

FIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF BITS OF FREEDOM

1.

Bits of Freedom protects digital freedom in the 2010 general elections

After the fall of the Dutch Balkenende-IV government, the Bits of Freedom-community drafted a Manifesto for Digital Freedom, featuring nine policy proposals to protect digital freedoms in the future. A number of political parties immediately incorporated some of the manifesto's items in their election programs.

In order to then further improve the election programs, we drafted amendments to these programs and asked members of political parties to table them. Which led to five parties eventually incorporating a total of ten of our amendments in their final election program.

One month before the general elections, Bits of Freedom the launched the Digital Freedom Chart (www.digitalevrijheidswijzer.nl): a website that instantly shows which political parties promote digital freedom in their election programs. The site was discussed in dozens of media and blogs. Within a single day the site attracted over 25.000 visitors, and on election day over 50.000 people had visited it.

2.

Bits of Freedom halts 'Embed-tax'

Every day, millions of videos are being published on weblogs and social networks such as Hyves and Facebook. This is called embedding. Buma/Stemra, the Dutch rights holders organization, introduced the obligation for website-owners to compensate Buma/Stemra when embedding these videos. This even meant that everybody who would place these videos on Hyves or Facebook could expect a bill of a minimum of 130 Euro at the end of the month.

Bits of Freedom considers embedding to be an essential part of internet culture. Embedding is also important for Dutch musicians themselves, as a means of promoting their music. A charge on embedding would stifle the use of and promotion on weblogs and social media. Together with numerous concerned internet-users, we campaigned against Buma/Stemra. In part as a result of our campaign, Buma/Stemra retracted most of these new rules, only three days after publishing them. And since YouTube later agreed on a licensing-scheme with Buma/Stemra, the average blogger should not need to worry at all. The free embedding of videos remains safe, for now.

3.

Bits of Freedom helps internet users to protect themselves

Bits of Freedom does not only campaign, but also empowers internet users with practical tips to protect their online privacy. We developed "Webwijs" together with our experts and fans. In "Webwijs - Online Self-Defence in 5 Clicks", we explain how you can defend yourself with five simple measures against viruses, spam and privacy-infringements. Webwijs is free to use and free to share. The publication is available as a web guide (www.bof.nl/webwijs), a leaflet and a poster. For five days on a row, leading Dutch online news website Nu.nl published a 'click' on her website.

4.

Bits of Freedom exposes biggest privacy violators with the Big Brother Awards

Since 2001, Bits of Freedom organizes the Big Brother Awards to expose individuals, companies, governments and proposals which furthered surveillance on internet users or encouraged violations of our privacy. The Awards are granted by an independent expert jury. The ceremonies on 5 February 2010 received considerable media coverage on TV, in newspapers and on the internet. It was the sixth Dutch edition of this international initiative.

5.

Bits of Freedom achieves transparency on wiretapping

In The Netherlands, the number of telephones wiretapped per day equals the number in the United States in one entire year. This number has been made public after ongoing efforts by Bits of Freedom through Freedom of Information Act proceedings and the courts. Now that there is more transparency regarding the number of taps, we successfully convinced political parties to call for a critical investigations on the legitimate use of wiretapping. In 2009 the Minister of Justice finally promised a thorough report that should delve into our specific concerns.