Dear readers,

2016 was an exciting year for EAF. We opened our office in Berlin, our team grew from just 13 full-time equivalent staff to over 25, and we were able to both celebrate many successes and learn from many mistakes.

My colleagues and I are delighted to publish this first activity report for the Effective Altruism Foundation. We would like to take the opportunity to inform you about our year in 2016. The report covers both the work achieved in 2016 and an overview of the goals, approach, and primary projects of the foundation for 2017 and onwards.

As you probably know, our foundation is funded exclusively through private donations. We are thus deeply indebted to our volunteers and donors, without whom our activities would be impossible (or, at least, far less successful). We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank those volunteers and donors for their support throughout the past year.

I am personally grateful to support the work of such a motivated team in my role as Head of Communication, and I look forward to yet another prosperous and eventful year ahead!

Kind regards,

Jonas Vollmer
Director of Communication, Effective Altruism Foundation
The Effective Altruism Foundation (EAF) is an independent think tank and project incubator at the intersection of ethics and science, made up by a young, interdisciplinary team of around 25 full-time equivalent staff.

Our overarching goal is to improve the quality of life for as many individuals as possible. This means we look for sustainable and effective ways of reducing suffering among sentient beings, guided by the self-scrutinizing methods of effective altruism (EA) and empirical research from a variety of academic fields.

To that end, we are currently pursuing four key campaigns: efficient and evidence-based poverty reduction, animal rights, a responsible approach to future technologies, and promoting effective altruism in the German-speaking world. We will describe each of these in more detail below.
Projects

Outreach

We expect that a larger EA movement will greatly increase the quality of direct aid worldwide, and make it more likely that involuntary suffering will be reduced at a global level. Our outreach project thus aims to make effective altruism known to a wider audience. To do this, we focus on supporting local groups in the German-speaking world, developing a professional media strategy, organizing conferences, and raising donations for effective charities.

Publicity work

**EAGxBerlin**

In October last year we held EAGxBerlin – the largest conference on effective altruism in continental Europe. Over 300 attendees took part to learn more about EA and discuss promising approaches to global problems.

**Media work**

We appeared in influential Swiss and German media sources during 2016, including the *Beobachter*, the *Neuen Zürcher Zeitung*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung*, the *Freitag*, the *3sat*, and Swiss television. In addition, Adriano Mannino discussed humanism and related ethical questions on the popular Swiss programme *Sternstunde Philosophie*, and Jan Dirk Capelle gave an inspiring introduction to effective altruism at TEDxDresden.

**Newsletter**

Through our monthly newsletter, we keep around 2000 people updated on the latest news at EAF and in the EA movement in general.

**Local groups**

Over 20 local groups in Germany, Austria and Switzerland regularly organize events in order to promote effective altruism. We support these groups by providing various resources, such as a guide to founding and running a local group. In 2016, our support enabled local groups to organize around 100 public events on themes related to effective altruism.

On a tour in November and December 2016, we were able to give introductory talks on effective altruism to several hundred students in six cities in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

We also ran a number of successful workshops on ethical career choice in collaboration with the organization 80,000 Hours, under the tagline “Make your career matter”.

In October 2016 we held a meetup for all German-speaking local groups. In addition to becoming better acquainted with one another, the volunteer organizers were able to exchange insights and advice related to the running of local groups and event organization.

**Services relating to effective altruism**

**Careers and donation advice**

We were able to coach around 100 people last year through personalized career and donation advice. Our career advice was directed primarily at students or apprentices looking to make the greatest possible impact over the course of their career. Our donation advice, meanwhile, focused on recommending organizations that are able to reduce suffering in a cost-effective way.

**Tax-deductible donation**

Donors from Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands can support international EA organizations tax-free by donating through EAF. Despite the considerable administrative cost on our part in processing these donations, we have so far offered this service free of charge. In 2016 a total of $961,458 was donated to effective charities through EAF. (Donations to our project “Raising for Effective Giving” are not included here.)

EAF/Sentience Network

The EAF/Sentience Network established last year has now connected over 120 people. This network consists of people from various backgrounds who donate significant amounts of time or money (at least 10% of their income) to effective charities, and allows them to exchange ideas and coordinate their career plans.

Effective development work

**1% Initiative**

In 2016 we started and successfully filed our 1% Initiative in Zurich. The initiative proposed that the city use 1% of its budget to support effective charities in the field of global poverty and health. The initiative has a realistic chance of being accepted and could lead to effective charities being supported with millions of euros annually.

**Policy paper**

We also worked on a policy paper about effective development work, which will be part of the campaign for the aforementioned 1% Initiative and serve as the basis for negotiating with relevant government organizations.

Outreach

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Sentience Politics

Sentience Politics is an anti-speciesist think tank advocating for a society where the interests of all sentient beings are considered, regardless of their species membership. To achieve tangible and sustainable change, Sentience Politics engages in political lobbying and conducts research to identify and implement effective ways to reduce suffering.

Research and Publications

Article series
We have published a six-part series on our website detailing the philosophical basis of Sentience Politics. Alongside strategic considerations, we also explain why the topics (anti-)Specieism, veganism, wild animal suffering, and future technologies are important to us.

Policy papers
We published three policy papers in 2016. Fundamental Rights for Primates forms the basis for our initiative in Basel of the same name, and offers concrete reasons for our proposal. In Cultured Meat we focus on the advantages of cultured meat in comparison to the current meat industry, as well as obstacles to its development. Invertebrate Suffering discusses the potential sentience of insects and other invertebrates, and the moral implications thereof.

Research network
We also founded a research network aimed at exploring the potential sentience of non-human species, and fundamental philosophical and decision-theoretical questions. Over 240 researchers from various disciplines and attracted over 250 people.

Events
In May, we hosted the highly successful Sentience Conference in Berlin. With its primary focus on effective strategies to reduce animal suffering, the conference hosted 28 speakers from various disciplines and attracted over 250 people.

We also organized a panel discussion on primate rights with Prof. Steve Wise from the Non-human Rights Project and Colin Goldner from the Great Ape Project, and another on cultured meat with Prof. Mark Post of Maastricht University and Sebastian Joy from VEBU. Other events organized by us include a talk in London by Prof. Randall S. Abate of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, as well as a screening of the film Unlocking the Cage in Berlin.

Lastly, our colleagues have given a number of talks on issues related to animal rights. Locations included EA Global in San Francisco, EAGx in Berlin and Oxford, the International Animal Rights Conference in Luxembourg, the Ernährung und Verantwortung conference in Hofheim, and the vegan summer festival in Berlin.

Sentience Politics

Political Campaigns

To achieve change and to make the public aware of our goals, we started three political campaigns in 2016.

—► Fundamental Rights for Primates
Non-human primates have a fundamental interest in life and the freedom from bodily and mental harm, just like humans. However, since this is not ensured by Swiss animal protection legislation, we are promoting the establishment of these fundamental rights in the cantonal constitution of the city of Basel. To this end, we were able to collect and file 1000 supporting signatures. Our campaign has already been featured in 11 media articles.

Surveys show that the population is positively inclined towards our proposals, indicating that the initiative has a realistic chance of being accepted. A victory in the vote would be a historic milestone, making Basel the first place in the world to grant fundamental rights to a non-human species.

—► Sustainable Food — Lucerne
In Lucerne, we want to make vegan options available in all public canteens and simultaneously promote a sustainable diet (inclusive of seasonal and regional variations). Reducing the consumption of animal products is not just beneficial for animals, but also combats climate change, global hunger, and water scarcity. As a part of this initiative we collected and filed 1000 supporting signatures. Our campaign has already been featured in 11 media articles.

—► Sustainable Food — Berlin
Building on the reasoning behind our Lucerne initiative, we also argued that plant-based options should be made available in public canteens throughout the Berlin district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. To achieve this, we need to collect 6012 signatures within six months, and have so far received the first 2000 signatures through the support of countless voluntary helpers. Our demand has been mentioned in more than 30 media articles so far.

—► 1% Initiative
The 1% Initiative was also successfully started in Zurich (see the Outreach section above).
Foundational Research Institute

The Foundational Research Institute (FRI) investigates effective and cooperative strategies for reducing all forms of involuntary suffering, with a particular focus on risks posed by future technologies. It takes an interdisciplinary approach and specializes on questions of ethics, decision theory, game theory, and computer science.

Research and Publications

We published 8 new articles on the FRI website, covering topics such as suffering-focused AI safety, measuring and evaluating suffering and happiness, and key differences between various ethical positions. We also published four introductory articles on our philosophy and goals and gave the website a new design and structure.

Three of our academic colleagues (Kaj Sotala, Simon Knutsson, and Caspar Oesterheld) have published early findings from our work on their personal blogs and websites.

We also expanded on our public bibliography on suffering-focused ethics, and prepared a research programme on wild animal suffering with a specially trained team of researchers. This project will be passed on to Sentience Politics for further work.

In addition, we succeeded in attracting the philosophers Ulla Wessels and Bengt Brülde, as well as the mathematician Olle Häggström, to our advisory board. They review our research and contribute their ideas on a voluntary basis.

Events

Along with some of our colleagues, we attended the conferences EA Global in San Francisco and EAGx in Berlin and Oxford. At EAGx Berlin, Caspar Oesterheld gave a talk titled Artificial Intelligence and Effective Altruism. And Effective Altruism. At the research colloquium AI and Responsibility, organized by PhD students of the German National Academic Foundation, Max Daniel gave a talk titled Why We Should Already Prepare for Superintelligent Machines.
Raising for **Effective Giving**

Raising for Effective Giving (REG) connects professionals from various fields who are committed to donating part of their income to effective charities. REG has become well-known in the world of poker, attracting over 200 professional poker players, including the reigning world champion Martin Jacobson. REG also organizes and supports online fundraising campaigns and charity events.

In 2016 we collected a total of $1,462,450 in donations to highly effective charities. According to our current estimate, in 2016 REG’s own operation costs were around $86,744. This means that for every dollar that we spent on REG, we raised around $17 for effective charities. In addition to the donations mentioned above, we were also able to collect $65,612 for EAF.

A majority of the donations in 2016 were generated through the poker player Dan Smith’s fundraising campaign. With help from other large donors, this campaign raised a total of $1.7 million, out of which over $1 million went to our recommended charities AMF, GiveDirectly and SCI.

The poker players Dimi and Dan Shak also organized a successful fundraising campaign in 2016, raising a total of $70,000.

As in previous years, two charity poker tournaments were held by All In For Africa, one of REG’s partner organisations, in aid of the Against Malaria Foundation (AMF). Through these tournaments, All In For Africa managed to raise a total of $22,400 for AMF.

Last but not least, countless individual members and supporters of REG made valuable contributions to our work or that of our recommended charities.
EAF’s work and that of its projects depends entirely on donations from people like you.

Donate online at: ea-foundation.org/donate

Or transfer to the following recipient:

Effective Altruism Foundation
Efringerstrasse 25
CH-4057 Basel
Schweiz

IBAN CHF CH67 0023 3233 1775 4501 N
IBAN EUR CH20 0023 3233 1775 4560 D
BIC/SWIFT UBSWCHZH80A

Thank you for your support!

Do you have any questions, comments, or criticisms? Please get in touch with us!

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