

The following interview made with a Wine Project developer Alexandre Julliard for Pardus e-Zine that is in Turkish. Thanks to Alexandre Julliard.

Pardus e-Zine is prepared by Pardus-Linux.Org Community and you can find the all of the e-zines on <http://www.pardus-edergi.org> in Turkish Language.

Who is Alexandre Julliard?

I'm the maintainer of the Wine project. In my other life I'm the CTO of CodeWeavers, the company behind the Crossover product. I'm 39, I live in Switzerland, and my main hobby is motorcycling up the twisty roads of the Swiss alps.

What do you think about love and politics?

I would advise against doing both at the same time :-)

Have you ever been in Turkey? What do you think about it?

I visited Istanbul a number of years ago, it was very interesting, with many beautiful things to see, and also a lot of fun, it's a very lively city.

What do you think about free software?

I'm a big fan of free software, I love to be able to make the software that I use behave the way I want, and not the way some proprietary company has decided it should behave. I also love the fact that it enables cooperating on a project with many smart people from all over the world; that's a lot more fun than hacking all by yourself.

I also think software freedom is getting increasingly important since proprietary software seems to be becoming nastier all the time, with all the DRM, the DMCA, patents, etc. The way things go, it will soon become impossible to do anything interesting on a proprietary system.

What can you say about proprietary softwares? And does it matter that your GNU/Linux distribution consists of non-free softwares like Adobe's Flash?

It matters, I would much rather use only free software. But I'm also pragmatic and willing to accept that there are some things where proprietary software is still necessary.

That's the motivation behind Wine too; it's a fact that there are many proprietary Windows applications that don't have a free software alternative, and I prefer people to use these on top of a free software OS, instead of being stuck in an all-proprietary environment.

Which GNU/Linux distribution do you use?

Debian.

How long have you been using your GNU/Linux distribution?

Probably something like 13 years now. I started using Debian around the 1.2 release if I remember correctly.

Which desktop environment do you prefer? Why? What's the advantages of your desktop

environment by comparison with others?

I don't use a true desktop environment, just a barebone window manager (fvwm). My true work environment is Emacs...

Have you ever been heard of Pardus GNU/Linux? If so, what do you think about it?

No, I hadn't until now.

What do you think about developing a GNU/Linux distribution by hand of a government institue?

As a developer I have to admit I'm not a big fan of the fact that everybody seems to be developing their own distribution. It would make my life a lot easier if there were only a couple of distributions, so that we could rely on things being done the same way across the board. Support issues for hundreds of different distributions is a nightmare. But of course that's the price of freedom...

Could you tell us the story of Wine's birth?

It was shortly after the birth of Linux itself, when it was basically just a kernel and the GNU tools suite, with no end-user applications. So a few of these early Linux users got together and we tried to see if we could somehow make use of the huge pool of Windows applications out there. After a few months of hacking we got Solitaire to work, and since then it has just been a matter of implementing the rest of the API. We've been at it for 17 years now, with no end in sight...

Is there any similarity between "Wine Project" and "A Goblet of Wine" ?

Not a lot besides the name. In fact, at developers meetings we tend to drink beer instead of wine...

It's said that Wine is not an emulator. What is Wine? What's the thing that makes Wine something rather than an emulator?

It is an alternative implementation of the Windows API, so it's not more of an emulator that Windows itself is. A Windows application running on Wine is no different from a Linux application running natively, it's just calling a different set of system libraries. There's no virtual machine or CPU emulation involved, so there's essentially no overhead.

Wine is a GPL licensed software. So it's a free software. How do you success to develop free software version of a proprietary operating system's components?

Being free software is a major advantage because it allows contributions from everybody. This is particularly important for something like Wine, where there are thousands of Windows applications with their own specific problems. In a proprietary development setting we would have to concentrate on the top 10 apps, but with free software, there's always someone, somewhere in the world, who cares about even the most obscure application and who can send us fixes to support it.

How many people are there behind Wine Project as a developer? And is there any career opportunity for people who want to be a Wine Project? What criterias do you expect from who wants to be a developer?

At any given time there are probably around 50 active developers. Over the course of the project there have been over a thousand contributors.

There are certainly plenty of career opportunities, a large number of Wine developers are employed by one of the companies working on Wine, the main one being CodeWeavers. So if you are a good Wine developer you can expect to receive job offers...

There are no strict criterias to become a Wine developer, mostly you have to enjoy spending hours looking through gigabyte-long debug logs to figure out where some obscure call doesn't do exactly what the application expects, with no documentation of course. That's not everybody's idea of fun, strangely enough.

What do you think about PlayOnLinux, CrossOver and Cedega? Have you ever tried one of them?

I work on Crossover in my day job, and I've tried the other ones too. They all work fine for what they want to achieve, which is slightly different from the goals of Wine itself. I don't care much for Cedega though, due to the fact that they are not contributing back their Wine changes.

According to an article published a few months ago, between Wine, CrossOver and Cedega, while Cedega is the best solution for games, Wine is the worst in fps criteria. What can you say about that situation?

It's hard to make generalizations like this, it depends a lot on what games you are testing. It's quite likely that for specific apps, solutions like Crossover or Cedega will work better, because they can have app-specific hacks that help one popular app at the expense of less popular ones. In Wine we have to keep things general and fix problems the correct way, which often takes longer than a quick hack.

Could we see Wine as an operating system in future?

Not by itself, Wine is just a component, not the whole OS. But the vision is that it should become more and more integrated into existing Unix systems, and become almost invisible to the point that Windows compatibility would simply be a standard feature of any decent Unix.

Do you want to say anything to our readers?

Thanks for your interest in Wine. Please give it a try with your favorite Windows application, and report any bugs you find, that's the best way to help us make it even better!

Erdem Artan
erdem@pardus-linux.org
<http://www.pardus-linux.org>