

2019

ANNUAL TRANSPARENCY REPORT



openPetition

01 Overview

openPetition is a non-profit civil society platform funded by the donations of our users. We are politically neutral, transparent and independent of party politics and the economy. Data protection is an important cornerstone of our work. Our servers are based in certified data centres in Germany. Our team has been working towards further extending the outreach of our Berlin-based platform making openPetition one of the biggest petition platforms in Europe.

openPetition in numbers: 6,7 million people subscribed to our newsletter in 2019, 62.000 people subscribed to our facebook page, our platform was visited 17.5 million times last year.

Address: Greifswalder Straße 4, 10405 Berlin.

Team: CEO Jörg Mitzlaff employs eight full-time staff members, four in the IT department and four in the editing department, one of whom is participating in a special volunteer training program.

Find out more at: openpetition.eu/content/about_us

Networks & alliances openPetition is part of: Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement (BBE), Initiative Transparente Zivilgesellschaft, Charta der Vielfalt, Freiwilliges Jahr Beteiligung, Allianz Vielfältige Demokratie, Allianz Rechtssicherheit für politische Willensbildung, Berlin Institut für Partizipation, Mehr Demokratie, Netzwerk Bürgerbeteiligung, Strategienetzwerk Online-Partizipation, Volksentscheid Transparenz Berlin, Open Government Netzwerk

Finances: Our budget in 2019 was 1.017.077,67 euros. Our expenses amounted to 478.380,34 euros.

Our vision

- policy-making through home parliaments
- making openPetition international and promoting our mission all over Europe
- advocating for more political transparency and more democratic decision-making processes



Petitions in numbers: 4.43 million signatures, 2.313 newly published petitions, 18.282 contributions to debates, 1.296 statements made by politicians, 194 successful petitions.

Projects 2019:

- Diversity Management
- taking part in a consultation process at the state parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia as experts for citizen participation
- successful implementation of our petition tool for the public administration of cities and municipalities (opTo)
- support even more petitioners with their submissions to politicians
- openPetition goes international
- publishing of a petition handbook containing information about petitions in Europe as well as a ranking of the work of petition committees

02 Outstanding campaigns

In 2019, the commitment and activism of 958.778 people has been successful! 2019 was an exciting year: 2,307 new petitions were published on our platform, 4,43 million people supported them and we were able to gather 1,258 statements from politicians.

Freedom for lifesaver Sarah Mardini #freeSarah

The petition demanded freedom for **23-year-old Sarah Mardini** - lifesavers don't belong behind bars! She had been arrested in Athens for human trafficking, individual enrichment through donations, money laundering, espionage and membership in a criminal organisation. During her **escape from Syria**, Sarah and her younger sister Yusra (Olympic swimmer and UN Special Envoy for Refugees) **pulled the escape boat**, which had been in distress many sea miles away from the shore. She saved the lives of 18 people. The petition was submitted to German Foreign Secretary Heiko Maas asking him to make an effort to help Sarah. She was released on bail after 106 days under arrest.



Petition image. source: openpetition.de/lpgmrz



Say yes to organic shopping bags!

The initiators of a **petition in Austria** demanded a **ban on ordinary plastic bags**. With the help of open-Petition they managed to put the issue on the national parliament's agenda where the ban was finally approved. But the initiators and their **10.000 supporters** don't see their demand as fully approved yet - they are now fighting for a law that makes labelling organic shopping bags mandatory.

Save public swimming pools!



Both photos taken by openPetition staff, November 2019

With their petition, the **German Water Rescue Society (DLRG)** aimed at combatting the trend of more and more public swimming pools closing. They managed to gather more than 120.000 signatures and were able to submit them in a spectacular way: The president of the DLRG himself carried the signatures over the river Spree in a lifeboat to arrive right at the German parliament and hand over the signatures to Marian Wendt, head of the German petitions committee, and other MPs.



They have been successful: To end the trend of public swimming pools closing, the different parties involved came to agree on a masterplan between communities, federal states and the federation, which clarified how financing would be shared.

Callout for a fair practical year for medical students



Photo during a demonstration, source: openpetition.de/l/fairespj

The **Federal Representation of Medical Students in Germany** called for a fair practical year for medical students. They demanded the improvement of the future doctors' training and **fairer working conditions**: with higher students' financial assistance, sick days, courses and better equipment at the workplace. The initiators organised a Germany-wide day of action with many **demonstrations**, managed to gather 108.000 signatures and handed over the petition to the Federal Ministry of Health.

03 Our projects

In addition to the continuation of already established projects, the openPetition team has overcome a number of other hurdles and tested and improved the platform. Here you can learn a little more about projects that we have pushed forward together and thus made successful.

Implementing our openDemocracy Tool in several municipalities



Many petitions deal with local politics. **To ensure that this participation is taken seriously and that concerns are dealt with, we designed the so-called openDemocracy-Tool (opTo).** This software enables the launch of petitions directly on a local authority's website. The mayor is obliged to reply and when a certain quorum is reached, the city council will discuss the topic. In this way, citizens' concerns can be conveyed **directly to the representatives** and statements of the parliament will be published transparently. We offer opTo for free.

Implementing opTo and making it more popular was one of our main projects in 2019, for which we redesigned the website **www.openDemokratie.de** and contacted more than 3,000 mayors in Germany. The Hessian municipality of Karben was the first to implement opTo and other municipalities quickly followed. Meanwhile **more than 100,000 citizens benefit from the tool**, can start a petition on the municipality's own website and contact their mayor easily. In the future we want to give more people this opportunity - in more countries and languages.

Networking & events

openPetition is now a member of **several networks and alliances**. The Berlin Institute for Participation invited us to a „Democracy Dialogue“, where we had the opportunity to talk to representatives of the media and civil society about our work and experiences.

Furthermore, we accompanied the process of the **Open Government Partnership Germany**. We are a member of the academic strategy network „Online Participation“, from which numerous research cooperations have resulted.



Rita Schuhmacher and Jörg Mitzlaff,
photo owned by Berlin Institut für Partizipation

We are now a recognised organisation in the „Volunteer Year Participation“ program and were able to recruit Conner Defosse, our first volunteer within this program. He organised and conducted a workshop at the BerMUN conference in Berlin with students from all over the world. With the participation of our openPetition staff in numerous conferences and workshops such as a conference on urban planning and the TINCON, a youth edition of the well-known digital fair re:publica, we always stay up to date.

Moreover, openPetition participated in a dialogue with **people from the Ukraine and China in two lectures and discussion rounds**. On the basis of German petition law, the potential and possibilities of democracy promotion through digitalisation and petition platforms were demonstrated.

In-house changes

The openPetition team has repositioned itself in 2019: the Tech Team has grown by three people. With the introduction of a Lean Salary, i.e. a transparent and comprehensible basic salary based on the median income in Berlin for each role in the team, we are fulfilling our outstanding responsibility as a platform financed by donations.



„The salary should not be a cause for status thinking, envy, resentment and power struggles between colleagues. We introduced the Lean Salary because performance in a team is a basic requirement for working at openPetition.“

Jörg Mitzlaff, founder of openPetition

04 Our vision

The steadily growing participation on our platform allows only one conclusion: **More and more citizens want to actively participate in political events and seek the dialogue with politicians. We at openPetition want to give this dialogue a space with new means. We develop digital tools that strengthen our democracy.**

openPetition international



Our platform is now **available in 35 countries and translated into 27 languages**. We would like to make openPetition available in all official European languages in the short term, and in as many languages as possible in the long term. Since we do not speak all these languages ourselves, we have had native speakers actively assist us with the translations. In order to meet our quality standards in every language, in the future we would like to be supported in our work by users from the respective countries. These **„country managers“** will, among other things, check petitions for their quality and help other petitioners in their mother tongue. This way we want to make openPetition accessible for as many people as possible. **If you are interested in becoming a country manager, please send an email to info@openpetition.eu**

Home parliaments

The home parliaments will be our most extensive project in 2020, which the whole team is already involved in. With the house parliaments, we want to give people the opportunity to be part of the solution themselves and to play an active role in politics. **A home parliament consults on petition issues and is composed of people with different opinions. It should represent a cross-section of society in order to make a decision more representative.** These people are not interested in electoral success, but in a quick and effective solution for the problem. The participants meet in person for a discussion and should work out proposals for solutions together. The results will be published transparently online and then handed over



openPetition designs the process: We offer a technical solution, integrate the home parliaments into the well-known petition platform and connect interested parties with each other. The participants should develop their ideas on their own, openPetition only supports the process, the preparation and follow-up.



House of Digital Democracy

In 2020 and the following years, openPetition would like to establish a „democracy laboratory“ together with other organisations. We want to create a place where different civil society actors pass a critical eye over our political system and develop digital ideas together to strengthen our democracy. We want to decisively counter the anti-democratic developments of the past years. We are also committed to ensuring that the contemporary development of a democratic landscape receives an influential lobby.

03 Financial resources & use of funds

Thanks to our over 36.000 donors, we achieved a lot last year. They not only contributed to making the engagement of citizens possible, but also promoted participation via openPetition. openPetition was founded in 2010 by Jörg Mitzlaff and started as a voluntary initiative. openPetition is a non-profit organisation.

INCOME	Donations and sponsorship contributions	907.661,51 €
	Asset management (interest income)	669,99 €
	Revenues	108.746,17 €
	Other non-taxable income	0,00 €
	TOTAL INCOME	1.017.077,67 €
EXPENSES	Write-downs	-9.975,50 €
	Personnel costs	-274.995,35 €
	Travel expenses	-4.064,60 €
	Rent, office space and server	-13.466,25 €
	Donations paid/given	-0,00 €
	Fees/payment transactions	-21.760,17 €
	Other operating expenses	-86.021,64 €
	Taxes	-24.083,62 €
	Other costs	
	Office supplies	-1.984,27 €
	Postage, telephone	-2.480,80 €
	Other costs	-1.408,12 €
	Hospitality in the house	-242,48 €
	Books	-130,31 €
	Catering	-860,33 €
	Fees	-5.463,06 €
	Software/Hardware	-5.505,04 €
	Fees (third-party services)	-1.339,84 €
	Web design (external services)	-1.075,21 €
	Licences	-10.397,96 €
	Expenses Pedagogical support	-1.261,24 €
	Legal and tax consultancy fees	-8.879,78 €
	Non-deductible expenses	-792,71 €
	Administrative costs	-2.194,06 €
	TOTAL EXPENSES	-478.380,34 €

04 Our team

openPetition signed the Diversity Charter in October 2019 which aims at increasing the appreciation and integration of diversity in the working world. Thus, we want to **create a work environment free of prejudices**. All team members should enjoy the same degrees of respect and appreciation, regardless of sex and gender, nationality, ethnic background, religion, disabilities, age or sexual orientation.

In 2019 above all, our team has grown - we built the foundation already in 2018 when we started renting a second office space in the House of Democracy and Human Rights in Berlin. By now, our team counts 11 members and will receive even more support in the course of this year. Oftentimes we can also count on the help of highly motivated interns, who are supporting the editing team in their day-to-day business.

openPetition's Diversity Management goes well beyond equality and anti-discrimination policies. To us, diversity indicates to also improve job opportunities for people with incomplete CVs. We think it is more important that people share our values and want to be part of our democratic mission.



Editorial

Rita Schuhmacher, Jasmin Daum, Conner Defosse and Jessica Seip advise petitioners in organising their campaigns, take care of openPetition's public relations, press work, communication and fundraising and represent openPetition at public events. Since 2020 we have received additional support from our student assistant Philine Janus and want to say special thanks to our interns Lea Gelfert and Anna Frey.

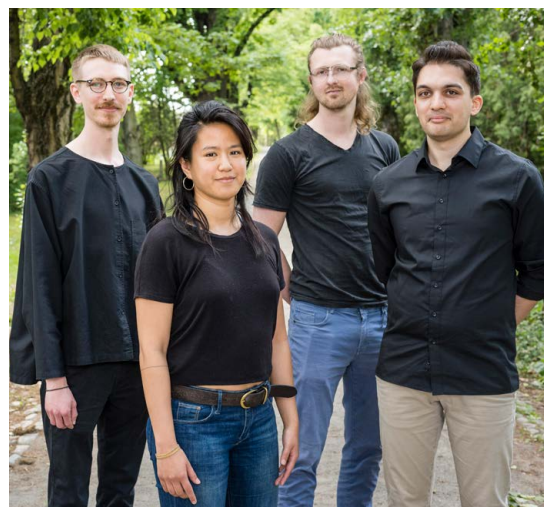


Jörg Mitzlaff

founded openPetition in 2010 and has been acting as managing director ever since. He describes himself as a **digital democrat and visionary**. He mainly focuses on developing new ideas to improve our platform and to serve as coordinator between the editorial and the IT team.

Web Development Team

The Tech Team currently consists of **Jonas Hantelmann, Steven von Roden, Thanh Dung Nguyen and Dan Axford**. Jonas has been working with openPetition since 2016, the others joined the team in April 2019, further developing the platform technically and building tools to increase citizen participation.



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