

openDemocracy
free thinking for the world



2014 and beyond

“ Today it is not difficult to know what is happening, but in order to know why it is happening you need openDemocracy.

Ivan Krastev, Executive director of the International Commission on the Balkans

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A note from the Editor-in-Chief

openDemocracy is a global online magazine with a digital commons model. We are independent and not-for-profit, and for twelve years we have written and published on the important issues of our time – from wars and economic crisis, to democracy and human rights. This document is designed to be an introduction to openDemocracy, an update for our existing supporters and an overview of our editorial and business model for potential funders.

Two things distinguish us from the pack. We don't just offer insightful perspectives, in-depth analyses and sharp debate; although these are rare enough. We bring together the voices of young and old, new authors as well as seasoned professionals, and we have skilled in-house editors who care about the value of argument rather than word count or commercial worth. This creates a uniquely open and democratic space.

Second, our digital commons model provides the means to offer a high output of material on a low budget without compromising on quality. We achieve this through harnessing the willingness of knowledgeable and engaged people to write about what they find important, usually without pay. They do so because they believe in the project, and to get access to our editors and an interested audience worldwide.

The crises of the epoch of market globalisation demand a worldview that guards the gains of openness, human rights and democracy against a rising threat of xenophobia and fundamentalisms.

Our readership shows strong growth across the world – 22% last year - is very diverse, and includes many “influencers” including scholars, journalists, activists and policy makers.

What we publish has an impact on those who read it: 84 per cent have found “perspectives or facts on openDemocracy they've seen nowhere else” and half have “used arguments expressed in openDemocracy with others when debating”.

In 2013 openDemocracy's financial strength has improved significantly. Our aim for the coming three years is to be funded with a balanced mix of reader donations, earned revenues, especially from partnerships and sections, and philanthropic support.

While we have now secured some significant grant funding for the years to come, we need to raise more to sustain the operation. This is an appeal for funders who think strategically to join us to ensure we can continue our mission.

What follows describes how we are attempting to achieve this: our structure, readership, budget, funding needs, goals, team - and what we need to be able to continue to offer Free Thinking for the World.

Magnus Nome - London, October 2013

What is openDemocracy?

openDemocracy has a unique position in web publishing, combining high frequency, low cost publishing with quality, thoughtfulness and integrity. There is nothing like it, and it is under constant development with exciting prospects for future growth.

We currently publish over 60 articles a week, receive millions of hits a year, and are read in every country on earth. Our content is frequently cited, cross-posted and re-published globally. Our archive contains over 20,000 articles contributed since 2001.

We call it a digital commons. Our aim is to support openness, human rights and democracy by analysing and debating the nature and future of world affairs and ideas in a new kind of space dedicated to the public interest, free at the point of use, inviting contributions from all around the planet.

We are a federation. Our Main site organises all our technical and administrative underpinning, and directly publishes over half our content. Our Sections, which are self-funded and editorially independent, publish dedicated content, building influence over the longer term while remaining part of oD.

We are expanding our revenues. Through experiments (trial and errors) over more than twelve years we are fashioning a way forward that is economical, highly productive and sustainable. For example, in 2012 the Main site created 'Editorial Partnerships' with leading universities and policy NGOs, bringing in almost £50,000 for 2013. We are growing our supporter income and large personal donor network and diminishing our reliance on large grants.

Our largest source of support is our contributors. Thousands of established and new writers worldwide contribute their time and expertise, the vast majority without payment, the rest below market rates. They make it possible to publish so much original high-quality content on our very modest budget. They are also loyal readers and often unofficial oD ambassadors.

We do all this with a tremendously lean and effective organisation. We have a young, dedicated and hard working staff. All of the Main site, Section and debate editors now fundraise, and there is a positive culture towards generating revenues across the team, allowing us to develop funding relationships with a high number of foundations, trusts and supporters (see full list in the Appendix).

We have achieved this thanks to our passion to survive and our openness to change, inspired by the need for openDemocracy's opposition to the vested interests of organised ignorance and their media gatekeepers. Across a decade we resisted the moral panic of the war against terrorism, challenged market fundamentalism, championed human rights, and supported a democracy of deliberation, not populism.

The Main Site

openDemocracy is a federation of the Main site and currently five editorially independent sections. The Main site is the hub of the operation, providing the infrastructure and producing about half the content. Its responsible for technical, organisational, publishing and back office support.

Last year saw strong growth in good unsolicited submissions which furnished nearly a quarter of the Main site's content. New voices finding editorial and publishing support have come from countries from Nepal to Brazil, Afghanistan to South Korea, and right across both North Africa and Europe. Most submissions are rejected, but the overall quality is high, demonstrating the need for our unique platform and work of its editors.

The Main site also seeds major debates, or sub-sections, with their own pair of editors often working part-time to great effect and very economically. Currently the two most important are **Arab Awakening** and **Can Europe Make It?** - both with a high level of publication, significant readerships and their own social media followings.

Our Sections

■ **openSecurity – on conflict and peace in our age**

In-depth coverage on conflict and peacebuilding, bringing critical security analyses into the mainstream.

■ **oDRussia – on liberty in Russia and beyond**

Covers politics, civil society, human rights and culture in Russia and the former Soviet states.

■ **50.50 – strategies for inclusive democracy**

■ Publishes critical perspectives on social justice, gender equality and pluralism. A debate without the female half of humanity is neither global or democratic, so 50.50 publishes women's analysis, insight and views.

■ **OurKingdom – on the crisis of democracy in Britain**

Questions and investigates power in the United Kingdom, whether public or secret, cultural or economic, from the perspective of securing and enhancing our shared liberty.

■ **Transformation – where love meets social justice**

Tells the stories of those who are combining personal and social change in order to reimagine their societies.

■ **justEconomy (proposed section)**

A section planned for when we reach our funding goal. Edited by Ann Pettifor, the distinguished critic of neoliberalism and leader of the Jubilee Debt Campaign, who is eager to rename our OpenEconomy section and turn it into a must-read space for alternatives to market fundamentalism.

Our readers

More and more people read us. The last 12 months has seen a 22% growth in readership.¹ And it's a worldwide phenomenon, with double digit per cent increase in the USA, India, United Kingdom, Turkey, Egypt, Australia, Italy, France, Spain, Russia, the Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Israel, Malaysia, Ireland, Brazil, Ukraine, Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Lebanon, Belgium, Japan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

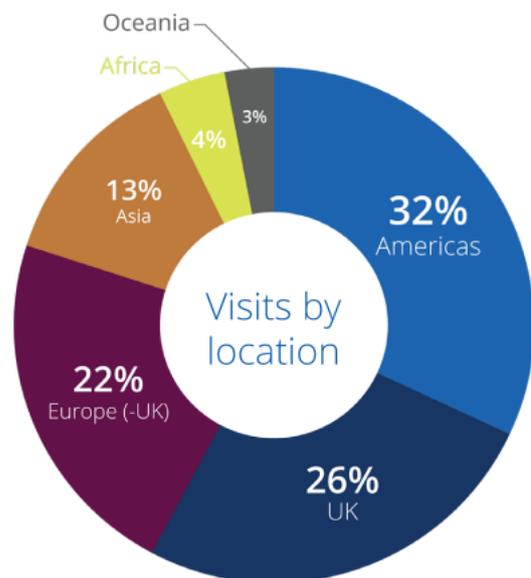
We are read by those who change the world. All kinds of people read openDemocracy, but many of them are "influencers". A third of our readers consider themselves activists, one in five influence policy professionally, one in twenty is involved in drafting policy and 1% are elected representatives that vote on legislation.²

We influence the mainstream media. About a quarter of our readers are occasional journalists or writers, and 7% are media professionals. We receive daily information or interview requests from media outlets including BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera, Washington Post, The New York Times, Bloomberg, NPR, Russia Today, The Guardian, The Observer, Le Monde Diplomatique, El Mundo, Sky News, ITV, CBC, ABC, Channel4, Islam channel, USA Today and many others.

We harness the openness of the internet. By publishing with Creative Commons licensing, we help our articles spread beyond our own website and readership, as they are frequently cross-posted and referenced. openDemocracy has a high Page Rank, is the 2nd Google result on "International politics" and 3rd on "Democracy".³ Our website is based on open source software.

Respected by scholars. A majority of our readers have postgraduate degrees, 40% work in academia or education, and one in ten is a professor. oD has been used as a source in multitudes of academic papers and in over 800 Wikipedia entries.

Thriving on social media. It's "our new front page" and with a new social media strategy implemented this year, we have taken advantage of the opportunities. oD has followings of over 23,000 on Facebook and 20,000 on Twitter, in addition there are Section and project accounts. Of all our visits, 19% now originate from social sharing.



1 Unique visitors, 1/9 2012 – 31/8 2013, Google Analytics.
2 Online survey conducted August 2013 with 1,014 respondents.
3 Non-personalized Google search via Ixquick.

Status 3rd quarter 2013

By the summer of 2013, openDemocracy had seen off some stormy waters. A revenue shortfall from 2012 was resolved with a fundraising drive which also fully funded 2013. Now we have started long-term grant fundraising for 2014 – 2016. Already more than a third of the grant funding required to cover our modest running costs has been secured.

The site has been redesigned to ease navigation, give a more appealing impression and leave more screen space for reading. The new look premiered on July 1 and has been well received.

The same date marked the launch of our newest section Transformation, which after only months of operations has gained a readership on par with the established sections.

We're actively developing a new section on the globe's troubled economics, and are working to establish an office with staff in the US. We expect these projects to contribute important editorial material, as well as strengthen the organisation's revenue base. They will only start up when funding is secured, so as not to be a potential financial liability for the organisation.

Our strategic priorities

- Keep growing our readership: 3.25 million unique visitors in 2014
- Keep growing our revenue from reader donations, partnerships and syndication
- Secure all necessary grant funding for 2014-16 before mid-2014
- Launch a fully funded justEconomy section
- See North America (US & Canada) office fully funded and opened
- Engage with new partners worldwide to deepen our reach further
- Improve quality and accessibility editorially and in design
- Continue and increase in-depth coverage of a Europe in crisis
- Explore the possibility of staffed office in India

Our funding mix

Quality journalism, comment and analysis is a non-profitable common good that will continue to need support until a new model of media consumption has emerged.

At this point in time no-one has found a formula that pays for publishing content like ours from earned revenues alone. We project significant philanthropic support for the next three years while growing earnings and expanding reader support.

Our values of openness and inclusiveness, as well as the global and diverse nature of our readership, excludes the possibility of putting the site behind a pay-wall. The work of the staff,

that of our authors, as well as the generosity of our donors, is based on the premise that our content is and will remain free and accessible to everyone.

We are, however, generating revenues and are making every effort to reduce the amount we need from large grants, thus increasing our independence and sustainability. We have created a significant new revenue stream from editorial partnerships in the last 18 months as universities seek public impact and an educated readership.

Income from reader donations is rising, we have a large and growing database of historical donors, and our fundraising communication is becoming increasingly sophisticated. We have grown the number of supporters who sign up to automatically recurring donations through PayPal, Just Giving or standing orders.

We are developing a programme for high value donors, as well as seeking to harness our network of supporters as volunteers.

There is some income from advertising and syndication, and we are looking for partners that could help us increase the latter in 2014. The development of an oD reader app for smartphones and tablets is in hand, with a revenue share model that could bring some modest income while offering our readers a new service with no cost or risk to oD.

The Main site also grows financially as new self-funded sections are added to our digital commons. The 2014 budget for the Main site follows.

“ *Let's support openDemocracy to the hilt. Intelligent, unbought, unspun opinion, uncomfortable but necessary truths and a lot of good horsey argument: heaven knows they are in short enough supply!*

John le Carré

Main Site Budget for 2014

We have two budgets: The budget for the Main site to which sections contribute; and the *combined budgets* of the Main site plus the revenues and costs of the independently funded Sections. By 2014 we aim to have some Sections that are separate legal entities providing contracted revenues to the Main site.

Main site budget for 2013 £

REVENUES

Advertising and syndication	6,750
Grants	158,000
Donations	61,000
Sections	79,000
Editorial Partnerships	46,500
TOTAL REVENUES	351,250

EXPENDITURES

Direct Costs

Commissioning/Publishing	12,865
Marketing/Development	36,000
Fundraising	3,000
Website	26,600
Travel	6000

Overheads

Accounting	12,050
Premises and office	14,795
Management and Staff	231,669
Legal	2,000
Bank	600
Entertainment/Events	1,700
Miscellaneous	650

TOTAL EXPENSES **347,929**

SURPLUS **3,321**



Appendices

1. Core Team & Board

Editor-in-Chief and CEO

Magnus Nome has overseen the transformation of oD this year. His background is in journalism and TV/radio production.

Editor

Rosemary Bechler runs the Main Site and oversees its editorial partnerships. Before becoming an editor she was active in peace movements, and has a Cambridge doctorate in 18th century literature.

Publisher

Andrew Hyde is responsible for publishing and syndication, coordinates website tech and design, and works on editorial partnerships.

Head of operations

Jessica Thomas is responsible for the day-to-day operation of openDemocracy's organisation. A project manager by trade, she has experience from a wide range of organisations and charities.

Finance director

Peter Johnson is an accountant and oversees openDemocracy's finances on a part-time basis.

Editors, Our Kingdom: Oliver Huitson, Clare Sambrook and Adam Ramsay

Editor, 50.50: Jane Gabriel

Editor, oDRussia: Oliver Carroll (with Felicity Cave)

Editor, Transformation: Mike Edwards (with Ray Filar)

Editor, openSecurity: Robin Wilson (with Shilpa Jindia)

Founder and fundraising advisor: Anthony Barnett

Board

Meets quarterly, chaired by David Elstein. Rosemary Bechler, Anthony Barnett, Jeremy Fox, John Jackson, Peter Johnson, John Mills, Michael Mitchell, Turi Munthe, Magnus Nome, Elaine Potter, Tony Curzon Price, Susan Richards and Laura Sandys MP.

2. Funders 2011-2013, Main site and Sections

- Eric Abraham Charitable Trust
- The Barrow Cadbury Trust
- Esmee Fairbairn Foundation
- Allan & Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust

- Hauser-Rapse Foundation
- HIVOS
- International Council on Human Rights
- JAS Fund
- Marmot Trust
- Mulberry Trust
- Natur och kultur
- Network for Social Change
- Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Oak Foundation
- The Open Society Institute, NY
- The Open Society Institute Initiative for Europe
- David & Elaine Potter Charitable Foundation
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund
- Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
- The Sigrid Rausing Trust
- The Tedworth Charitable Trust
- TIDES: New Field Foundation
- Tinsley Foundation
- University of East London
- USA for Africa
- The Surrey Square Charitable Trust
- Andrew Wainwright Reform Trust

Individuals who have supported oD very generously include

Costas Carras; Charles Chadwyck-Healey; Greg Dyke; David Elstein; Claire Enders; Brian Eno; Jeremy Fox; Jeremy Hardie; Judith Herrin; Anne Lapping; John Mills; Mark Oliver; Ed Ross; Jo Stanislaw; Nick Whitaker.

3. Legal

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In the UK you can support openDemocracy with charitable grants and gifts to the openDemocracy programme of The Open Trust, a UK registered charity (#10864094). It is ANBI-eligible in the Netherlands.

In the USA, it can be supported with gifts or grants to openDemocracy (USA) Incorporated, an independent 501(c)(3) with an openDemocracy programme.

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