information because some of the people involved were hard to impossible to reach.

These are the things that were done during the last year and in which I very involved. I would also like to note a few other achievements made by other members of the board. With the help of PPLU PPI finally has a working bank account. There is also a full page dedicated to finances now, so the financials of PPI certainly have never been more transparent than they are now.

I think it must be clear to everyone that the administration of PPI has made a great leap forward. However there is clearly a big issue that remains to be solved, the blocked bank account. I still have not given up on this.

I'm well aware that I didn't achieve all goals I set out for myself as co-chair of PPI. I do believe I made a positive contribution to PPI during the last year. We have all seen the painful departure of PPAU, PPUK, PPSE and PPIS. Despite some important progress made on several key points last year was a black year for PPI because of this. I certainly can't say I blame any of them for leaving. PPI certainly never achieved its full potential. I do however strongly believe an organisation like PPI is necessary, and that it can be turned into a valuable asset for the Pirate movement world wide.

Last years PPI board was in my opinion not a real board. The last board was clearly dominated by one group of people. I've ironically noted that I feel more like an opposition leader in the parliament of PPI, than as a co-chairperson in the board of PPI. There clearly are two very distinct visions about what PPI should focus on. One is to focus on lobbying global organisations like WIPO. The other one is to focus on supporting small and starting PP's around the world and provide proper official channels of communication. I believe both equally are important. However for some of the more established European parties focus should be on lobbying. For the mostly smaller parties focus should on support and communication. The focus of PPI in the past has always been exclusively focused on the first goal to the extent that it was even preventing new board members to focus on the latter goal. Electing a new board that is properly international, one person per nation, is an absolute requirement for me personally to continue any work on PPI. These differences led to a lot of tensions, inefficiently and frustration. We never managed to form a coherent board with a common vision and goal. I've often felt useless, powerless and even embarrassed about being PPI chair.

However after many doubts I have decided to seek re-election. If re-elected however I will only commit to accept the function if the newly elected board is a really international board without any clear dominating group. If such a board were to be elected without me in it, I would still be willing to help out with paperwork in Brussels for example.

Koen De Voegt
PPI co-chair 2014-2015

