

World News

Italy is Debian Country

Italy's free software community has been working hard to enforce its social networks. After the LUG Camp in Rome in mid September, and the successful Code Jam event in Ferrara with nearly 300 attendees who were there to listen to talks given by Andrea Arcangeli, Dave Cross, Alex Martelli, Allison Randal, Randal Schwartz, Michele Simionato, Simo Sorce and Larry Wall on October, 9, Italian Debian Developers decided to meet in Milan October, 16 to 17 for the first time. Italy with its nearly 40 volunteers involved in packaging Debian software, is one of the countries with a high density of Debian developers.

Carlo Contavalli, the initiator of this event, a Debian developer, and also a member of Milan OpenLabs, summa-

rized the aim of this event as follows. Although various local free software activities are happening around Italy almost all the time, the people involved have seldom heard of each other, let alone worked together. Learning from German experience, it was hoped that the Milan Mini Debconf would help improve the social networks between Italian Debian developers.

The event featured talks about Custom Debian Distributions (CDD), Debian Packages Tags (Debtags), User Mode Linux, and the Gnu Arch revision control system TLA. Interestingly, overnight accommodation for many of the 50 par-



ticipants from all over Italy was arranged at the "Postello" guest house which has a Linux-based booking system. ■

<http://lugcamp.lugroma.org/>

<http://www.codejam.org/>

<http://postello.realityhacking.org/>

<http://debtags.alioth.debian.org/>

<http://wiki.debian.net/index.cgi?CustomDebian>

<http://debconf.linux.it/>

Celebrate Software Freedom in Bulgaria

Whether you are writing a new software or building a house – it is always the same story: you won't get it right the first time. But you do get a second chance. The "Free Software Association Bulgaria", who organized "OpenFest 2004", a festival dedicated to software freedom, shares this experience with you. FSA Bulgaria's second chance was an event held on October 24 to 25 in Bulgaria's capital, Sofia, and two other major cities: Plovdiv and Pazardjik.

Attracting a total of over 500 people, it became the biggest event dedicated to free and Open Source software (FOSS)

ever to have happened in Bulgaria, if not in the Balkans.

While last year's event was held under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria, this year's OpenFest saw lectures by distinguished members of the Parliament and active politicians from the entire spectrum of political agendas. They all showed support for the OpenFest motto "Let's share our freedom!"

"The difference from last year is evident", says Yovko Lambrev, one of the main organizers, "In 2003 it was a four hour event with three international guests in one hall, reaching an audience of 100 people. This year we saw a two day event in two halls packed with more than 300 participants just in Sofia."

The annual BSD user conference was part of the agenda. As this year's event was planned in just three weeks in advance, the only foreign representatives came from the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia. But participants still had an oppor-

tunity to exchange ideas about propagating free software in transitional economies.

The major topic besides the lectures was the imminent danger of software patents that are being pushed by large software publishers via the European Council in violation of the normal democratic process. Twice the OpenFest participants protested by getting up from their seats and literally turning their backs on software patents. Both state-sponsored and private nationwide TV and radio stations, as well as the IT press, covered the protest and the concerns in their reports.

The discussions at the event clearly showed that FOSS closely reflects the needs of a young transitional economy. However, since the major software publishers typically have a government lobby, the main obstacle is political. OpenFest will continue to spread the ideas of Open Source with annual events. ■

<http://openfest.org/>

<http://fsa-bg.org/>

<http://ludost.net/openfest.html>

<http://bsdcon.bg-freebsd.org/>



■ Breed your Cows with Open Source!

Over 70 South-African farmers have started using Open Source software to manage their cow herds. Specially developed modules on the basis of Apache, PHP, and MySQL provide a user interface and back-end for pasture, livestock and financial management, as well as for performance analysis. Among others, the software creates reports that show how fertilizing the pasture influences milk and meat production. Both, ordinary PCs and GPRS-enabled handheld devices, can be used to access the web interface. Data can be collected offline, a vital feature for farmers in regions with a poor telecommunications infrastructure.

The only downside the system has – at least in the eyes of Open Source activists. Being developed by ACS Online, a Sun Microsystems associate, the system runs on an proprietary operating system, Solaris 9. ■

<http://www.tectonic.co.za/view.php?id=374>

■ The Winner is... (Not a Male Nerd)

When the Norwegian Unix Users Group NUUG and the Oslo University College “Høgskolen i Oslo” announced the winner of their annual Free Software Prize at a ceremony in Oslo, October, 12, their choice marked a tiny but important revolution in male-dominated Open Source development. The winner was... a family.

14 years old Snøfrid Kleppe and her parents, Astri Kleppe and Conrad Newton, won the award worth 30,000 NOK (about 3,700 EUR) for “having shown that free software is not just for male nerds”. With their Linux live distribution “Snøfrix” the family develops a distribution “that is made by, and for, developers and users of both sexes and all ages”, as the laudation put it.

According to the family website, mother and daughter

develop the CD, while both parents handle the documentation. Snøfrid herself has been using Linux since the age of 9, and it is due to her that games are an especially important part of the distribution. ■

<http://www.nuug.no/prisen/>

<http://www.skolelinux.no/~conrad/snofrix/html/us/welcome.html>

http://www.skolelinux.org/knoppix_no/snofrix/

