



EuroBSDcon: Behind the Scenes

EuroBSDcon is an annual technical conference gathering users and developers working on and with the BSD operating systems family and related projects. It is typically held in September/October and hosted in a different European city every year. EuroBSDcon offers an exceptional opportunity to learn about the latest news from the BSD world, witness contemporary deployment case studies, and meet other users and companies using BSD-oriented technologies.

EuroBSDcon is also a boiler plate for ideas, discussions, and information exchanges, which often turn into programming projects.

The conference has always attracted active programmers, administrators, and aspiring students, as well as IT companies at large that found the conference a convenient and quality training option for staff. It usually attracts around 250 attendees and lasts four days: the first two days are tutorial and devsummit days, and the final two days are the conference itself with two to three parallel tracks.

First held in 2001 when the conference started in Brighton, UK, it has since taken place in 12 different countries. The only repeat visits were the conferences in the Netherlands (Amsterdam in 2002 and Maarsse in 2011), the United Kingdom (Brighton in 2001 and Cambridge in 2009), and Germany (Karlsruhe in 2004 and 2010).

Historically the conference organizers changed every year, so in 2010 a nonprofit foundation was created to back the organizers, both financially and organizationally. The EuroBSDcon Foundation is based in the Netherlands.

Nowadays the responsibilities for the conference organization are divided into three

parts: the EuroBSDcon Foundation, the organization committee (OC), and the program committee (PC).

The foundation board consists of registered officers with designated roles and a representative of each BSD that is interested in the conference (currently FreeBSD, OpenBSD, and NetBSD) and the head of the OC of the previous, the current, and the next year. Furthermore the foundation has additional members responsible for the website, the registration system, and future members of the board to help prepare them for their roles.

The foundation provides a legal entity to sign contracts and to ensure the financial security of the organizers. It provides a financial buffer so bills can be paid even before the conference registration has opened so things like advances for venues and hotels can be paid. The foundation also hosts the conference website and the registration system, as well as some other basic services like mailing lists.

The foundation also facilitates the transfer of knowledge and experience between organization committees. That's why the heads of the organizing committees of the last and next conferences are also part of the board.

Another big part of the foundation's work is finding sponsors, as about a third of the conference budget is provided by them. The other two thirds of the budget comes from the entrance fees.

The board meets monthly on IRC, and once a year in-person, during the conference itself. Furthermore, some tasks like financial statements and meetings with the accountant require additional in-person meetings of some of the board members.

The organizing committee changes every year and is responsible for the local organization of the conference. The head of the organizing committee is elected by the foundation board.

When selecting a future conference location, the board looks for a city the conference has not been held in before so that frequent attendees have a chance to visit different places, and also so that people who can't afford to travel far are



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more likely to have a chance to attend. It also tries to alternate between destinations in Western and Eastern Europe for the same reasons.

The organizing committee head ideally serves for two years before the conference is held so that they can observe one full organization cycle before he or she is in charge. The head then forms an organizing committee with other volunteers. The location of the next EuroBSDcon is traditionally announced during the closing session of the current conference.

Immediately after the conference, the organizing committee for the next conference begins the process of selecting a venue and speaker hotel so that the date of the next conference can be announced, at the latest in January.

The OC responsibilities extend beyond the conference itself into things like the social event, the organized dinners, partner program and catering during the conference. They coordinate with the organizers of the devsummits and birds-of-a-feather sessions that take place during the conference. They create a conference logo, design and produce T-shirts, bags, lanyards, speaker gifts, and so on.

The OC also recruits local volunteers to help out at the registration desk, with the partner program, and anywhere else a hand is needed during the conference itself.

The last major player in the organization is the program committee: it is responsible for selecting the talks, tutorials, and keynotes. The PC is formed by the PC head and consists of two members from each of the FreeBSD, OpenBSD, and NetBSD communities. Members of other BSD communities are welcome as well. Once the PC is formed, a call for papers is announced, usually in March. In parallel, the PC searches for interesting keynote speakers. When the call-for-papers period is over, the PC decides which talks and tutorials will be accepted and ensures that the talks are well balanced between the BSDs and also between topics. Once the speakers have been decided, the PC creates the tracks and schedules the talks so that by the end of June, registration can be opened. The PC coordinates the travel and accommodations of the speakers and tutors. During the conference, the

PC introduces the speakers and helps them keep to the timing of their talks.

All in all, about two dozen people are involved in organizing the conference. The organizing committee for EuroBSDcon 2017 in Paris has already started work for next year's conference, while the foundation board is still busy with the financial statement of EuroBSDcon 2016.

The EuroBSDcon Foundation is always looking for volunteers to organize a conference in interesting parts of Europe. If you'd like to see a EuroBSDcon in your city, get in touch.

In memory of its first chairman and one of its founders, the EuroBSDcon Foundation offers the Paul Schenkeveld travel grant. Paul was one of the few people, if not the only one, who attended all EuroBSDcon conferences, and as such, the foundation could think of no better way to honor his memory than to enable someone who might not be able to afford it to attend a EuroBSDcon.

The grant covers travel expenses, hotel accommodations, and the conference and social event fees.

If you are interested in attending next year's conference and require financial support, please consider applying for this grant on the EuroBSDcon Foundation website.

The EuroBSDcon Foundation is committed to transparency, and will publish balance sheets and profit and loss statements for 2014 and 2015 on its website in the coming weeks. Statements for 2016 will be published as well, in early 2017.

See you in Paris at EuroBSDcon 2017! ●

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LINKS

- EuroBSDcon: <https://www.eurobsdcon.org>
- EuroBSDcon Foundation: <https://eurobsdconfoundation.org>
- Paul Schenkeveld Travel Grant: <https://eurobsdconfoundation.org/paul-schenkeveld-travel-grant/>