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# Trollparty in Caracas during World Social Forum

By Josef Davies-Coates

Next month I and a team of free software and democracy advocates will be travelling out to Caracas, Venezuela, for a Trollparty during the polycentric World Social Forum at the end of January 06.

The event is being funded by [SAPI](http://www.sapi.gov.ve), Venezuela's patents and copyright office, whose Director Eduardo Saman is a staunch Free, Libre and Open Source Software (FLOSS) advocate.

Jose Parella, a GNU/Linux System Administrator at SAPI, recently gave the team a nice update on the country-wide migration to open source (all public institutions in Venezuela should be using 100% free software by the end of 2007):

"Current "bumps" in FLOSS migration process for Venezuela are:

- a) Corruption
- b) Lack of politic will

It's no secret that Microsoft is paying corrupt officers in the Government so they keep their contracts. This is happening not only with Microsoft, but also with Oracle and several others enterprises at Cavecom-E which is the Association of IT Enterprises in Venezuela.

The most recent and prominent case of this is the one of Alfredo Atay, which was Director of the IT Office, the office in charge of directing the migration policies for the whole Government. In a internal letter that leaked several months ago (I was in München at the time) he was recommending Red Hat Enterprise Linux for the whole Government, which in Venezuela is distributed by only one enterprise (Software Libre 777 de Venezuela, C.A.)

Fortunately, several government offices (including SAPI) were already migrating their systems to 'free as in beer' systems, and they were outraged by this unilateral decision (the Venezuelan Linux Community, active since 1995 at least, was never consulted nor invited to any of these events) so they published the letter and Atay resigned.

Venezuela has one of the most advanced migration processes, but it's artesanal and not well-coordinated because of lack of politic will. Just to mention, these offices have either migrated their whole systems, or a part, or have a strong migration plan:

\* SAPI, which is the Patents and Trademarks Office in Venezuela. We've migrated almost all services to Debian GNU/Linux on 2004 (even before the 3390 Migration Decree was approved) and in 2005 we strengthened our Free Software Policy.

\* BANDES, which is the Social Development Bank, is currently working in a complete banking infrastructure using Perl and PostgreSQL. Great people working there. They have Pascual de Ruvo and Nelson Nieto, who worked in CADIVI before.

\* Treasury Bank is also working in their security infrastructure with Free Software. They're being outsourced by Novell, but have two "good guys" in there. They have Ernesto Crespo, who is an Electric Engineer, Python programmer and SuSe partner (although he's a Debian maintainer).

\* CADIVI, which is the Currency Control Office, runs their system on Perl over Oracle in Linux. They're migrating their database to PostgreSQL, but I'm not sure how much they're going to achieve this.

\* UNESR, which is the National University Simón Rodríguez (which was our Liberator's teacher) is currently migrating their systems to Debian GNU/Linux. They host the only Secondary Mirror of Debian in Venezuela. Ernesto Hernández-Novich, which has been President of the Venezuelan Linux User Group and currently working on several projects involving Perl, PostgreSQL and Debian, is the consultant at work there.

\* Several other universities, including the World-famous Simón Bolívar University are working with Fedora Core from several years on, and now starting to implement Debian GNU/Linux. The Universities are no mandated to migrate, but they're doing it, and so are the Private Enterprises. Ernesto Hernández-Novich, Ricardo Strusberg and Patrick O' Callaghan are three teachers at Universidad Simón Bolívar which use and promote Linux from ancestral times.

\* The National Election Board (CNE) is migrating their Web systems to PHP + MySQL (most likely). One member of the Community, José Luis Rey (which also helped in the recovery of PDVSA - the Oil company - during the National Strike, using Linux) has installed Linux in the voting machines.

\* PDVSA, the State Oil Company is helping the Community to achieve their projects, yet they don't have a strong migration plan yet (and I wouldn't recommend it, since we live only from the Oil we sell)

\* VIVE TV, a State TV Broadcasting Station which aims to cultural and social TV programs, has their backend on GNU/Linux. As they work with several Graphic Designers, they've lots of Mac's G5. They've succesfully installed Debian and Ubuntu on those machines, and are currently working with Darwin and the Quicktime Streaming Server. They have Nerissa Aguilera, which in my opinion is the most expert woman in GNU/Linux in Venezuela, responsible for the setup and maintenance of a cluster in the Venezuelan Institute of Scientist Investigation.

\* CANTV, the private-owned Telecom/ISP in Venezuela, has been running Linux from several years on in their mail servers, some web servers, DNS servers and so on. They have Luis Muñoz, which is an international authority on Perl programming as their security director.

I will stop here. Lots of more offices are migrating, even those which doesn't have to migrate (State Governments, like Lara State Government). You can check this out in [migrandovenezuela.org](http://migrandovenezuela.org)

Jose"

More details about the Trollparty as they develop are available on the Caracas Trollparty website:  
<http://caracas.trollparty.org>

Join in at <irc://irc.freenode.net/#trollparty>

More news soon...