Saturday, 5. December 2020

To   **The CoC Committe of The EuroPython Society**

Corroborative in Support of Jason C. McDonald's Submission about Marc-André Lemburg

I have been made aware of the conflict between Jason C. McDonald and Marc-André Lemburg. I would like to express my support for Jason as I experienced very similar and destructive behaviour of Marc-André going back to 2010-2014. I ask you to consider Marc-André's behaviour towards Jason not as an outlier but as consistently experienced by a number of members of the Python Community at large and over a long period of time.

The conflicting experiences that I deemed (and still deem) unacceptable conduct reach back to the period around 2010 when the German Python community was starting to crystallize around a number of events (like the annual Python Barcamp in Cologne, a newly forming PyConDE, a Python Unconference in Hamburg, and many local meetups). For historical reasons the German Zope community had already established a formal organization ("Deutsche Zope User Group e.V." – DZUG) back in 2001 and was offering to repurpose the entity – which ultimately resulted in it becoming the "Python Software Software Verband e.V." (PySV). This process included talks with various members of the Python community – large parts of the existing board were already active in the EuroPython community and other non-Zope projects on a national and international level. The process around this transformation also included Marc-André and took a number of intermediate steps and rounds while PyConDE was established and the existing organization transformed over a period of about 2 years.

A number of specific incidents with Marc-André led to the board of the PySV resigning (by not running for another term) in 2012 as none of the existing board members wanted to be part of a community any longer where people were under personal attacks by Marc-André and where one constantly had to hope not being targeted next.

Incidents

During FrosCon 2012 – a conference that I used to attend because it is one of the informal community-led FLOSS conferences with an almost "family room" feeling – Marc-André attacked me verbally in such an aggressive, vicious way that left me both emotionally destroyed and questioning my grasp on reality. He questioned my motives about the Python community, wanting to be a usurper being damaging to the community by not doing what he thinks the Python community needed and not working on his schedule – a big part here me being a former Zope contributor and thus not being a true part of the Python community.

One of the tenets of the existing DZUG organization was to work on a strong sense of concensus instead of competitive behaviour.

Marc-André undermined this again and again, for example by aggressively letting community members speak his messages in their names (which they regretted after realizing what happened) and preparing a campaign to rid the board from members that he deemed not appropriate due to their relationship with Zope. He aggressively promoted a block of candidates who did not even know they were used for this campaign.

In another instance he tried to artificially create competition in the effort of requesting proposals for a future PyconDE / EuroPython between Cologne and Berlin and leading an intransparent process where a non-defined "jury" or "community" would vote on the proposals. As community members in Berlin and Cologne became aware of the competition they started a collaborative process of figuring out a good way to organize those conferences without having to spend resources on a useless competition and instead focusing on creating a good roadmap for a number of conferences in Germany. Marc-André pushed back heavily against this and again personally attacked community members that nurtured this cooperation.

Lastly, I still remember an experience at one of the EuroPython conferences in Florence where Laura and Jacob (who originally led the EPS) invited the community to talk about a generational shift and how to stewardship of the EPS and the conferences in the future. This was an informal discussion picking a spare room within the conference schedule and attracted maybe around 15-20 people. After some introductory remarks I had to leave the room due to a phone call and joined the room again after maybe 10-15 minutes. Stepping into the room I was surprised by the formation of a new board which Marc-André was leading as chair. I was completely confused at this point because even though I do not understand swedish laws about non-profit organizations there was no formal process that explained what just happened.

I gave up any formal roles within the German Python community back in 2012 to protect my emotional and mental health – with the trust that our local community would grow stronger from being aware of the conflict and rallying toward a shift that would protect others from similar interactions with Marc-André. I re-joined the PySV board a few years ago to help with providing knowledge about the history of the organization and being more of an advisor, due to limited capacity in my spare time.

It saddens me to see that Jason has had a similar dramatic experience and even though I stil wish Marc-André not being a part of my life I would like to support Jason's case

I can support the incidents circumstantially from corroborative email threads back from 2010–2012 which I can make available confidentially where needed, but I may have to clarify whether I can make them available as many of those threads involve around 15 other community members that may not expect this communication to be made available to third parties or publicly.

Sadly,

Christian Theune