

# Bureaucracy



Dear Linux Magazine Reader,

Although my personal all time favorite thing to hate is spammers, bureaucracy and its supporters are starting to hit home at the moment.

The tax man I have always seen as one of the good guys. I spent too long as an accountant to really hate him. He is, after, all only trying to collect a prescribed amount for the social good. No tax, no health service, no support for those who need it most.

My gripe is with those who impose rules where they are not strictly necessary. Health and safety laws are fine. That protects us all. Filling in form BZ37d because someone in accounting wants to know a contractor's shoe size, is just silly.

The UK has a Data Protection Act 1988 which is linked to the European Treaty Series 108. This means that information held on an individual should be adequate, relevant and not excessive. It

should also be obtained for specified and lawful purposes.

Run a small business? You need to jump through the hoops and fill out the correct paperwork just to keep customer information. And of course, pay the fee. You would think that would stop data-mining where companies can collect all those little snippets of information and build up a detailed profile on you that they can then sell to other companies who want to sell you products. Targeted spam? No that is a bad idea!

In practice though, it is neither one thing or another. Walk into a shop that you have never dealt with before, and tell them your postal code and house number, and they know who you are. Try to buy a television without giving your name – can't be done because the TV licensing authority wants to know who owns a set.

OK, so that stops anyone breaking the UK television licensing law. Yet having your utilities for heating cut off for non-payment of bills, does not get the information passed on to the social services, who may be able to help. Or possibly at the risk of peoples' lives, records on potential criminals are destroyed because the police think it is against the Act to keep them.

Governmental jobs now require a European Computing Driving License as part of the criteria. This is obviously based on a proprietary operating system. Need the job? You must get the piece of paper and credit card to say you can type a query into a search engine or use a CD. Paper for paper's sake. That and the money it costs.

Schools are sent out letters telling them how to prepare carrots for eating, a film receives a classification only to then have local councilors say that for their

## LINUX MAGAZINE

We pride ourselves on the origins of our publication, which come from the early days of the Linux revolution.

Our sister publication in Germany, founded in 1994, was the first Linux magazine in Europe. Since then, our network and expertise has grown and expanded with the Linux community around the world.

As a reader of Linux Magazine, you are joining an information network that is dedicated to distributing knowledge and technical expertise. We're not simply reporting on the Linux and Open Source movement, we're part of it.

area this is wrong. We all know of examples, but by allowing those who make the rules get away with it, we are just creating paper and checkboxes for our daily lives.

I want to be stopped from injuring myself and others, but I do want to be able to call a carrot a vegetable rather than a fruit as decreed by the European Commission, and buy apples by the traditional pound weight rather than being legally forced to use kilogram.

Live free!

**John Southern**  
Editor

### Now Published in Polish

We are proud to announce the launch of a new sister publication, **Linux Magazine Poland**. The Polish-language version started with the February issue and is a reaction to the very high level of interest that Linux and Open Source enjoy in Eastern Europe.

We wish our colleagues great success in helping Linux become the standard OS in Poland!

For those of you who read Polish, or just for fun, have a look at:

[www.linux-magazine.pl](http://www.linux-magazine.pl).