

Proposal:

Changed timeline membership contribution



PhD Network University of Twente

By Janike Bolter, treasurer 2024/25

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Summary

The current P-NUT membership contribution is made annually at the end of the board year. This means members pay retroactively for the year they were a member. At the end of the board year, this leads to much confusion, as people who graduate are asked to pay their contribution, and new members with faulty signup forms need to be chased down by the treasurer. On top of that, the financial closure is complicated as last year's members pay in the next bank year. The workload for this is immense. To alleviate pressure on the treasurer, especially at the end of the board year, I propose to collect the annual fee at the beginning of the board year for current members and immediately upon signing up for P-NUT for new members.

Commented [BM1]: I like the proposal and I'm fine with it. But do we actually need this kind of document? And do we need to vote for it separately? How about making it part of the vote for the statutes change? Maybe we can avoid some work..

Commented [BJ2R1]: 1. the work is done, 2. this is not the same so 2 votes for 2 things.

1. Problem statement

The goal of this section is to explain how the membership fee is handled by the treasurer currently and why this could be disadvantageous. In the end you can find a very short summary of the problem statement.

P-NUT currently has about 250 members, who pay an annual fee of 12 € at the end of the board year (around March). This fee is collected by the treasurer. The treasurer is a part of the elected board and is voted in during the GMM. They are legally responsible for P-NUT's finances as they are KvK registered. During the year, they manage the finances, pay out invoices, decide on event budgets and keep track of spending. At the end of the year, the treasurer faces an audit by 2 auditors independent from the elected board. Here, the treasurer has to show that all the money spent is accounted for and the bookkeeping is complete. In parallel, they also have to collect the annual fee in multiple rounds of Picasso collections. Additionally, they have to design the budget for the next year, taking into account the trends of the years prior. Finally, they have to write the annual report to inform all members about P-NUT's finances. The bulk of the work of the treasurer is at the end of the year.

P-NUT elected board members like the treasurer are compensated for their work by the university with a one-month contract extension. Over a year, this breaks down to 4 h a week of work for P-NUT. During the end of the year, keeping in this time frame is almost impossible, putting a lot of pressure on the treasurer. This also makes this role unattractive to potential elected board members. P-NUT is concerned that it becomes a struggle to find people who want to be active, especially in the elected board. For many candidates, this is due to the high workload associated with this role.

The three big tasks at the end of the year (audit, incasso, and annual report) are essential tasks of the treasurer and cannot be outsourced. The audit and the annual report must be done after the fiscal year closes. The only leaver left is the incasso. Part of why there is so much work is that multiple rounds of requests have to be done because members change bank numbers, graduate, or make errors when signing up. In many cases, the treasurer has to personally reach out to the members in question to clarify information and confirm membership status in the last year. This takes a lot of time and effort.

Finally, there is a problem for the next treasurer. The membership contribution was done during their fiscal year, but they were not voted in yet. In their audit, they then have to answer for someone else's work. The budgeting is completely confused for that reason, as the money from last year's budget is coming in now, and estimations for this year's budget have to be done with the knowledge that the money will only come in in 12 months. Bureaucratically speaking, this is a nightmare.

The goal now is to alleviate some of the pressure on the treasurer, to make the role more attractive and achieve better financial liquidity.

The problem is clear: The P-NUT treasurer has to do the bulk of their work at the end of the year. This workload is too much for the compensation offered. The incasso is the only task that can be moved to a different time.

P-NUT needs to change the timing of the membership contribution.

Commented [BM3]: It's not easy indeed but IMO "struggle" does not reflect well the experience of previous boards. My experience in past years is that we've always found the right people with only reasonable effort. And in most of the years I saw, there were people queing up for at least 1 position.

Commented [BJ4R3]: That is not my experience. 2 years in a row 4 candidates for 4 posts and in you first election, muriel, mira and lea were pushed very hard. I dont know how it was before.

Commented [BJ5R3]: How would you like to rephrase it then?

Commented [MB6R3]: Good you mention that, I didn't know there were these differences in perception. I suggested an alternative

Commented [BM7]: Are you sure? For sure not outsource entirely but it's not that black and white. I see tasks that can easily be outsourced. e.g. ask someone to make the incasso batch file and compile the required documentation for the audit (sorry I'm only thinking about that only right now).

Commented [BJ8R7]: these people would need access to those files which are more or less confidential, so it would have to be another board member. I dont see many people very excited to take that over.

Commented [BM9]: there's another part of the problem, at least Bram and I experienced this: right now, P-Nut only receives budget after expenses are made already. In financial terms, this negatively impacts financial liquidity, as it's called. Because first money is going out, before the money comes in. Good financial practice is to gather income first, before making expenses. So charging upfront achieves that practice.

Commented [BJ10R9]: I mention this in the paragraph above but it should be in the conclusion too you are right.

2. Proposal

I propose to pay the annual membership fee at the beginning of the board year for current members and upon signing the membership form for new members. This will spread out the work for the treasurer during the year, releasing pressure on the closure of the board year.

The idea is that the new treasurer will request the annual membership fee of the current members after their election together with the former treasurer. This will help ease the new treasurer into their role. During the year, the treasurer can request the annual fee of new members on a monthly basis. Not only will this spread out their work during the year, but it also prevents faulty applications from being undetected until the end of the year. Finally, at the end of the year, the treasurer can close the fiscal year with the audit and the annual report and remind all current members of the upcoming annual payment after the GMM.

For P-NUT members, not much would change. They would still pay their annual contribution around the same time. New members would pay immediately, confirming to them that they are officially and correctly registered now.

Members would have to pay double for the year 2025. The contribution for 2024 is being processed already, and in March, the contribution for 2025 will be charged, too, with all due course. Afterwards, nothing would change for current members.

The hope is that by reducing the work load on the treasurer, more people will be interested in taking up elected board roles, which is essential for P-NUT's continued existence.

3. Conclusion

The workload on all active P-NUT members during the end of the board year is high. The work of all active members is valued, and we cannot expect them to work beyond their capacity or compensation. Spreading out the work during the year would be one change to help a crucial role face less pressure.

The proposal above aims to lower the pressure on active members, make the board more attractive, and keep the organization for members as consistent as possible.

I am looking forward to our discussions on March 6th, 2025. If there are any questions beforehand, feel free to email me at p-nut@utwente.nl.