Drupal Europe
Darmstadt, Germany
10 – 14 September 2018

Post-event report

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much" – Helen Keller

Official group photo
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"In his Driesnote he also talked about the Drupal Europe [leads] and it was really impressive because he invited all the organizers of Drupal Europe up on stage, and all of us in the audience gave them a big round of applause. It was a standing ovation for the team. It was really special and I think it was nice to honor them the privilege to see how important they have been for the Drupal community. They've done such a good job. [...] Standing in the audience [...] it was so emotional." - Podcast hosts
https://drupalsnack.se/drupalsnack-81

"Drupal Europe [...] was an outstanding conference like no other. The feeling of being part of the community and working towards common objectives is indescribable and very motivating. The event ran seamlessly and provided value to all participants thanks to the highly driven and competent organizers."
https://thunder.org/thunder-drupal-europe-darmstadt

"I am amazed for sure. I did not know what to expect when I came to Drupal Europe. [...] By coming here I was just blown away by how professional it is, how involved everyone is, how dedicated everybody is. So I wanna give a big thanks to all the organizers. [...] It's clear that they have gone out of their way to make this Drupal Europe the event of the year." - Michael Miles in https://drupalsnack.se/drupalsnack-81

"When we put out a conference like this, we come all together. [...] There is a whole spectrum that you can do in the community. And they come all here together. We have other events where maybe the people who are interested in frontend go or those who are interested in backend go. But Drupal Europe or DrupalCon Europe, these events bring us all together. [...] It is exciting!" - Baddy Sonja Breidert
https://drupalsnack.se/drupalsnack-81

"Darmstadt was far from tourist attraction (I've been to DrupalCons in Barcelona, Prague, London, Vienna etc) and for me Drupal Europe was equally as good yet far more accessible to all. I had excellent community conversations and did great business too. Works!" https://twitter.com/pdjohnson/status/1041088750544203776

"On a personal note, I thank you all for your warm welcome and letting me be part of an awesome experience I will never forget. Your contribution makes a difference, it did for me and I'm certain for many others."
https://twitter.com/KenMunene/status/1041651771146416128

"It was lots of fun and new learning at Drupal Europe. Thanks to all the volunteers for tirelessly working in making it successful event. This event has really set higher benchmark for future Drupal events."
https://twitter.com/mohit_rocks/status/1041546210258157568

"Just another day in the park, a Chinese, a Syrian, an Indian and Ethiopian playing basketball in Germany. Once in a lifetime experience!"
https://twitter.com/tsegat/status/1040261120664252416

"As a graduate of TU Darmstadt [across the street] I've always dreamed of visiting Darmstadtium as a conference speaker. Thanks to Drupal Europe this dream came true! This was an amazing conference at an amazing venue. Thank you for having me!"
https://twitter.com/hchonov/status/1040641366609588224

"1.5 years ago I was part of the very hard decision to not do a DrupalCon 2018 in Europe. I always hoped that the Drupal Community will step up and organize something themselves. But Drupal Europe exceeded all wishes and hopes, a very very big thank you to all involved people <3" https://twitter.com/Schnitzel/status/1040907413703073792

"[...] It was hands down the best Drupal event I have been to! Thank you so much for the organization team and the volunteers! You are the heros!"
https://twitter.com/Ayeshlive/status/1040882648443498498

"Thank you so much to the Drupal Europe organizing team and everyone who attended! This was an amazing week and I enjoyed every minute. [...]"
https://twitter.com/ekl1773/status/1040881770646970372

"This Drupal Europe has been the best conference I've ever been to, of any kind. There is not a single thing I would have changed from start to finish. It's the people. You are all fabulous. Every single one of you"
https://twitter.com/rachel_norfolk/status/1040707031093727232

"This Drupal Europe has been a really special event. Thanks to all the volunteers that have invested so much time on it: a big event like this is really needed to keep the ball rolling."
https://twitter.com/chumillas/status/1040631234651742210

"'The Drupal community is an optimistic one and I love that' - So says @sparklingrobots and after two days here I can confirm the feeling. Loved every minute I had at Drupal Europe" https://twitter.com/FrancescaMarano/status/1040178911265652737

"The passion, energy and sense of inclusion within the Drupal community has amazed me this week. Loving my first Drupal Europe experience!"
https://twitter.com/KatharineShaw42/status/1039771806067040256

Why Drupal Europe?

From the first DrupalCon in 2005 in Antwerp, the community self-organized to put on events for itself. Some events where lead by specific companies (DrupalCon Szeged or DrupalCon DC for example), while others were collaborations within the community. As the conferences grew very big and more and more professional, no collaboration of people could take on paying the unimaginable amounts of bills (especially up front) and no company wanted to take on the risk of losing a million euros. The Drupal Association gradually took over the logistics parts and then most of the organization of programming other than sprint teams and track content. However, the Drupal Association needs to make money to pay its bills, keep drupal.org up and organize all its other activities for promoting Drupal. DrupalCon was/is a key income source for the Drupal Association so if DrupalCon is not making money that is a problem.

It turned out in 2017 that when staff costs are factored in, DrupalCon Europe was not making money for the Drupal Association (while DrupalCon in the United States did, providing 45% of the total income of the Drupal Association by itself). Megan Sanicki wrote a very detailed blog series that gives a lot of insights into the finances and goals of DrupalCon. In summary DrupalCon Europe cost the Drupal Association around a million euros to put on and instead of making money, it lost around 15% of that consistently. So based on those facts the Drupal Association decided to put the event on a pause while something more sustainable is figured out.

A group of community members were selected to form a committee to help define what DrupalCon is, so a licensing scheme can be devised for event organization companies to apply to organize DrupalCon Europe instead. If this scheme is to work well, then this could bring DrupalCon to further regions of the globe as well. Some people thought if the event is losing money why would anyone sign up to do it and thought this is a cop-out.

Even if this was to be a hope of a long term solution for Europe, we've experienced a lot of sadness and outrage at the time at events and online forums in Europe. According to Dries

[Buyatert's stats at the time](#), almost 45% of Drupal contributors are European with the United States a distant second at 29%. Many felt that the Drupal they helped create makes the Drupal Association money in the United States so contributors and users have a chance to meet there, but the substantially bigger contributor community in Europe (who in no small part made Drupal possible in the first place) lost that opportunity. In this light, we did not agree with the consideration of the two DrupalCon events on their own terms, in that profits from the United States would not be brought to compensate losses in Europe, but at the same time we did not wish cuts at any other parts of the Drupal Association which would have been necessary to offset for the situation.

All in all we needed to take the Drupal Association decision and see what we can work out in that situation. Literally as the news hit, DrupalCamp Antwerpen was happening and various attendees of the camp immediately rallied together to skip sessions and discuss the situation and plot a path forward. Those participating showed great interest in maintaining a large event in Europe but recognised the need for that event to look for different ways to achieve results. It wasn't enough to just continue as we have before.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/146931223@N07/31183165708/in/pool-drupaleurope/

The discussions continued at the DrupalCon Vienna community summit and then BoFs throughout DrupalCon Vienna. Ideas ranged from making existing camps bigger, switching to university venues, changing the format drastically, buying a big tent and so on. One of the BADCamp lead organizers David Hwang provided lots of input and encouragement. Read the massive notes document of 17 pages detailing various discussion points.

Ultimately we agreed that we need a melting-pot type of event where developers get inspired by Drupal used for fun projects, customers get inspired by the community spirit and how things are made, designers, translators and marketing folks could productively participate, and so on. DrupalCon Vienna ended with a decision that we *are* going to organize the event, but we did not yet know anything beyond that.

Distributed online team

We set up an online team of leads on google drive for document sharing and used Slack for chat because that was readily available on drupal.slack.com. We regularly had issues with the disappearing history, had to copy conversations to documents and re-explain things but this was the common denominator we could work with and we were not into revolutionizing the chat system used by Drupal but to put on a conference. We wanted to pick our battles. We used Jitsi for video meetings which worked great on desktop and iOS, people on Android had regular issues though. A bit later, by the time the conference happened, the Android client got more stable as well.

The tools we struggled with most were project/task management. We started using Trello, but left it largely unused and grew out of due to the complexities of the project. We started using OpenSocial but did not have people to actively nurture communities there and abandoned that too. We set up OpenProject on our own servers to rescue ourselves but also left that largely unused. At the end we kept each other in check on our meetings and used various spreadsheets to move processes. It was (not surprisingly) hard to get volunteers to track their contributions in project management software.

Later on when tasks were too complicated for one group to handle, we branched out to a web team, program team, volunteer leads team and lead organizer team each with their own meetings, but still kept the all-team weekly meetings going for over a year until the conference was over. We did not have a team/meeting structure for people working on sponsors, financials, venue/catering, attendee care and communications. Those were discussed more ad-hoc as needed and mostly managed by the respective single person responsible for them.

The web team had great success using GitLab's issue tracker to track issues and do QA and integration of features developed on a staging site. In the lifespan of the website we developed two different versions, the initial simple version being a manually updated static brochure website and the second being a full-fledged Drupal 8 website.

Email was an important tool, too. It was a good decision to set up dedicated IMAP accounts early that could be shared by working groups. Ticket sales/attendee care, sponsoring, and volunteer coordination are some examples where this approach was really rewarding (especially when you cannot rely on a single person monitoring a mailbox full-time).

With the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) coming into full effect in May obviously many web workers (i. e. most team members) had a focus on implications for our tools. We were not perfectly set up for this (using data storage hosted outside the European Union and obviously handling personal data) but we did the best we could for privacy protection. We deliberately did not ask for any personal data other than information we needed for the ticket and to communicate with attendees. We did not send personal data in webform submission notifications. We used tools with GDPR certifications for ticket sales and emails. We did not sign contracts with all site administrators who had access to user accounts, which would have been needed strictly speaking, but we made sure to have a common privacy understanding in the team and limited critical access.

Hello World

[We posted our Hello World post a week after DrupalCon Vienna](#) announcing that we are on it because

1. We wanted an event which brings together the European Drupal community.
2. We wanted to make sure that the European market sees that Drupal as a technology is a strong brand.
3. We wanted to prove our community that we can do this conference sustainable and cost effective.

We were primarily looking to solve the financial problems by choosing less fancy venues and not providing food.

It was also very important for us to state that we are not doing this to set up a parallel Drupal Association and we fully intended to collaborate with the Drupal Association. While we did not (intend to) use the DrupalCon brand, the Drupal Association helped us with a lot of historic data, spreadsheet templates, email samples, etc. that sped up a lot of our work and provided key insights to plan our financials. They also helped with our marketing through the Drupal Association channels and drupal.org frontpage. The Drupal Association also needed a place to hold the board meeting and board retreat and organized that around and at Drupal Europe as well.

Settling on a venue

[We launched our call for venues two weeks later](#) (which had outstanding results) alongside a call for swag that we could sell and make early money (which did not work). The call for venues had some outstanding results with the following city submissions:
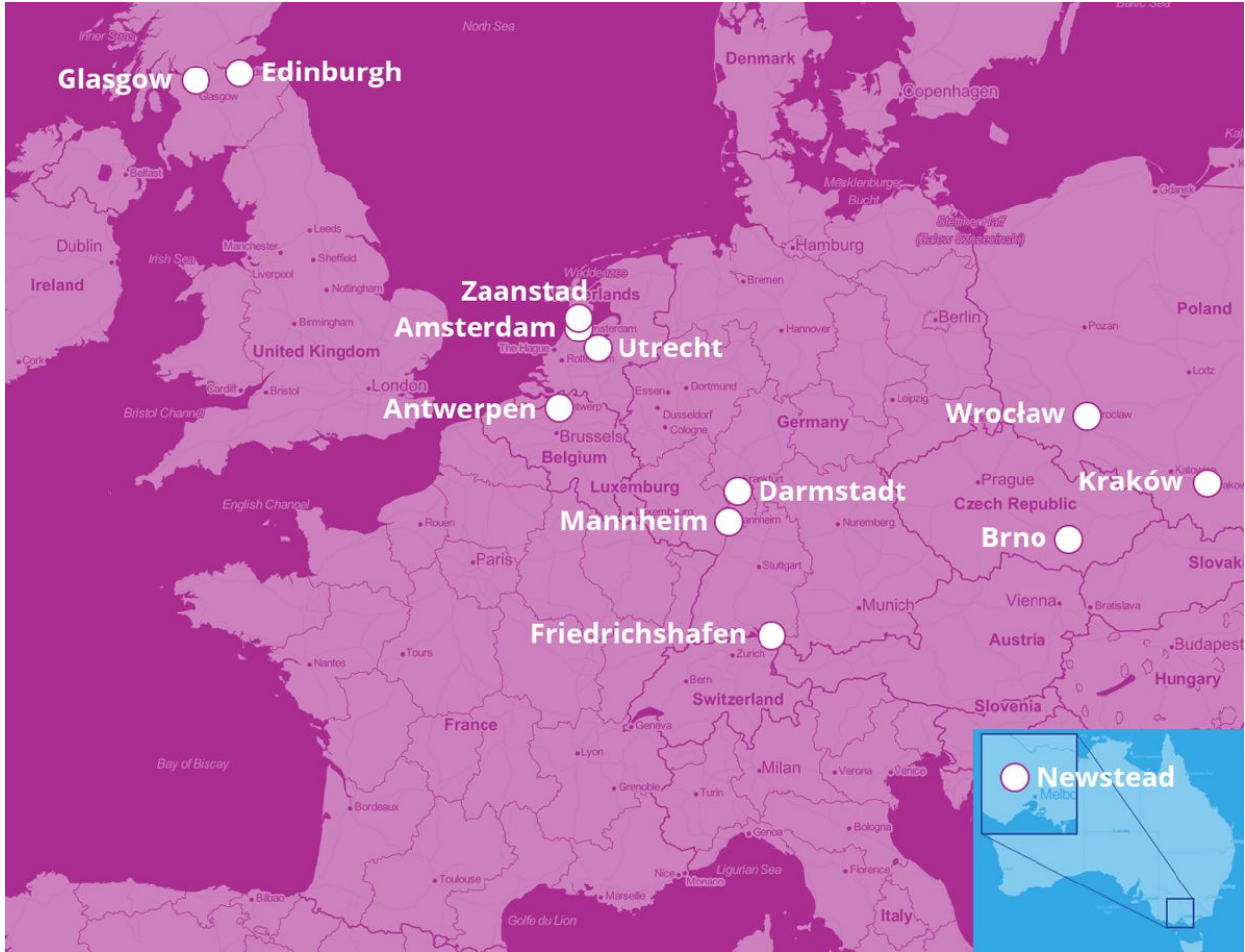
Illustration by Meike Jung using Leaflet, Tiles by Stamen Design under CC BY 3.0, map data by OpenStreetMap contributors

- Germany
  - Darmstadt
  - Friedrichshafen
  - Mannheim
- The Netherlands
  - Amsterdam
  - Utrecht
  - Zaanstad (north of Amsterdam)
- Scotland
  - Edinburgh
  - Glasgow
- Poland
  - Kraków
  - Wrocław
- Belgium

- - Antwerpen
- Czech Republic
  - Brno
- Australia
  - Newstead, Victoria

After all if Australia can participate in the Eurovision song contest, why not have Drupal Europe there, right? ;)

We asked a lot of questions about the venues, and most would have been great in some way for our event. We spent a lot of time discussing various options and locations considering to avoid conflicts with events like IronCamp and Frontend United. We posted an enthusiastic update in November and as you can see there we've still been experimenting with how to approach the conference model and proposed a version that got significantly amended later.

We planned to confirm and announce the venue mid-December, but that did not happen before mid-January when we announced our venue and dates.

While most of the venues proposed could have worked, we choose Darmstadt because it provided a good combination of an amazing venue in a very accessible location combined with reasonable venue pricing. It was definitely not a less fancy venue as we set out to have, but the pricing was fair. It was a key deciding factor that the German community not only suggested us the venue but they were ready to stand behind the event and serve as the fiscal entity. While Drupal Europe Stichting has been set up in October in Eindhoven to possibly serve as a backing entity, it did not have staff or experience putting on events and had no reserves in the bank. We also talked to the Drupal Association to serve as the fiscal entity, but as they wanted to avoid losing money and we had no guarantees to not do that, that was also a no-go.

Given how amazing was the venue, we found it surprising that we got it for a reasonable price for this week. We thought that the venue would be hard to work with or there would be lots of hidden costs, so we carefully examined all potential charges listed. We did not find anything hidden and they were very positive and supportive of us. Later on we did find out two issues:

1. This week clashed with important religious holidays including Rosh Hashanah, Hijra and Ganesh Chaturthi. We did not consider these date conflicts, which speaks to the lack of cultural diversity in the organization team at the time. We regret that some of our (potential) community members could not attend due to these conflicts. One of our volunteer leads celebrated Ganesh Chaturthi at Drupal Europe and helped us become a lot more aware of this religious celebration. Organizers of international events should use http://www.interfaith-calendar.org/ or an equivalent and also consult people to get more context to each holiday/celebration listed especially their significance.
2. This week also clashed with the Automechanika expo in Frankfurt, which draws 136.000 visitors who take over hotels in the cities around Frankfurt as well. Despite the plenty of

hotel rooms normally available in Darmstadt downtown, it is hard to compete with that demand when you are a comparatively tiny conference of at most a couple thousand people. This turned out to cause problems for accommodations for our attendees (but read on later) and even for some of our bigger exhibitors as they had a hard time to find companies to do booth buildup.

Event organizers with a more diverse team would have definitely avoided this week as they would be aware of both conflicts before booking. If we would have known, we would not choose Darmstadt as this was the only complete week available with only 9 months to go before the event in this venue.

Darmstadt

https://www.flickr.com/photos/jean-fenouil/44023621874/in/pool-drupaleurope/
Darmstadt downtown nearby the venue - photo by Jean Fenouil

Darmstadt being a city of 160k people with a sizable university population with the venue located right downtown resulted in an atmosphere where you can go out for dinner and probably bump into another group of Drupal Europe attendees. Randomly meeting other attendees was the norm.

The close proximity of the Frankfurt airport was a big plus. A direct airport bus is running between the venue and the airport normally every 30 minutes daytime. And there are power plugs and free wifi on the bus, how is that for a great arrival / departure experience?

Darmstadtium

While we sometimes felt like mere "conference organizing enthusiasts" in discussions with Darmstadtium, our partnership turned out to be very productive. They worked with us to find the best solutions for our problems within the frameworks they were able to offer. We ended up almost booking the whole venue (except one big auditorium) and basically took over the building for the week. They gradually understood more and more of our diverse program elements and what each meant to us. They even took care of little details like setting the led lighting on the infodesk to the conference's brand color for the week.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/jean-fenouil/44023618914/in/pool-drupaleurope/
Photo by Jean Fenouil

The venue was very well received by our attendees, especially the natural light in the atriums and most rooms. Even one of our contribution rooms had a huge glass wall letting in natural light and direct street access to get some fresh air.

"We are really digging the venue of Drupal Europe. Large open spaces and some really stunning architecture. [...] Our team can't seem to get over the sheer beauty of the Drupal Europe venue. It's truly stunning [...] Really thankful to Drupal Europe for the great choice!" https://twitter.com/Srijan/status/1039511199312822272 and https://twitter.com/Srijan/status/1040253518798577664

Accommodation

The hotel situation might have cost us a considerable number of potential attendees as the above mentioned expo resulted in many big hotels completely booked by automotive companies. We attempted to negotiate group rates for room blocks in hotels but they said there is no such option for this week as the rooms will be booked either way. And indeed that came true.

We started calling out the issue publicly as early as May telling people to book hotel rooms anticipating this problem, but understandably many people did not yet know if they would attend as no program was available yet, people did not know if they are going to speak or not, etc. Later on some feedback indicated that our calls for hotel room booking was not alarming enough early enough.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/040photo/30241757687/in/pool-drupaleurope/
Drupal Camping photo by Floris van Geel

After the issue was raised in our Slack channel, several volunteer initiatives started right away and all options were immediately reflected on the web site:

- Some team members researched hotels farther away and looked up alternative booking portals, even called up remote hotels to reserve room blocks. We did not end up offering those blocks as they were only accessible with cars and the reservations were only valid very short term which did not let us develop a solution to distribute them.
- A Google map with train stations was set up to indicate towns outside Darmstadt with only a few minutes to reach by train to assist extended accommodation search.
- Some locals started a couchsurfing channel to share sleeping space available within the Drupal community locally.
- A group of volunteers started organizing a camping site on drupalchat.me. The so-called Drupal Camping turned out to be quite an attraction with an event bus. We had to cope with very strict german rules, so after 10 pm it was "Nachtruhe", meaning that we had to skip the bonfire and party elsewhere at the lake to enjoy our music and the stars without bothering other guests. Even with the 60 Drupal people we had at the camping on

Tuesday we managed not to get kicked out and in the end be happy campers with not so much troubled camping owners.

Drupal Europe brand

Alongside the call for venues, we also launched a call for designers. While we had a temporary logo right away, we needed a complete brand we can use for the website, roll-ups, stickers, track icons. Our call for designers received many great submissions.

Sample submissions from Aline Skibitzki, Steffen Belz, and sixeleven srl respectively

After thorough discussions we decided to partner with sixeleven srl in Italy, the same company that designed the DrupalCon and Drupal Dev Days Milan brands and work forward from another brand proposal they sent. Sixeleven delivered a brand manual with fonts and colors and worked with us designing the sponsor brochure, stickers, PDF schedule, etc. We also had two designers on the lead team who produced matching designs for the lanyards, rollups, digital signage, further website elements, etc. which worked in perfect unison with the sixeleven designed items.

Social media, giving Drupal Europe a voice

We knew from the get-go that we need to be active on social media. And in fact through the year we posted over a thousand tweets on https://twitter.com/DrupalEurope. We made several announcements on Twitter exclusively especially before we had attendees we could send emails to. We kept posting more detailed posts to our Medium blog, but daily news were delivered over Twitter. While we hoped to be able to, once we had our Drupal website, we did not integrate the blog or the social media channels there, so our Twitter feed was more like the source of the most up to date high level news source while our website was best to review all available information.

While Twitter is quite popular in "insider" Drupal circles, we hoped to reach out of those. We also set up our Facebook presence which replicated a lot of the Twitter messaging and we also had a LinkedIn page that did not get much activity though. Further attempts were made with Xing.com, a dedicated Meetup account, an event page on Airbnb and probably some more volunteer-based initiatives. The idea was to drive interests from various platforms to the

channels where we were actually providing information at. None of these approaches were very effective in part because we did not have the resources to keep them up to date.

While we ran a very small ad campaign on Facebook and a bit bigger one on Twitter targeting technology people in the region, we did not seem to succeed with reaching outside of our regular reach with them so abandoned the idea to spend money on them.

Finally we thought it is important to have a consistent social media voice so our Twitter account was managed by a single person. We made sure to make the biggest noise about all the things that helped build our credibility at the start and then things that demonstrated our value provided. Some people considered our social media activity too chatty but it definitely helped give a familiar voice to the conference that was not too formal and contributed to the community camp feel of the event.

Websites and the process of getting them ready

As mentioned earlier, over the span of the year we had two different websites. The initial website was a Symfony 4 based HTML-landing page. The other was the full Drupal 8 site with workflows, user generated content and so on, that turned out to be more complex than we initially anticipated.
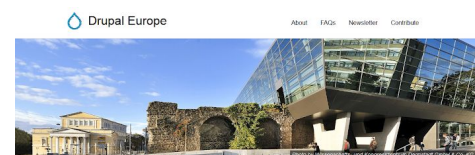
HTML-landing page

Starting with the simpler of the two first, the goal there was to put together a quick and simple website, just to tell the world that we are here, who we are and what we want to achieve.
It was initially created on the 13. October 2017, in a very simple and slim version, which gradually evolved. We stopped development on it on 17. May 2018 and it was replaced by the Drupal 8 website shortly thereafter. Statistically we had 226 commits over the period, giving an average of 1 commit per day. 8 people contributed to this site with 85% of contributions from 3 contributors.

Using Symfony 4 as a midway point between a fully-fledged website and a simple HTML website worked out quite well, there was a slight overhead to it, but that was mitigated by it providing benefits in regards to asset handling with automated optimization of js, css and image sizes.

October 13, 2017 – May 17, 2018

Commits to master, excluding merge commits. Limited to 6,000 commits.
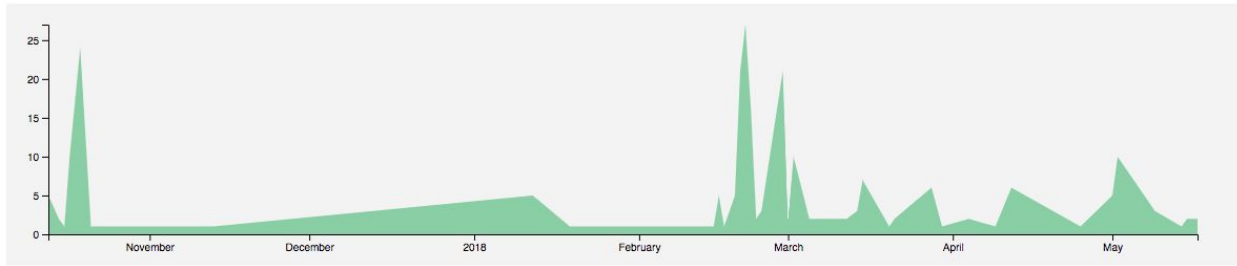
Drupal 8 website

We explored a lot of different approaches to building the website, the big contenders were CoD, RNG and even using Commerce as a base for the event – but quick prototyping using those approaches did not provide a useful shortcut to a complete website. Ideally CoD for Drupal 8 would be our go-to choice but that was not yet mature enough when we needed it.

We then decided to decouple the ticketing system from the website and later investigate the possibilities of integrating it into the website, which simplified what the website had to do. We ended up going with a setup that required a lot of configuration, but very little custom code for handling the functionalities – we also went at it with the mindset that what we build was not meant to be reusable so if a shortcut was taken that would be okay as the website wasn't going to live more than a little over a year.

We took good care to make the website responsive and support features we needed with webforms, field permissions and an extensive set of content types, views and paragraphs. We even powered the digital signage in the venue off the website, read on that later.

March 5, 2018 – September 12, 2018

Commits to develop, excluding merge commits. Limited to 6,000 commits.
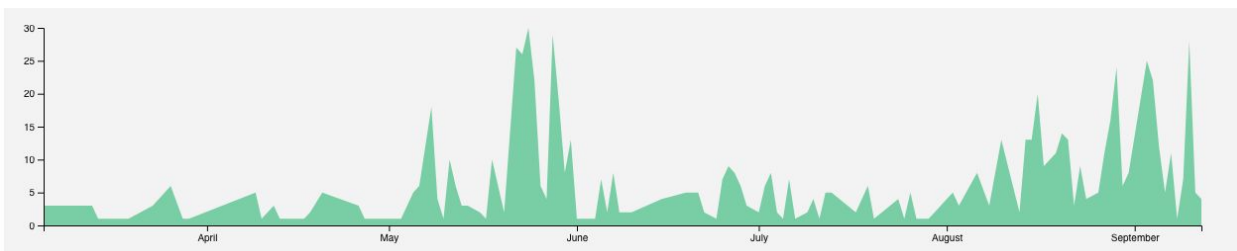
This website received a total of 795 commits between March 5 when we started its repository until September 26 when our last commits happened as of this writing. That comes down to almost 4 commits per day. There were 17 contributors to this website, the top 3 contributors made 83% of the commits.
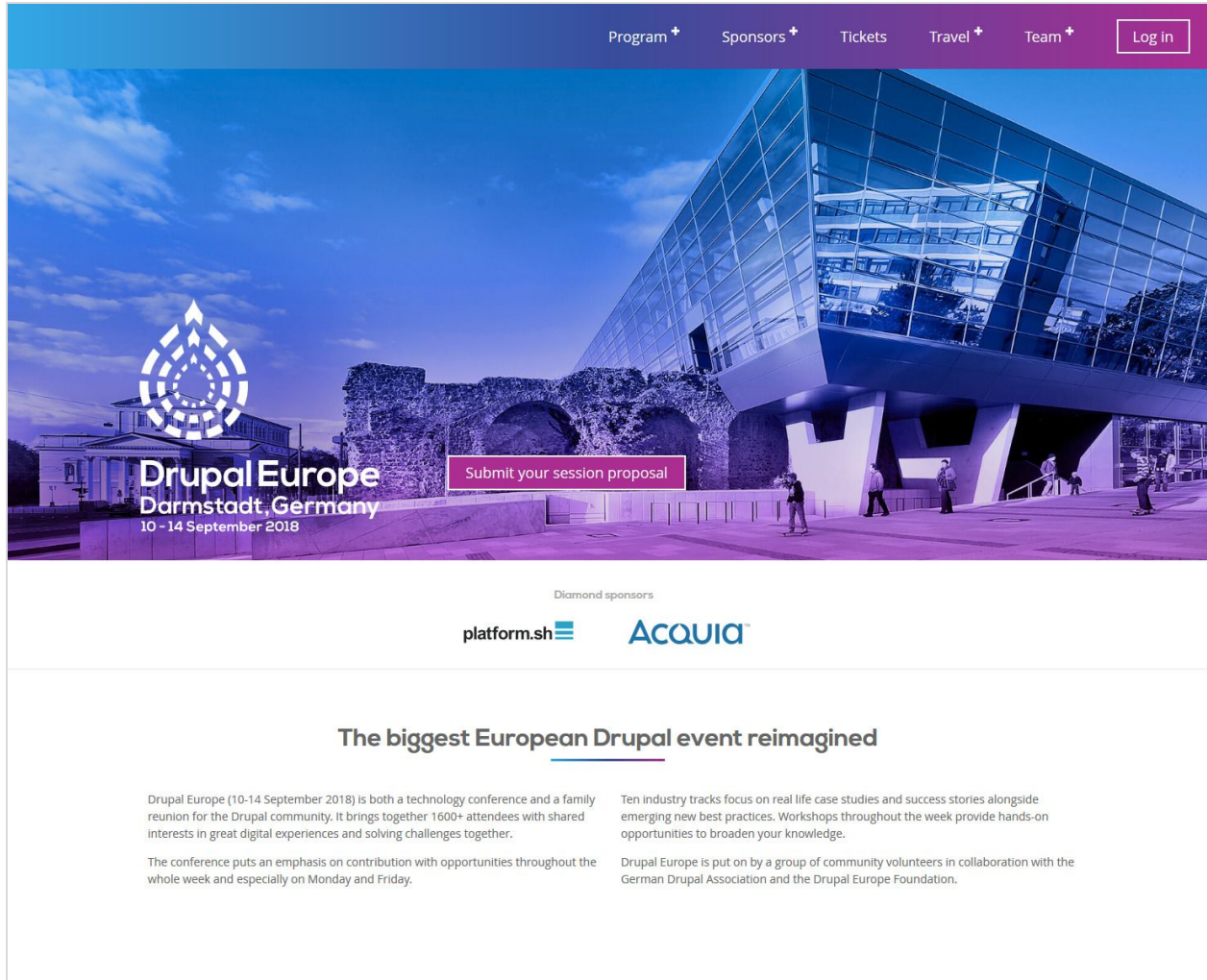
Initial release of the Drupal 8 website

While we did not intend to create a reusable website by any means, we realize people may learn from how we did things. So we published the whole source code at the end of the conference at https://www.drupal.org/project/drupaleurope_website. We are not going to support this project, it is merely posted as an example, however other event organisers may want to pick this up and bring it further or cherry-pick some ideas for their websites.

Timing and the website

A look at the calendar can be treacherous when you still have so many months to go until the event. We started too late with defining milestones which put us in tight situations during the course of building the website. At a time when the website team was still evaluating Drupal distributions, it turned out that a placeholder website was not enough to serve the changing requirements during preparation of the event.

We wanted to publish information about sponsorships and found out after a while that it would really help convincing others to show some early sponsors. We wanted to start selling "early supporter" tickets and offer a corresponding badge for download (and optimally already link sold tickets to a user account). While we kept updating the brochure site, that took time away from volunteers' building the Drupal 8 website. Many little holdups resulted in a really tight timeline before the event. We could not allow much time for session confirmations and we were way too late to use featured speakers for serious marketing on the site.

Verticals as our final program concept

We arrived at our final program concept by the beginning of March. We've had lots of discussions with community members to try to solve the life and death problem of DrupalCon Europe that the customer attendees are not there because there is not targeted content for them and sponsors are not there either because they cannot sell to customers as much as in the United States as a consequence. While this is in part a result of how Europe is different culturally from the United States, we could refocus the program on users of Drupal to work around this a bit. We've seen the summit model working very well at the beginning of DrupalCons (so much so that DrupalCon Seattle in 2019 is going to dedicate one more day to summits) and we thought we turn that around and organize the program around industry verticals.

Some of us met and sat down at the DrupalCon Nashville sprint to refine the concept and match to possible schedules and room allocations. We published our industry verticals at end of April (and posted the photo above). Our industry verticals where

- Digital Transformation + Enterprise
- Government
- Healthcare
- E-Commerce
- Higher Education
- Publishing + Media

- Social + Non-profit
- Infrastructure (later expanded to DevOps + Infrastructure)
- Drupal Community
- Drupal + Technology
- Agency Business

We were still assembling a track team at the time. Ultimately we were more successful with some of the topics than others. Healthcare was least successful and needed to be removed with the sole session we accepted from it transferred to Digital Transformation + Enterprise. Drupal + Technology received the most submissions by far.

We hoped to recruit sponsors for tracks as well but that did not work out too well. Only one sponsor bought a specific track sponsorship and the two diamond sponsors used their track sponsorship option. In hindsight the track sponsor packages were not necessarily providing comparable benefits to similarly priced other packages.

> *"One of my favorite Drupal Europe things was the eCommerce track. Normally a DrupalCon has one, if even two - or even none. There were TEN sessions about Drupal and eCommerce. I wish more events would reach out to this vast market."*
> https://twitter.com/nmdmatt/status/1040885627309441024

Session tagging

Alongside the verticals we also announced session tagging. We provided a way for speakers to add arbitrary tags to their sessions which we lightly edited later for consistency (eg. title casing them). No limits were provided for tags as we believed tags would give more details about sessions even on skimming the list. They provided a great cross-section of content to browse with, for example looking at all security sessions at https://www.drupaleurope.org/session-by-expertise/security shows content from building secure containers through writing secure code to the The OpenEuropa Initiative. These would not have been in the same track at a traditional DrupalCon. We pre-created tags with the traditional track names and some technologies and tools we expected would show up to inspire submitters.

Session tagging was then also adopted by BADCamp for 2018 and for DrupalCon Seattle in 2019 with a somewhat different approach, picking up to three tags from a predefined set.

~~Code Sprint~~ Contribution

This question bugged some of our leads for a while.

DrupalCon already replaced "code sprint" with "sprint" some time ago, recognizing that this activity was not only about development but also about translations, design, marketing, and even planning for future development. Still the "sprint" terminology was so firmly established in

the Drupal community that it looked hard to change, even though still not representing the activity too well and confusing for newcomers.

It is not a "sprint" where a backlog of sized stories is used to form a set of tasks that a given team of people commit to deliver in a timeframe and then release / demonstrate. The backlog is fluid, the team is fluid and the timeframe is fluid, while the work may or may not be committed and released. It is also not a sprint in the sense of needing to run real fast and getting very tired at the end. At DrupalCons there was usually a segment attempting to introduce the concept before every keynote and as part of the closing keynote explaining around the misleading terminology. Also sprint is not necessarily something that people associate with working on marketing materials together or do project planning. Why not change the terminology to begin with then?

Contribution is a dictionary word that is more natural to understand, more inclusive to different energy levels and types of work. It does not sound (and does not have the history of being) so attached to code development only. So from March onwards we decided to change the terminology and drop "sprint" entirely in favor of contribution. Contribution day, contribution room, contribution mentoring, etc.

The change was in no small part inspired by [WordCamps having Contributor days](). We decided to use *contribution* day rather than *contributor* day as it sounded slightly more inclusive of new contributors, i. e. not the day of those who are contributors (already). Also contributor room, etc. could have *othered* contributors as if other rooms or sessions are not for them.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/gaborhojtsy/44016055124/in/pool-drupaleurope/
Almost empty contribution room on Monday morning - photo by Gábor Hojtsy

Several sponsors signed up to support contribution, two of which also got to name our two week-long contribution rooms. Feedback about the natural light as well as all day coffee/tea and snacks in the contribution area was really good.

> *"I arrived with some question-mark-salad in my brain and left Drupal Europe with the proud feeling that I contributed to this community, that I now understand what kind of issues this community also faces and that I really can help to find solutions for those issues as well. I am a part of it, so I will contribute."*
> https://www.drop-guard.net/blog/johannas-first-mentoring-and-contributing-experience

> *"I love the emphasis on "contribution day" and "contribution space" rather than "code sprint" at Drupal Europe. OSS contributions comes in many shapes and sizes. And representation matters."* https://twitter.com/eojthebrave/status/1039505954138611713

Mentored contribution

We worked with the existing (also volunteer) contribution mentoring team from the start to carry the tradition of mentored contributions on Friday. Altogether 40 people signed up to be mentors at Drupal Europe.

Many people raised before that if they arrive on Monday without experience, they feel out of place then as mentoring only happened on Friday usually. Contributors working on specific areas often only have dedicated time at events like this to work on issues all day and are therefore not often easily or practically approachable to mentor new contributors on Monday. So we discussed with mentors that some of them would be available on Monday already to introduce new contributors to the Drupal processes. We were happy to see a couple people tweeting they enjoyed this. While it is easy to say that full mentoring from Monday onwards would be useful, it also falls on volunteers with limited capacity.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/gaborhojtsy/29797425067/in/pool-drupaleurope/
Mentors thanking contributors on Friday photo by Gábor Hojtsy

We also provided a mentor's table in the exhibition space out of our budget and helped provide mentor supplies for Friday. Due to some miscommunication, not all regular mentor table equipment was ready from our side on Monday, but we managed to solve that throughout the week. We also provided the usual eight free mentor ticket codes for volunteers who primarily attend to mentor so they don't need to even pay for their ticket to contribute. These tickets were distributed by the mentoring leads.

Mentors usually have custom t-shirts provided by the event but this time we did not have the budget nor the possibility to have the right sizes and fits collected and shirts ordered based on them in time, so mentors printed their own green ribbons which were used to identify people doing mentoring especially on Friday but also throughout the week. Compared to the shirt, the benefit of ribbons were that they were more reusable for multiple days and were possible to combine with all kinds of clothing styles.

On Friday we provided space for the usual three areas:

1. First-time contributors workshop where Drupal processes and tools are introduced to participants (see [photo on the right by Gábor Hojtsy](#))
2. Mentored contribution to put that into practice with actual tasks; helped out by mentors
3. General contribution with topic teams working together to solve ongoing tasks such as media management, modern admin UI, search API, MongoDB, Drupal demo, etc.

We also recognized contribution day itself needs more work to be well organized for non-code contributors as well. We discussed with mentors to structure the introduction in a way that is modular based on the tools needed for specific tasks. However, more effort and processes need to be in place to have recurring translation, marketing, design, etc. teams at contribution days. We set up [the #contribution-funnels Slack channel on drupal.slack.com](#) following contribution day to improve on this.

All-in-all there was so much interest in contribution on the Friday that we needed to expand the available space considerably on the spot and ask the venue to set up a whole new hallway with tables and power strips. The new contribution area was available in less than 15 minutes.

Contribution days also provide rare opportunities for lead Drupal contributors to meet face to face and discuss topics important at the time. Drupal Europe provided space for many of such important meetings and was hopefully useful in moving those initiatives forward.

Admin UI and JavaScript modernization team meeting photo by Gábor Hojtsy

> *"So many contributors today, really looking forward to see the aftermath! Big thanks to all the mentors, who kept a happy face till the end!"*
> https://twitter.com/rouvenvolk/status/1040696363053473792

Initial audience survey

We also launched our initial audience survey in March. We got 92 responses, which may not be highly representative but the people were quite varied from project managers to site builders to frontend developers. It was clear from the results that people thought DrupalCon was awesome (39%) or at least all right (28%), while 20% of our respondents did not even attend a DrupalCon yet. There was no single other event that all the people responding to our survey could meet at. People liked how DrupalCamps feel, but were not concerned of event size as long as they can meet their peers there.

A sample reason why DrupalCon is the best: *"I got to meet people from a wide variety of countries, companies, roles, and also friends from the US who only ever travel over to Europe for the big DrupalCons."* Likewise, *"Being part of the community"* was listed as the top reason to participate for 40% of our respondents, followed by attending sessions which was top priority for 27%. Interest for business, content and editorial as well as showcase sessions were highest. People were evenly distributed among looking for Drupal speakers and speakers from other areas.

75% of respondents said there should be workshops and/or trainings. We did not ask specifics about costs associated which was an oversight. Read on later about workshops and trainings.

40% of the respondents said they'd rather not get a goodie bag and free t-shirt. On the other hand 42% said free coffee and tea all day should be offered. Only 14% said we should reduce the ticket price and not have coffee and tea at all. In terms of lunch, 38% said they are fine with "venue food" (a further 31% even said they would pay extra for better food at the venue), while only 17% said we should not offer lunch and reduce ticket prices instead. The respondents of course did not yet know what kind of "venue food" to expect in Darmstadt.

All in all, the survey confirmed our goal with creating an event that brings the various folks of Drupal together to meet and inspire each other, as well as our focus on industry case studies. On the other hand, our initial cost cutting ideas about catering were not validated.

The first European Splash Awards

At the end of April alongside the industry verticals, we also announced that we'll hold the first European Splash Awards. While we thought of it as a social event at first, later on we realized it had a lot of value built into the main program as a keynote.

Splash Awards originates from The Netherlands where in 2014 local companies realized they need more celebration of the great projects built by companies. Later on the format was licensed for local awards ceremonies in Germany and Austria, Norway, Bulgaria, Denmark, France and Romania. In Eurovision style we wanted to bring the country-awards together for a European Splash Awards to showcase the wide variety of highly professional projects built with Drupal. This lined up perfectly well with our industry tracks as we attempted to steer the conference towards showing the real business value of Drupal more. It was a logical step to integrate it into our schedule as a keynote. The variety and quality of nominees also impressed Dries Buytaert sitting in the front row:

> "Congratulations to all the Splash Awards winners at Drupal Europe! Such an impressive list of brands and innovative Drupal use cases."
> https://twitter.com/Dries/status/1039417091571507203

Photo by Paul Johnson

We believe there is a lot of possibilities for improvement in the presentation of the awards, but we got a lot of good feedback on the format already. More countries are looking to host their own Splash Awards next year and DrupalCon Seattle even includes Splash Awards as a program item now. We are looking forward to see how that turns out in the United States.

Driesnote and the Prenote

Other than ensuring Dries can make it to Drupal Europe, we did not need to do much for the Driesnote. Once realizing the date conflicts with religious holidays on the beginning of the week, we moved the Driesnote to the middle of the conference so everyone had the chance to attend or at least view the stream.

Dries was very professional about the preparation and ran a test of the Driesnote on Monday. It was maybe his most action-packed keynote ever with announcements about Drupal 7 and Drupal 8 end of life and Drupal 9 release dates; a perfectly flowing demo of Drupal 8.6.0; extended Drupal 8 security support; video updates on various initiatives; announcing that drupal.org will adopt GitLab and that DrupalCon is back in Amsterdam in 2019. Phew!

Driesnote audience photo by Gábor Hojtsy

Our only challenge about this session was the room size. We hoped we can have everyone in person in the same room for our most popular session. If the conference is to have the 1600+ people as we hoped, we could have integrated the two adjacent rooms (that we used for contribution) for the Driesnote into a much bigger keynote room that could hold most participants. (And in that case cut back BoF space to have room for contributions).

However for all other sessions, the keynote room even in the more compact size we used it in was too big. We did not afford ourselves the luxury to pay for the room for the day and then not use it for sessions, so we attempted to put the most popular / most important sessions in this room. At least for the keynote our audience size was right in the sweet spot and filled the room.

Photo by Amazee Labs

This Driesnote was also special in that Dries invited the lead organizers of Drupal Europe on stage and we received a stunning standing ovation from the audience. Thank you!

Megan Sanicki also announced shortly before Drupal Europe that she is stepping down from the Executive Director position at the Drupal Association and leaving the organization. Dries also invited her on stage and said farewell to Megan.

We continued to not having a question segment right at the Driesnote but have a separate Q&A session dedicated for questions, so a lot more questions can be asked and detailed answers given, which was quite well received.

> *"This Dries Q&A format is fantastic! He's right here with us, not far away on a distant stage. I really liked the new Q&A format and hope you keep building on it. I thought the "cozy" room size actually added to the atmosphere."*
> https://twitter.com/wizonesolutions/status/1039894979760582657 and
> https://twitter.com/wizonesolutions/status/1039957709905436672

We moved the Prenote alongside the Driesnote to Wednesday morning. The Prenote kept its tradition to be a welcome event for the Drupal community and was definitely still as good as ever on Wednesday morning.

> *"So delighted that Drupal Europe continued the fine tradition, no institution!, of Prenote this year. Always causes belly laughs."*
> https://twitter.com/pdjohnson/status/1040345314367037440

Finally, we also had the traditional conference group photo after the Driesnote, right outside at the back of the building. Not taking chances here, our team members spent hours on the day before to find the best spot even considering the angle of the sun at the time. The photo turned out amazing.

The future of the open web and open source panel

This was the by far most challenging session to organize for us. First of all, we wanted to inspire our attendees to consider how our work reflects on the future of the internet and society as a whole through our open source practices and whether we are building an open or closed web. Recent developments like Firefox's Facebook Container extension, Apple's blocking of third party tracking in Safari, Microsoft's acquisition of Github, the rise of the IndieWeb (see Drupal integration at https://www.drupal.org/project/indieweb) and the Brave browser among various other things were key moves to discuss.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/amazeelabs/44656779341/in/pool-drupaleurope/
Photo by Amazee Labs

We hoped to have various voices in this conversation from browser makers through policy makers to consumers and software providers. We confirmed and announced our initial group of Matt Mullenweg (WordPress), Dries Buytaert (Drupal) and Barb Palser (Google) in the middle of June but Matt Mullenweg unfortunately needed to cancel due to scheduling conflicts two months later. Our final lineup was Heather Burns (Tech policy and regulation specialist), Barb Palser (Google), DB Hurley (Founder and technical lead of Mautic, one of former development leads of Joomla) and Dries Buytaert (Drupal). Tim Lehnen (interim Executive Director of the Drupal Association) is also passionate about these topics and moderated the panel. They provided a great mix of of views from concept through regulation to implementation.

> *"Thanks to @Dries, @WebDevLaw, @dbhurley and @TimLehnen for a rich discussion about open web and open source this morning - and to the Drupal Europe volunteer organizers for putting on a super cool event - it's been an awesome week."*
> https://twitter.com/barb_palser/status/1040163192780062722

The Open Web Lounge

When an idea is good, chances are high that you are not the only one who had it. That's good for the idea.

It popped up at DrupalCon Nashville where a sponsor dedicated their exhibition booth with the label "Open Web Lounge" for barcamp-style sessions, inviting people dedicated to other open source technologies as well. Meanwhile the German Drupal Association, as a founding member of the CMS Garden initiative, discussed options of promoting their project at Drupal Europe during their monthly meeting.

Some weeks later, a detailed concept was there and sponsors were found for a dedicated room. The 337 square meter room called "Darmstadtium Lounge" was a perfect fit for the plans. We created a space for sessions open to passersby but also areas with loose furnishing allowing for informal talks about common interests and lessons learned.

CMS Garden invited the communities of other renowned open source CMS and organized barcamp-style session proposals that were agreed upon on a daily basis. Unfortunately we did not record the sessions, but we had some awesome presentations and insights there by simply comparing how other CMS communities handle topics like marketing, "genius but unpleasant" community members, raising diversity, or of course different approaches of software solutions. This "off the island" programming offered great insights for example in how multi-language concepts differ between Drupal, Joomla!, TYPO3, Neos or WordPress.

> *"Getting a really open insight on how the #wordpress community takes care of marketing at Drupal Europe. They have an open backlog too ;-)"*
> https://twitter.com/imregmelig/status/1039797106222030848

The Open Web Lounge leads used the possibility to raise awareness by adding talks to the conference schedule each morning, so they were dynamically displayed on the venue screens.

10:30 - 11:15 lounge	●	**Raising diversity - who if not us?** Panel
		In this informal gathering we would like to share ideas on how to raise diversity within your community.
11:30 - 12:15 lounge	●	**Fundraising as a CMS community - where to get money from?** Panel
13:45 - 14:30 lounge	●	**Content-Security-Policy - your browser's XSS airbag** Talk
		The Content-Security-Policy (CSP) is a feature built in into modern browsers that allows to white- and blacklist frontend assets - in this session I'll introduce you to the feature.

It was a perfect fit that the program team did a great job to convince founders of great open source tools as speakers, who also visited the Open Web Lounge.

https://twitter.com/RocketChat/status/1041688588717576193

Rocket.chat and Nextcloud announced their partnership and integration a week after the conference - with a photo of the founders taken at Drupal Europe

Forming a track team and launching the call for speakers

Once we published the concept of industry verticals at the end of April, we needed a team to help us get to high quality sessions. We planned to follow the basic DrupalCon structure of a program team with a couple track chairs for each vertical. Only this time, we needed track chairs for areas that are not strictly Drupal but more focused on industries using Drupal. Healthcare failed out of the gate in that we did not manage to recruit a single track chair for it. Some tracks were hard to recruit a whole team for, such as the publishing track, but then brought fruits several times over. It took a long time to form the complete team, and we started meeting with the subset we had to make sure we can launch the call for papers.

All-in-all our track chair team of 32 track chairs (one of whom later resigned) did an amazing job across our 10 tracks. First they worked on blog posts to announce their tracks which helped them get on the same page about the focus of each industry vertical. These were published on our Medium blog. Then they worked to reach out to a diverse group of speakers and encourage them to speak. We did all we could to have good diversity in various ways on the chair team and had several first time track chairs mixed with people with experience.

We hoped that having experienced track chairs would smoothen the process, but given that this was a considerably different conference from DrupalCons and we needed to figure out a lot of our own process and priorities, that experience did not necessarily help. Leadership tasks of the track team were divided and handed over between four individuals which did not help with the smooth running of the team. Having one strong hand to lead the track team would have made processes a lot more effective but unfortunately no single person had the capacity to take this on.

While the track team worked really hard, due to our budget uncertainties we could only grant them free entry to the conference quite late in time. However we made it clear throughout the process that the worse it would be for them is a voucher granted for a cheap ticket if we cannot afford free tickets, so they did not have ticket purchase pressure.

Speaker selection

Our call for speakers ran for a month originally and was then extended for one more week until July 8, 2018. The submission dynamics looked like the following:

Date breakdown of total
441 session submissions
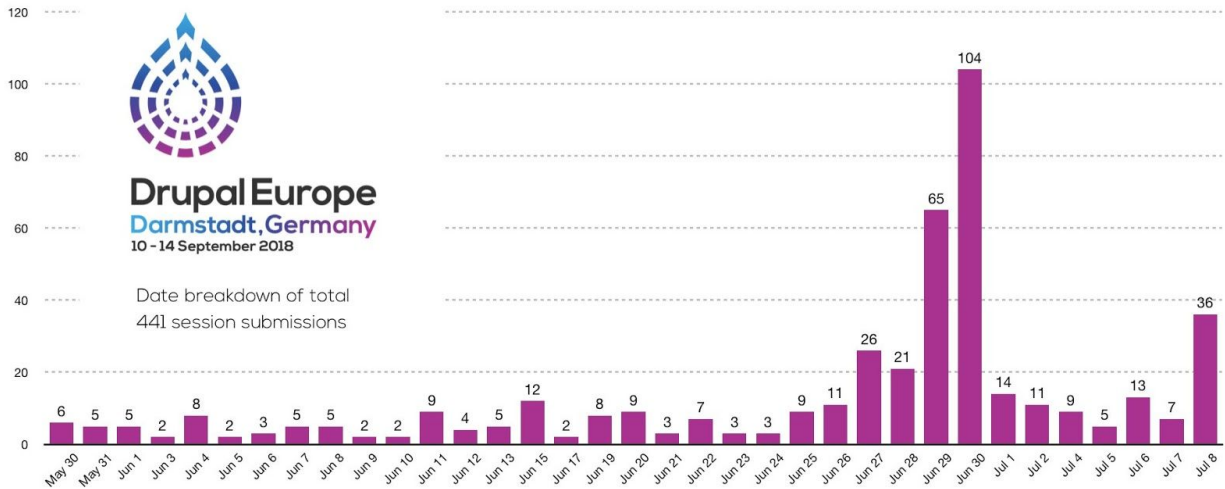
As with ticket sales, deadlines really made things go. We were glad we extended the deadline for a week as we got a lot of good sessions that were still in the making at the original deadline. We were looking for content in the following three formats:

1. 20 minute sessions (including questions)
2. 45 minute sessions (including questions)
3. 2-3 hour workshops

https://www.flickr.com/photos/144130050@N06/43818799175/in/pool-drupaleurope/
"Building Local Communities - foster Drupal adoption" workshop leads photo by Shyamala Rajaram

For workshops, we ended up providing two 45 minute slots combined with the break in-between, so in practice 105 minutes, which was even less than 2 hours. We wanted to have one workshop room that consistently hosts workshops on all three session days, and these were indeed very well received. A combination of frontend, backend, devops, community and business workshops were selected.

We aimed to have the 20 minute slots after lunch as a "speed-up" block, so each day most rooms (except the workshop room) had two 20 minute sessions. Where our session selection resulted in more 45 minute sessions, we also used this slot for full sessions.

For each industry vertical we gave full autonomy to the track team to decide their scoring and selection methodology and similar to DrupalCons provide a priority list of their selection. We even expanded the available session slots through the process, which some tracks used to add more to the accepted session list than originally planned.

While we asked about diversity in the session submission process, we did not expose the concrete data provided by the speaker to the track chairs to protect speaker privacy. We did expose *if* there was a diversity category chosen or not as a yes/no flag. While out of our overall submissions 31% of sessions were self-identified as having at least one diverse presenter, out of the actually delivered sessions (following all cancellations that were resolved) we had 29.5% of our sessions self-identified as diverse. Unfortunately in many cases, due to our lack of speaker funding, diverse speakers needed to cancel due to lack of financial possibilities.

While the track teams got to work frantically after the submission deadline on July 8, summer holidays made it very hard to ensure equal representation from all track chairs. Summer holidays also made it hard to get confirmations from speakers about their sessions. There were speakers we've literally been tracking down through colleagues or our friends we knew they knew. Two volunteers shared the task of communicating with speakers through a shared mailbox.

It took us almost a month when we finally announced the public session list with 162 hours of sessions and 9 in-depth workshops on August 3rd. In hindsight, more reviews by track chairs of submissions up front could have helped speed up the selection process a great deal.

While we did not have a speaker funding pool, we did offer one free ticket per session. For sessions with more than one speaker, we also provided a coupon code for early bird ticket rates, so that co-speakers at least don't get a bad deal even though they waited for so long to see if they get accepted. Finally, we provided a coupon code with all declined sessions, so those who did not get accepted could also still buy on the early bird rate. We also called attention to our free diversity tickets in the emails we sent, given the application process was still open at the time, so declined speakers could also apply there as appropriate.

Finally, we also hoped to get some help from our speakers to promote the conference and sent along a voucher code that they would invite people from their networks with. This voucher was valid for a €100 discount from the tickets being sold at any given time. Unfortunately we've only seen 5 uses of this voucher, so it did not work really well.

Trainings

While we already mentioned that potential trainers reached out to us in our post at the end of April, we had a lot of conflicting feelings internally about trainings. We considered them important parts of the event to provide high-bandwidth knowledge sharing. On the other hand the Drupal Association even cancelled trainings for DrupalCon Vienna 2017 (before cancelling the whole conference outright for 2018) to save costs. Our rough calculations also did not indicate we could make profits on trainings, at best we could break even. However that compared with the amount of work it took to organize them did not add up.

Nonetheless several trainers were interested and willing to step up, so we agreed with two trainers that they would organize the whole framework. We launched our call for trainings after call for sessions closed on July 10. As we already had a group of interested folks, we only ran the call for 8 days.

Then we drafted a contract between Drupal Europe and the trainers, so they would get a deadline by which they need to pay for the room they booked as well as costs for food for their trainees. They would sell their trainings themselves while the event would also do promotion of the trainings and profits would be shared with the event. We launched training ticket sales a little more than a month before the conference on August 2nd with the following trainings:

1. Drupal 8 getting started
2. GDPR for companies
3. GDPR for developers
4. Drupal 8 module development
5. Drupal 8 migrations
6. Drupal 8 with ReactJS

Trainings did not sell well, however this could very well be attributed to our self-fulfilling prophecy. They were launched too late and as we were busy with preparing for the conference, we did not have big marketing reserves to help push them and make up for launching late.

In the end two trainings remained, "Drupal 8 getting started" and a merged version of the two GDPR trainings. Neither of the trainers got to deliver a training at the end who lead the whole process. We think the topics were quite good, very relevant, and the trainers were also great. It is probably also the case that the free workshops proved to be competition for the trainings. We had a well received ReactJS workshop and also planned to have a migration workshop (which

was unfortunately cancelled later), so that may have attributed to the lack of sales of those trainings.

Informal gatherings (BoFs)

Nobody knows the power of BoFs better than us. Drupal Europe was formed in a series of BoF discussions at DrupalCon Vienna (after the initial discussions at DrupalCamp Antwerp).

It was important for us that we have plenty of BoF space and it is self-serve and entirely digital. We also wanted to have BoFs as first class citizens included in the schedule displays (read on later). So we opened BoF submission on August 20, three weeks before the event with 96 slots for three days that was later even more expanded to over a hundred slots. Submitters could pick from a set of predefined room and time combinations which automatically put their BoF in the right room at the right time. Participants could move their BoF around as needed and also unschedule it if they wanted so.

We were delighted to see BoFs following sessions on diversity, Gutenberg in Drupal, Drupal demo, layout management, etc. Also independent of sessions about paragprahs module's UI design, the Drupal Business Alliance, mentor orientation etc. There were also various fun BoFs like Tunisian fine pastry tasting or the movement BoF that took place outdoors. The German Drupal Association also used a BoF space to organize its yearly meeting and the DrupalCon Europe 2018 organizers also used a BoF space to meet the community and take questions.

We let submitters to assign industry tracks and expertise tags as appropriate so BoFs would also show up on pages for specific tags or tracks.

Roundtable discussions

While not organized by us, these are important to mention. Events like Drupal Europe are ideal to gather various interested parties for deep discussions. So the Drupal Association organized various roundtable discussions with supporting partners as well as local community leaders.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/68158920@N08/43706812565/in/pool-drupaleurope/
Community leaders round table photo by Paul Johnson

The reception of the community leaders round tables were great as people had a chance to share pain points cross-borders and get direct feedback from the Drupal Association and Dries Buytaert in person about their concerns. The second community leaders round-table was organized to focus on some top action items. For example, a "Marketing Drupal to Customers" initative was formed by Suzanne Dergacheva, Paul Johson and Ricardo Amaro and is looking for your participation to make materials happen.

> "Awesome to meet over 30 Drupal community leaders from different European countries and to represent Austria. As somebody said, together we can create magic!"
> https://twitter.com/crizzirc/status/1039173387569049600

Volunteer coordination

"Volunteers do not necessarily have time, they just have the heart" - Elizabeth Andrew

Drupal Europe was organized by volunteer leaders from the get-go. For the scope of this section we'll use the "volunteers" term for contributors who were not involved in the larger creation of the event but signed up for specific tasks instead.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/164916077@N08/44052522545/
(Some) volunteers group photo by Dropsolid

No event is successful without helping hands, and we found many of those at the right time. We created and posted a questionnaire on the website asking interested people to answer some basic questions regarding how they want to help, what medium of communication they prefer and will they be able to help on-site.

We sent out the first email to the volunteers who signed up via the questionnaire in early August. In this email, we explained the volunteering tasks and the communication methods to use. In further emails we provided details about the signup sheet we used to let people pair up to tasks.

We designed our volunteer signup sheet based on the sheet from DrupalCon Nashville. The sheet detailed the roles and responsibilities of the tasks they were supposed to do on-site. Two weeks prior to the conference, we sent out the signup sheet and asked volunteers to assign themselves to tasks they are comfortable with. We did not set any required amount of tasks or hours for volunteers, but we were not able to offer any benefits other than warm feelings either. Everyone spent the time they could contribute.

We had a great team of on-site volunteers helping us with activities like check-in at the registration desk, monitoring the sessions in rooms, sponsor care, trivia night, contribution rooms, photography and videography.

The tasks of monitoring sessions in rooms demanded the highest amount of volunteers and we had several gaps. We tried to fill those by approaching attendees we knew who did not yet sign up to volunteer but were attending those sessions either way. A printed checklist was created for room monitoring containing the necessary action items for the room monitor at that time slot to check before and during the session.

The almost 900 amazing photos that you see in our Flickr group were taken by a few people, huge thanks for your continued service!

The first in-person meeting with all the volunteers was held on Monday, September 10 where they could meet other volunteers and ask questions. During the meeting, we also dealt with unassigned gaps in the volunteer sheet.

During the event, we used Slack for communicating with the volunteers. We also decided to use drupal.org issues to give credits for contribution. On drupal.org we have a Drupal Europe 2018 project issue queue where we created issues for most of the volunteering activities from the Drupal Europe volunteer signup sheet.

The budget

The hardest part was always the budget which is probably true for any event of some size. The venue contract required a downpayment and apart from some small savings in the German Drupal Association's bank account there was no money to work with yet.

The financial report of DrupalCon Dublin served as a benchmark. We used a copy, filled in the cost estimations we had and quickly drafted ticket price levels. While the Drupal Association historically been putting on DrupalCon Europe for somewhat more than a million euros, our target was half a million euros instead. We hoped we can gather similar attendance and sponsorships but we had no history or credibility with participants or sponsors so that was hard to predict. Some people just assumed we are replicating a DrupalCon while others considered this a big DrupalCamp and did not expect the quality we were aiming for. Our target of break-even was set at around a thousand attendees with various flexible budget elements. Selling faster/better would make spending on marketing to wider markets possible, grants to attendees possible, more diversity support possible, etc.

Given very little seed money to work with we needed to sell fast. We decided to sell a batch of "early supporter" tickets for a little less than the estimated break-even ticket price at the time. We also quickly created our initial sponsorship packages and started promoting these. All that while we still had a pretty "drafty" static web page. It all looked far from professional.

A comparison of our actual ticket and shirt sales (ticket shop) income compared to contracted down payments that could not be postponed shows how close we were at the start to make it or break it. While we had sponsor income as well later on, that was not there at the time of the first payment yet and just started to be significant after the second payment.
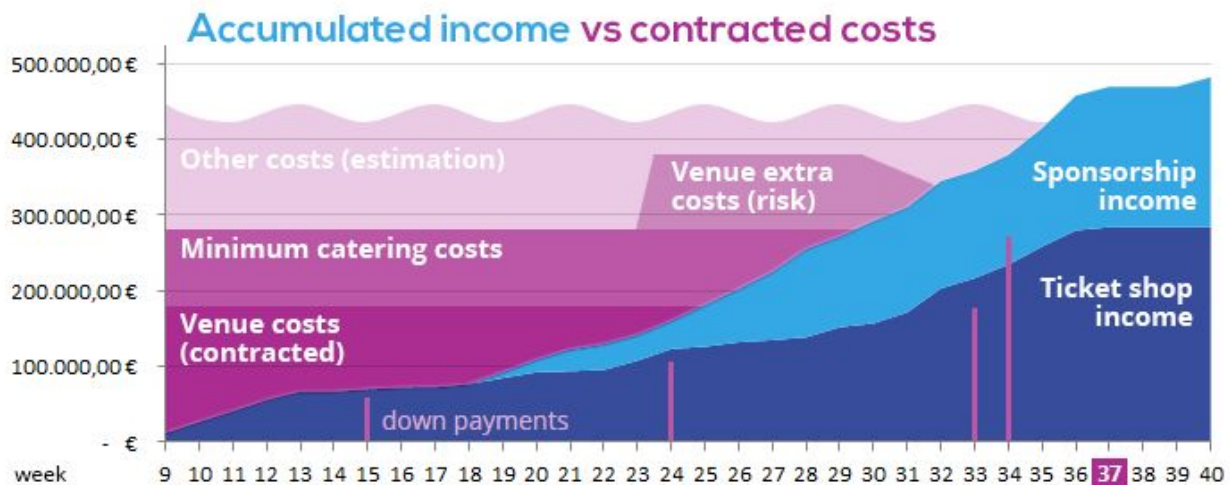
The chart compares major costs to the actual income situation over time. At each point in time we were interested if we can pay the next down payment (shown also as accumulated amounts) and ultimately hoped for reaching the point when the blue income reaches the pink costs, as we would not be losing money at that point. Week 37 is when Drupal Europe took place, and we only reached break even two weeks before.

Faith moves mountains is beyond any religious context true for the Drupal Europe lead volunteer team. Almost all lead volunteers immediately bought their ticket (and those for their colleagues) at the start. Some even offered a private loan, which we were not too far from needing on week 15. The Drupal Association bought all tickets it needed right away. (Thanks!) About half of our sponsors and around half of our attendees were also relatively easy to convince. The other half took a lot of work to convince which took most of the lead's time to ensure that the event is at least break even.

In our regular budget reviews, up to two weeks before the event we were to lose money. This has cost us a lot of things. If we would have had financial certainty much sooner we could have had time to raise funds to organize scholarships, could have supported our speakers to cover at least some of their costs, we could have organized better quality video recordings, ensuring all content is recorded, etc. As it was though, we even had uncertainty up to a month before the conference even if we can grant free tickets to the track team who worked for months to assemble the conference program. And we had to plan with a gap to cover incidental expenses like that of the on-the-spot expansion of the contribution area on Friday.

If we may give one advice to the community, for any future Drupal event: sign (and pay) your sponsorship early. Buy your tickets early, don't wait for the full program if you'll go anyways. If you are faithful you'll be part of the momentum that moves a mountain.

INCOME	NOT FINAL
Ticket Sale	€ 270.000
Sponsorship	€ 204.000
Other income	€ 16.000
TOTAL	**€ 490.000**
EXPENSES AND TAXES	NOT FINAL
Venue	€ 180.000
Catering	€ 110.000
Other cost (t-shirts, promotion, materials, ...)	€ 35.000
Payment processing fees and bank fees	€ 10.000
Event production	€ 95.000
Estimated taxes	€ 20.000
TOTAL	**€ 450.000**
THEORETICAL PROFIT	**€ 40.000**

Since the tax amounts are only estimated, we only know our profits for sure once the finance authorities make the final decisions in terms of taxes next year. If there is indeed profit left, we hope to support Drupal events in Europe.

General tickets

As mentioned earlier, we set up Early Supporter tickets to be able to pay our first downpayment to the venue. And we succeeded, thanks for believing in us! Our Early Bird rate was the same as for DrupalCon Vienna and our Regular rate was 10% more. That does not sound very much like the affordable conference we set out to organize, right? Well, the Drupal Association kindly provided us with some ticket breakdowns from previous DrupalCons and we were quite

surprised about the number of granted tickets. Our final total ticket income of € 270.000 divided by the 1000 or so attendees we had comes down to an average ticket price of € 270. That is well below even the Early Supporter rate. About a third of our attendees did not pay directly for their ticket. Their ticket was either included in a sponsorship package or were speakers or track chairs or received a diversity ticket or they were the few mentors who received free tickets. So if all attendees would have bought their tickets, the price would have come down to € 270. On the other hand, we considered it important to give free tickets to speakers for example and in fact would have loved to provide more financial support to them, since some of them even needed to cancel their participation because they did not have enough funds to attend. None of the people under categories receiving tickets that they did not directly pay for looked fair to exclude.

We were also surprised by the historic sale dynamics of tickets being sold very, very, very late in the process practically starting 5-6 weeks before the event once sessions are announced. Up until then its very hard to tell your conference size or even how many people to plan with. We did not have significant seed money to work with so we needed to have more aggressive timelines and have a larger part of our income earlier. We also did not have certainty of the amount of tickets to be sold. We had a venue flexible to accommodate a DrupalCon Vienna sized event with 1600+ attendees and we shot for that target in our marketing as well.

Our actual ticket sales were as follows. Number of tickets sold in dark blue, number of shirts sold in violet and number of general donations made in light blue from February to September:
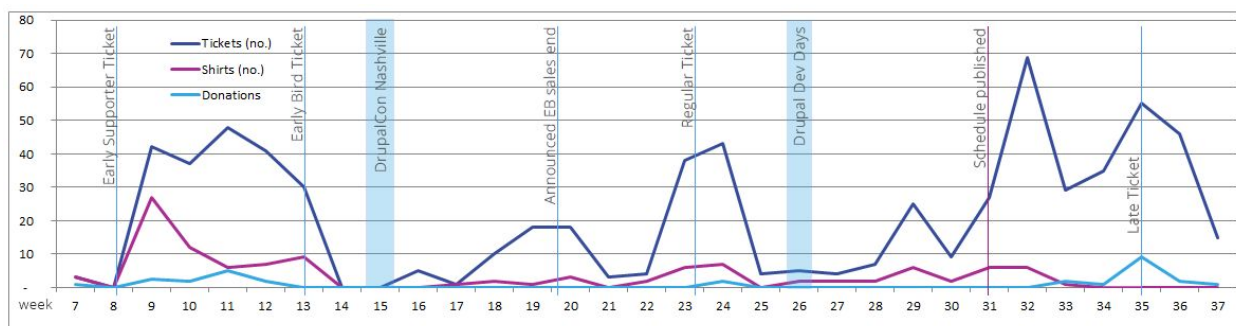
Here are all the rates for comparison:

Early Supporter	Until 26 March	€ 380
Early Bird	Until 11 June	€ 450
Regular	Until 27 August	€ 550
Late	Until 9 September	€ 650
On-site	On 10-13 September	€ 810

We also sold single day tickets onsite for € 270 to be used on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday for one ticket per person. We sold 24 single day tickets at the conference and 28 ahead of the conference. In other words most attendees bought a weekly ticket.

Ticketing and payment processing

We did a lot, really, a lot of research at the start around ticketing and payment providers. All the usual online services came up. We settled on a solution using the Pretix open source ticketing system and Stripe for payments. We could ensure our Pretix setup was GDPR compliant since we hosted it ourselves and controlled all the data. It had good usability even on the admin side. This let us run our own ticketing software and control every detail we needed. We had flexibility to set up various ticket types, coupons, discounts, upsells, etc. Using this setup we estimated we saved €30.000 in fees considering usual online ticketing provider fees.

While we had hoped to integrate Pretix with the website more than the embedded widget, we did not end up having time to do that. Unfortunately that lead to us spending lots of time deduping website accounts with tickets bought and more waiting time at the registration desk for attendees who did not have website accounts (despite receiving a mail to register on the website for a badge).

We also used the open source pretixdroid app on reformatted spare Android devices donated by volunteers for checking in attendees. Some devices and some pretixdroid software versions worked better than others, but scanning the QR code of tickets resulted in very fast check-ins for those who brought their QR codes along.

At the registration desk, we (intended to) split the registration lines in letter batches according to given names, and had a separate line for speakers. In an ideal world, attendees would have noticed the letters and the speaker queue and queued up nicely. In reality they were overwhelmed with their first impressions, were still trying to find their place, noticed familiar faces and started discussions, etc. Maybe more visible signage about letters or volunteers helping people find the right queues even could have helped. In hindsight, the separate speaker line also became an issue since many speakers did not pay attention to it, which resulted in several of them having handwritten badges and loss of time at registration.

Coupons and other promotions at events

While we kept raising the sales prices for tickets, we wanted the community to still get good deals. So we ran various coupon campaigns at DrupalCon Nashville, Frontend United, DevDays, etc. For DevDays we printed little business card size coupons and got them in each attendee bag to encourage people to buy tickets. We also got rollups printed that were brought to various events across Europe and the US and flyers to hand out to conference attendees and meetup participants.

For DrupalCon Nashville the Drupal Association let us place our rollup in their booth and we got Drupal Europe hoodies made to wear there to promote the event and make our organizers easy to spot. For further events we made pilot versions of the event t-shirt in white to wear and use as promotion. Our volunteers were present at each and every event we could be at appropriately dressed, handing out flyers. All-in-all we probably reached all the usual Drupal audience we could.

In hindsight it was not worth the effort to create vouchers for every single event as the conversion rate was *very low*. It was not enough to offer discounts, we should have promoted them more heavily.

Diversity tickets

Especially since we kept ticket prices comparable to DrupalCon Vienna, we wanted to provide new opportunities to potential attendees from diverse backgrounds who would not have a chance to come. We also wanted to give opportunity to all who believes the same to financially support this effort, so starting with Early Bird tickets, we provided the opportunity to purchase 25% to a 100% of an additional ticket to be used for granting diversity tickets. This did not work at all. We did not sell even a single ticket this way. There are probably many reasons. Our explanation of the options were perhaps unclear and we did not exactly define how such tickets will be distributed (as we did not yet know at the time). It was also definitely a new concept. One track chair offered their previously purchased ticket for this pool.

We did not want to abandon diversity tickets however and decided to dedicate the few general donations we had received (altogether € 1.270) as well as funds from our main budget to cover 25 free diversity tickets. We thought this is going to be such a small drop in the ocean for a

conference that hoped to have 1600+ attendees, but without any attendee-funded tickets and no financial certainty of the event yet, this was the extent we could commit.

As we did not have credibility/history in the community and our date selection drew deserved criticism for our lack of diversity earlier, we decided that we should not make decisions about who receives diversity tickets. Instead we partnered with diversitytickets.org which also hopefully helped us reach outside of the Drupal community serving yet another dimension to diversity. While we were ready to even expand the ticket pool if needed, for our 25 offered tickets unfortunately only 17 applicants signed up. All of them received their free ticket codes. 10 of them used the ticket code.

Contributor tickets

Back in our Hello World post right after Vienna we stated we want to make the event accessible to contributors who are not interested in sessions but all the more in meeting community members and work with them to make Drupal happen. We (again) did not know if we'll have money for this, so we perhaps launched this program a bit late, a month before the conference. After much debate we decided that contributors paying for their catering is fair, so we set up a €100 ticket for contributors. We also decided that one would need to fill in a webform to explain their reason for the ticket, so its not misused and does not endanger the budget. Six applicants requested a contributor ticket, all got the voucher code to buy one and all of them used their vouchers. Honestly we were quite surprised by the low number especially that we promoted the option in social media and right on the frontpage of the event, but it was a late offering.

Sponsors

How to convince sponsors to significantly support an event that has never taken place before? That was the first challenge the sponsorship team had. The goal was set to get sponsorships worth the cost of the venue, which was around € 200.000. That was approximately 1000% of what we were used to raise for local Drupal events and therefore we had to think a lot about how to convince companies to sponsor the event. We decided very early on to use similar sponsorship packages and format as in DrupalCon as many sponsors knew how those worked. We gathered information about potential sponsors and on March 13th, we sent out the first version of the sponsorship brochure.

But what were we selling? To start with, we were just selling an idea. An idea of a large scale Drupal event that would attract 1600+ attendees. Within the first hour, two sponsors signed up and one more followed on the same day. The first diamond sponsorship was signed one week later and also two module sponsorship packages. We got confident that this could work out, as we had raised nearly € 35.000 on the first week.
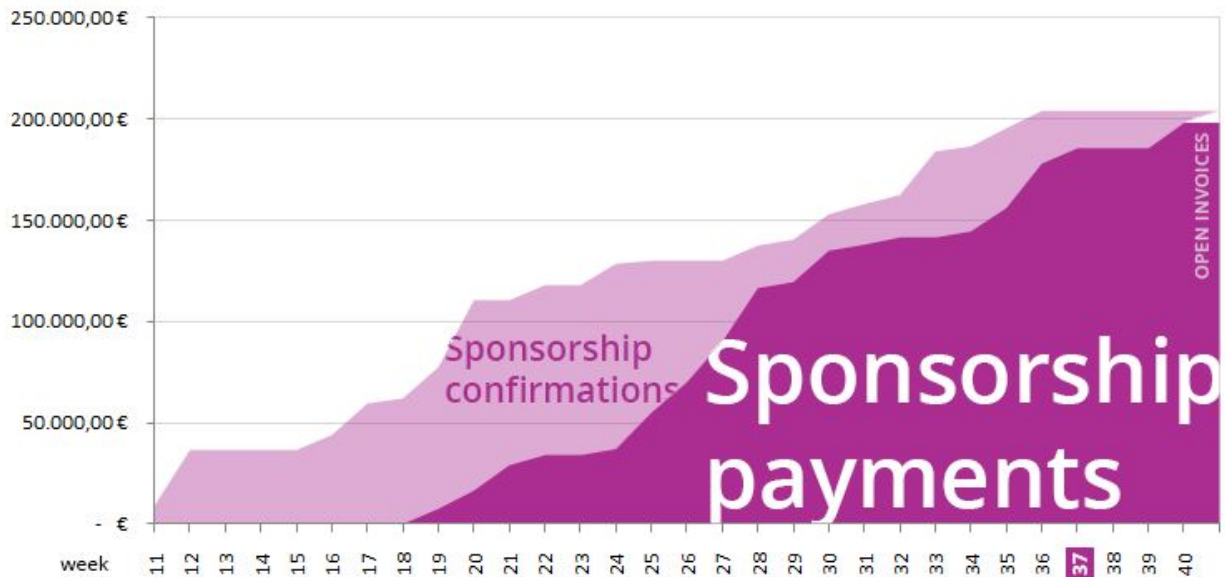
We had to create formal sponsorship agreements and make sure that all the venue rules got included in them. We noticed that many companies were still unsure about Drupal Europe and were waiting to see what the program would include and how many people we would attract. You could say that we had the famous chicken/egg problem in front of us. We had to think about some alternatives.

At DrupalCon Nashville, we came up with the idea of a country marketing sponsorship, which we presented to some agencies. The idea was to encourage Drupal agencies and communities from different countries to market themselves together. This could attract visitors from the countries to visit the booth and start a conversation with agencies. Some countries showed interest but unfortunately we couldn't convince anyone to take this sponsorship package. We still think this could be an interesting approach for agencies / communities to promote their work at DrupalCon Europe.

As this didn't work out, we had to come up with more ideas. Again, DrupalCon Nashville inspired us with the Open Web Lounge that was sponsored by Automattic and after discussing the idea with CMS Garden we decided to have an Open Web Lounge at Drupal Europe and started to contact potential sponsors. This idea became successful and we managed to get two sponsors for it.

Only one week before the actual event, the last two sponsors confirmed their sponsorship and we hit our goal and even € 4.000 more. Kuoni, the professional company that will organise DrupalCon Amsterdam 2019 signed the sponsorship agreement that made us hit the goal. Thank you Kuoni for supporting our event and showing the community that you care!

In August we had to start organising the exhibition area. The employees of Darmstadtium helped us to do that and we started to contact sponsors and allocate them a booth area. There is a lot to think about when planning an exhibition area and as we had never organised such a large event before, we definitely hit some hurdles on the way. With the patience of our great sponsors, we managed to organise everything needed for the event, such as renting computers, screens, tables and chairs.

One of the learnings from the event itself, was that it is important that there are clear rules about what the sponsors are allowed to do and what is not allowed. We noticed a lot of advertising material flying around the venue (literally as well as physically), some of the companies didn't ask for permission to do so and we even noticed flyers by companies that did not sponsor the event by any means. Sad.

We should have better promoted the designated „open area" where the community could place stickers and advertising material, and then keep the sponsor area clean and only available for sponsored content. The German Drupal Association's community stand close to the registration area served as the "open area", welcoming every not-for-profit Drupal project to place their promotional materials there.

Again, we want to thank all of our sponsors. Without you, this event wouldn't have been possible. Photo above by Baddý Sonja Breidert.

Childcare

Various of our organizers have kids and we thought it would be important to provide professional childcare for attendees and speakers to make their participation possible. This decision was in no small part inspired by very successful childcare services at WordCamps. We announced the plan for childcare on May 18th. In hindsight this was quite late for family-travel planning 4 months before the event. We were expecting small children as most European countries already had school at the time of the event, but ultimately the service we would have offered depended on parent requests. We researched various service providers and were really

looking forward to how this turns out. While we got lot of good feedback for trying, less than 10 interested parents signed up and only one of them responded to our request for details (age, etc) about the kids. Even that single parent did not attend at the end, so we did not end up offering childcare.

Our decision to have childcare sparked a lot of discussion and had wide reaching effects of other conferences looking into the option as well.

Onsite services for attendees and speakers

While childcare did not work out, we still wanted to provide parents with support, so we offered a lactation room for those who preferred privacy for breastfeeding or pumping. We also continued the tradition of a quiet room which could be used to get away from the buzz of the conference for some quiet time or prayers. To make these rooms private, we booked two rooms in the quietest area of the venue, the door to which were sometimes unfortunately closed by venue personnel. We were not diligent enough to check often but immediately acted when an attendee called that to our attention.

Speakers were provided their own preparation room that also included drinks catering in the room so they could have personal time to prepare for talks.

[All attendees were expected to abide by the conference code of conduct](#), which we built almost entirely based on the DrupalCon code of conduct for simplicity. There were some necessary changes as our code of conduct contact would of course not be at the Drupal Association and we cannot deny entry to future Drupal Association events for misconduct at our event as we don't have authority to do that.

We also provided communication stickers (green: open to communicate; yellow: only if you know me; and red: I'm not interested in communicating at this time) at the registration desk and green lanyards to request not be photographed. The Drupal Diversity and Inclusion group provided pronoun stickers (she/her, they/them, he/him, etc) and we planned our badge with enough space to place that sticker as well. Green communication stickers run out fast. We've expected a subset of our attendees to use these stickers but they were widely used. No-photography lanyards were ordered as neon green which turned out to be not true. A true neon color would have helped to spot attendees with this lanyard in photos easier and therefore such accidental photos to be discarded easier.

The venue is very accessible for wheelchairs with ramps and elevators. We also offered help with arranging interpreters if needed, but no attendee requested that.

We also offered an all-gender restroom block that included toilets that are otherwise marked men, women and an accessible toilet. This block was right at the second biggest session room with an easy accessible path to it as well.

Social events

What's a major Drupal conference without good social events? Various people highlighted social events in general or specific social events as their favorite moments in our post-conference survey. In that light, it may sound odd, but we only (co-)organized two social events all week and left the rest to the community to figure out. (And you figured it out very well, thank you!).

https://www.flickr.com/photos/amazeelabs/43762358865/in/pool-drupaleurope/
Trivia night photo by Amazee Labs

A major social event that is a mainstay is the Trivia night as it is fun for beginners and experienced Drupalers alike. So much so that we built in the financing of it in the sponsorship packages. This has historically been organised by the Irish Drupal community and they were back here to lead the event at Drupal Europe as well. But finding a suitable venue for it was not easy. We got various quotes and explored several options but they were either very expensive or at very sketchy areas of town. We even ping-ponged for a long time between which day it should be, which made social event organization for others a challenge. Finally we settled on the traditional Thursday and agreed that the venue would host it in the convertible keynote hall re-furnished for this occasion. Again we were lucky to find a good partner in Darmstadtium and their technology, as they could create a ballroom with tables for groups of five people out of the keynote theater in an hour. Hosting it in our own space helped us avoid smoking, loud music, etc. but still host a bar. Unfortunately some attendees got very carried away with their party-time, throwing paper airplanes and beer coasters around which we should have stopped when it started as opposed to only when the complaints came in. Other than that we only got good feedback about this event.

> *"First trivia night. I really enjoyed it, we had pretty good scores for beginners and even made a new friend David Needham"*
> https://twitter.com/MadaPosto/status/1040362882347802624

https://www.flickr.com/photos/jean-fenouil/44693155692/in/pool-drupaleurope/

Biergarten photo by Jean Fenouil

Our other social event was outdoors in the Bayerischen Biergarten which was organized almost last minute. With luckily amazing weather, the plentiful fully outdoor space helped to not feel like a cramped crowd.

Several other events were submitted by you! Thanks! The game night hosted in the venue drew a very diverse crowd with lots of games (photo on the right by Gábor Hojtsy), a small group of people walked around town, the camping group hosted a social night, there was a CEO dinner discussing the Drupal Business Survey results and other topics, the Belgian and Dutch associations hosted a party as well in the park right next to the venue and there was a publishing and media get-together. In short, you did not disappoint! We made a requirement that all submitted social events would apply the same code of conduct that the conference used.

We did not have capacity to organize a first timer's social event or the traditional women in Drupal get-together, neither the usual exhibition opening party. While many social events were

organized by you all, it is not surprising that nobody took authority independently to organize these. We could have been more transparent about the need to help organize these which may have resulted in them happening.

While we were happily in our bubble, the church bells at Tuesday midnight reminded us of 1944 September 11, when 80% of Darmstadt was destroyed in a bombing. It reminded us of a horrific world war's scars still present but at the same time of how respectful international collaboration has fostered a long period of peace (at least in Europe) ever since.

Catering

The major issue with conference centers is that if you are to have catering, you are required to work with the house's caterer and they have their usual pricing. Yes, one of the ideas to reduce the budget was to not offer catering. On the other hand we have been to DrupalCons that were harshly criticized for running out of coffee. Also the need for lunch and especially coffee and tea all day was underscored in our initial survey as well.

We have discussed the option to let attendees go get their lunch outside the venue. Theoretically this would not be difficult because Darmstadtium is located in the center of the city. But Darmstadt's downtown is not quite big enough to effortlessly feed 1600+ people spreading out to the nearby restaurants, easily expanding beyond a two hour lunch break even. The caterer sent us an offer with a self-buyer's option for lunch. That was the point when we realized that we would save € 5-7 per person per day on lunch. So we decided that we'd include lunch. Nothing fancy, just basic tasty food.

In dietary terms, the organizer team is pretty diverse. We had no doubts that an inclusive event needs to respect all common diets and have options for diverse food intolerances and allergies.

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https://www.flickr.com/photos/gaborhojtsy/42924565390/in/pool-drupaleurope/
https://www.flickr.com/photos/144130050@N06/44727118961/in/pool-drupaleurope/
Photos by Gábor Hojtsy and Shyamala Rajaram

We came up with a brisk idea: let's serve vegan food. That way it already respects vegetarian, vegan, halal, kosher, lactose-free and free of two major allergens. Looking at the dietary requests in the user registration form one of these were already a requirement for more than 25% of the attendees. The plan to always have one of two dishes gluten-free did not work out

on all days, but we managed to provide solutions on the fly with the caterer. We must admit we challenged the cooks a bit. In the end they thanked us for all the new ideas.

So actually on the one hand pre-contracted caterers might be an issue but on the other hand there are several advantages in working with one. They were experienced partners of the venue, they knew their workflows and spaces and they could usually make educated estimations. In our case the caterer made the plans for the placement of the buffet and drinks stations directly with the venue's people. And we just had to mention once that we don't want to hear any complaints about the availability of coffee or water.

While feedback on the food was overwhelmingly positive in social media and onsite, the post-conference survey had a more balanced view. Some people really missed meat options and a few people mentioned the food could have had more variety within its boundaries. The option to have a dedicated meat stand with some availability to extend this concept came up while talking to people.

We only heard positive things about the all day coffee and one person mentioned there should have been an option to have tap water. We already had no plastic or single use wrapping or cups or plates and we asked the caterer to donate the leftovers to a local food charity.

> *"Great atmosphere, interesting talks at Drupal Europe. And btw, all food vegetarian/vegan with no single-use wrappings whatsoever. That's the way to go!"* https://twitter.com/hukkajukka/status/1040186240585355264
>
> *"Deep talk about the delicious croissants at Drupal Europe at night! Loving it XD"* https://twitter.com/ChosenLuna/status/1039996687975112704
>
> *"Love the fact that all food at Drupal Europe is vegetarian and there are no plastic or paper cups, plates or other such waste. And finally, food is really tasty and there is plenty of it."* https://twitter.com/plastic/status/1040185970564521985
>
> *"The food was excellent, plentiful and varied. I like the fact there were pastries in am. As someone who skips breakfast to be at the prenote, keynotes etc that was marvellous. And fruit. Yay!"* https://twitter.com/pdjohnson/status/1040320555692503040

Wifi

The Darmstadtium has [a dedicated page](#) to boast about their network capabilities and their award won for it.

> *Latest IT infrastructure, a fast internet connection (up to 10 GB/s), extreme reliability and the provision of individual customer networks (VLAN technology) – with our digital infrastructure, we fulfil the most stringent requirements for network technology and connectivity.*

But, *you know*, we've seen many things before and DrupalCon has brought down the wifi system of some venues in the past where the IT people were so confident. Not here! Apart of a few isolated issues with client devices, the network worked flawlessly even on the contribution day when most people were concentrated in one specific corner of the building.

We had more than a thousand clients every session day on wifi. Somewhat less than half of those devices were Apple devices according to network stats. Roughly 10% of all devices used the 802.11ac protocol while 25% used 802.11n on 2.4Ghz and 75% used 802.11n on 5Ghz. 1TB of data was transmitted over wifi on the session days, while our wired devices doing session streaming also transferred another 1.7TB of data.

Our main contribution for making the wifi work was the network name and password. We chose "DrupalEurope" and "ContributeToday" to signify and spread the community spirit that brought together the conference in the first place.

> *"Very few conference centres deliver on WiFi availability for number of clients nor speed. Not once in the week, even during keynotes, did I experience problems. Fantastic service, that's not just the WiFi either. Highly recommend your conference centre as a venue."*
> https://twitter.com/pdjohnson/status/1041595697680797697

> *"Conference centres never believe us when we say we will eat all your data. And use all your connections. @ds_darmstadtium thank you for providing us with the perfect environment. I hope we'll be back again some day."*
> https://twitter.com/kattekrab/status/1040610271776129024

> *"Possibly the best internet of any large Drupal event @DrupalEurope. Super productive event and we haven't really started yet. Hopefully we will see you here. #DrupalEurope"*
> *[Speedtest.net results showing 3ms ping, 140.83Mbps download and 113.76Mbps up]*
> https://twitter.com/cyberswat/status/1039401275845009408

Digital signage

A significant cost cutting measure that was also great for the environment was to skip printing program booklets. DrupalCon had already done away with goodie bags that we did not have either, but we went one step further. Thankfully for us, the venue had plenty of digital screens everywhere starting from welcome screens in the parking lots and elevators (see on the side, photo by Gábor Hojtsy) through screens in the elevators, screens in the hallways and even screens on the doors on the second and third level.
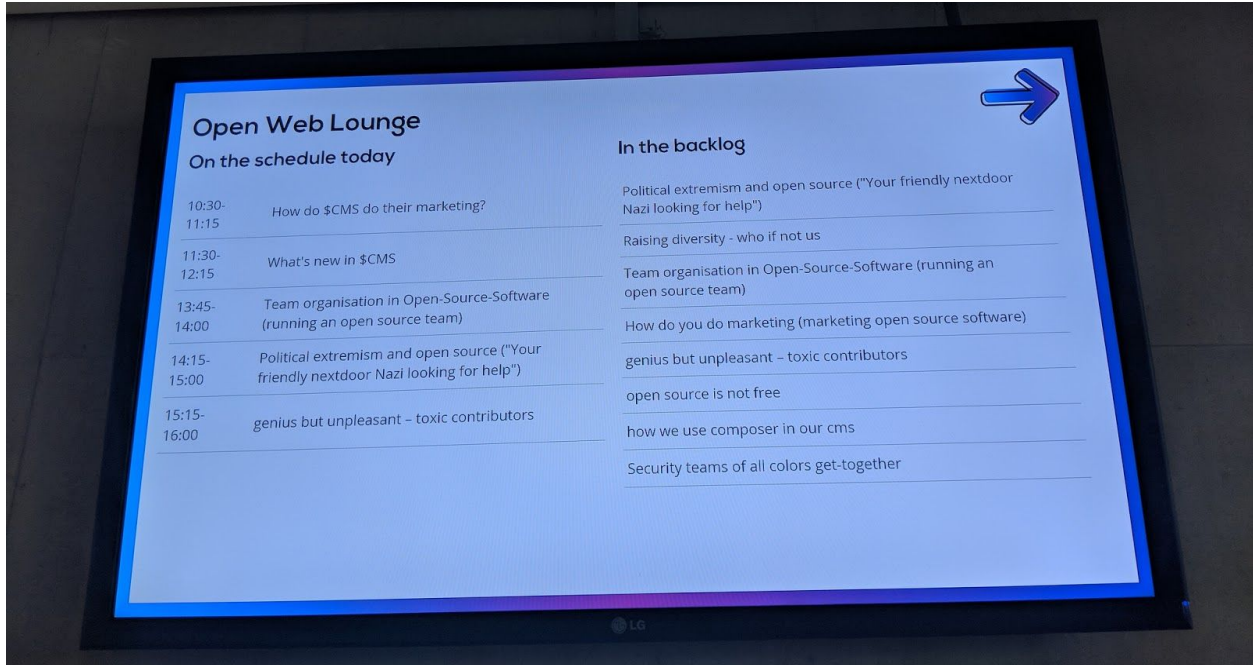

The screens could display any URL and would normally reload every 10 minutes. So we built some screens as custom styled Drupal nodes while others were powered from Views and included some custom JavaScript and CSS. We built several screen variants up front and used timelapse simulation for testing to check the dynamic time based logic for various screens.

We got some of them tested well with the venue remotely (eg. the door screens for rooms). The ones that were well tested ahead of time worked from Monday onwards without a hitch. As we were ready with some screens last minute, we did not give the venue much time for remote testing, so we had to spend quite some time with testing and adjusting some of them on Monday.

Slightly unfortunately all screens used Internet Explorer 11 to display content and almost none of us had that on their development environments. We relied on a browserstack.com subscription for this occasion. We also set the refresh interval to much more often when we were adjusting screen display. Another issue we had was with Drupal 8's great caching, which caused us issues once people were not updating their BoFs anymore and Views caches did not get invalidated often enough normally. We adjusted our configuration when we realized this and that made the program overview screens follow time more closely.

All-in-all the usage of digital signage allowed us to skip a lot of housekeeping time before/after the keynotes and update program items dynamically as they needed updates. When a talk was cancelled midday or another replacement was added, we could update the online schedule which updated all screens almost immediately.

Informal gatherings (BoFs) were self-scheduled by participants but immediately showed up alongside every other session or workshop in a timeslot on all screens (see photo on the right by Janne Kalliola). We heard that this resulted in a lot more activity at BoFs. We also created program items throughout the day from the Open Web Lounge unconference schedule that was always defined in the morning for the day, which drew participants to those as well. (Additionally to the Open Web Lounge having its own screen).
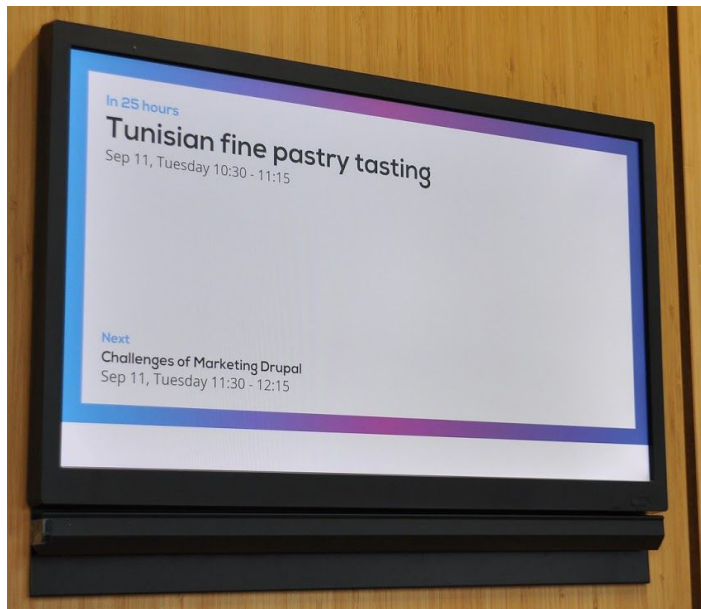
Some extra work went into SVG maps of the venue that laid out the spaces of the building including where to find each sponsor. We displayed these as well in rotation (floor by floor) on some of these screens.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/nomadig/43951444624/in/pool-drupaleurope/

Photo by Janne Kalliola

https://www.flickr.com/photos/nomadig/29754496817/in/pool-drupaleurope/

Twitter wall photo by Janne Kalliola

Finally, on our last venue visit, we had various interesting ideas for the use of the big gray projector wall in the main hallway. As people arrived and went towards the keynote room and contribution rooms we wanted to add a welcoming touch. Our initial idea was to feature photos from previous events on the first day and then from this event onwards. That morphed into a curated twitter wall that we could still use to display photos on but also had the option to feature text-only posts or photos where the added text was useful for clarification.

We evaluated various ready-made services for the Twitter wall, signed up for a few to try them out but the decent ones usually cost € 200 per day for a live curatable feed and we did not have that kind of budget to spend. Building our own quick solution with Views and oEmbed for tweet display was a logical next step. It would be amazing, if someone could bring this forward and create a supportable module or distribution out of our open sourced code.

We were not even ready with the twitter wall on Tuesday morning, so we used the keynote live feed to display on the screen and invite attendees in to the keynote. Once the session days were over we used this same screen to display wayfinding information for contributors behind the welcome tables of mentors and to say farewell to our participants at the end of the day.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/gaborhojtsy/29797417747/in/pool-drupaleurope/
https://www.flickr.com/photos/gaborhojtsy/29797426877/in/pool-drupaleurope/
Photos by Gábor Hojtsy

> *"Brilliant!! [the screens] were amazing, accurate and very helpful."*
> https://twitter.com/piyushpoddar/status/1041996646819815424

Video recording (and streaming)

This is an area that was most affected by our lack of funds. We asked for a video recording/streaming offer from the venue which was impossible to fit into our budget so we attempted to put our own solutions in place. There was no single source of existing video recording equipment at the European communities in the quantity needed that we could use and we of course did not have the budget or intention either to buy 10 recording kits. While we did not promise recording or streaming of any of our program, we wanted to do our best to try and do it.

We set up https://www.youtube.com/c/DrupalEurope (for most of the time without the custom URL as we became eligible for that way after the conference) to stream on the week and host our videos after the event.

We ended up with three solutions for video with overall very mixed results.

1. We had a very dedicated volunteer for recording and streaming the keynote hall. He had been working on a sustainable concept of a bullet-proof hardware solution for such purposes and took the chance to get the most out of his idea. He installed three cameras, one at the back of the stage to cover the audience, one in the middle of the audience and one up at the ceiling where the video control room was. He then mixed these live with the projected screen footage, the digital signage screen developed for this room and audio feed from the venue. The result was recorded locally and streamed live. We had great results with this solution as even though the live streaming broke at some points due to conflicts with configuration of our other live streaming equipment in other rooms, the local recording was consistently useful and could be used later to upload the correct session videos (except where speakers requested to withhold their publication).
2. We also had four previously used streaming boxes from the Dutch Drupal Association. Without a dedicated volunteer to attend to these and a lack of testing up front, it turned out too late that they were not getting audio from the HDMI over IP boxes they were connected to. Once we installed audio inserters alongside the streaming boxes, the streams were working well, but that was too late for many sessions unfortunately. These did not do local recording, but even if they would have done so, the lack of audio would have been an issue. Finally, the streaming from these boxes only worked if the input was 1080p or lower, higher resolutions did not work. As we got our recording equipments together last minute, we did not have the possibility to let the speakers in these rooms know ahead of time and pre-session setup did not always include setting it to a working resolution.
3. Finally the remaining five rooms had recording done with boxes we received from the Austrian Drupal Association. These only did local recording, not streaming. They needed

to be manually operated and required a lot more work after to cut the recordings and do uploads. Results were also mixed in terms of whether audio or video was recorded.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/gaborhojtsy/29846538777/in/pool-drupaleurope/
Keynote hall video setup photo by Floh Klare

It is clear we had too much trust in the self-sufficiency of some of the technology we used, given that the individual solutions were proven at previous Drupal events. However they were not used on this scale nor in this combination and were likely operated/maintained by more dedicated people even at those smaller events.

We should have done better testing of everything and assign one person responsible per room to be sure that the technology works in each case, on top of the room monitor that was there to help the speaker. The German Joomla! community kindly offered their equipment and operating team earlier that we turned down at the time as we did not have the certainty of the budget yet to promise to cover their travel and accommodation expenses.

After the first session day on Tuesday, the organizers team stayed in the venue until sunset for a retrospective meeting to figure out ways to improve how we solved problems especially in

regards to the recording solutions on the spot. We received several complaints over Twitter about the video streams at the conference. While we decided to focus more lead volunteers on further days to help speakers set up and make sure recordings work, we did not want to sacrifice the experience of people actually participating in person so we kept that as our first priority.
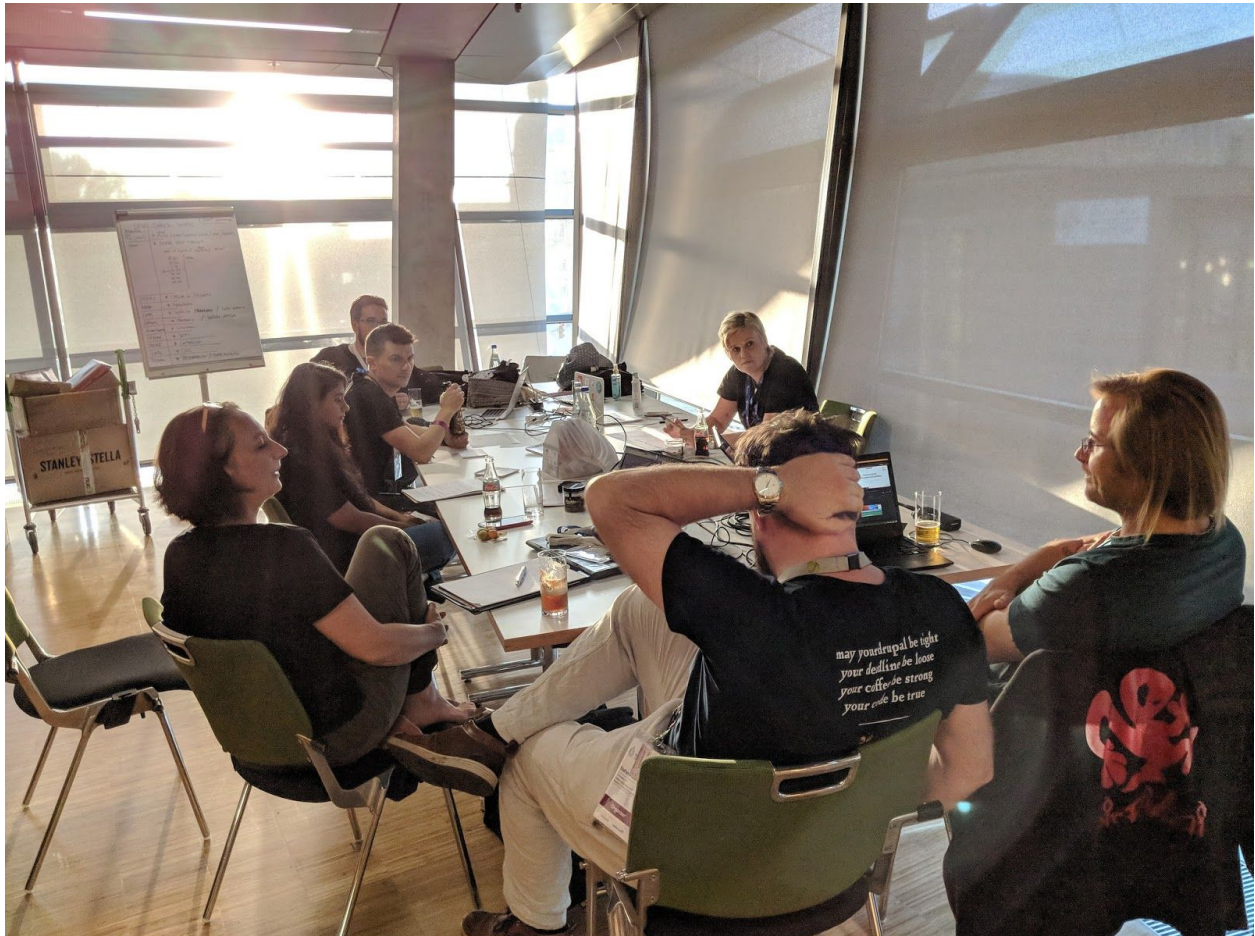
https://www.flickr.com/photos/gaborhojtsy/30863582158/in/pool-drupaleurope/
Tuesday retrospective photo by Gábor Hojtsy

It took us several weeks after the event, but eventually we got most things that were usefully preserved online, see https://www.youtube.com/c/DrupalEurope. As of this writing we are still looking at cutting session slide imagery as a video track on top of session audio recordings where we only had audio.

In hindsight if we would have had the budget capacity and more of a budget certainty in time, we would have signed up professionals or semi-professionals to do this so it does not fall on the limited set of leads who were busy with serving the in-person participants as well. At least we cannot blame the volunteer coordinators, they have been trying really hard to find enough room monitors early enough and still weren't 100% successful.

In summary what would have improved our situation would have been to split speaker screen video right at the laptop and not receive video from the venue's system. Ideally we would have been able to record, stream and monitor the output at the same time. Without monitoring, relying on local recording was not sufficient and monitoring the too numerous streams we had would have also required more people. Because we did not have tech personnel available in every single room at the beginning of every single session, some people tried to solve problems unplugging and moving our kits and that did not help. We should have had readily available tech help in every few rooms and tell people not to touch our tech.

Post-event survey

We got lots of feedback onsite, both good and bad. We tried to turn any onsite negative feedback into actionable improvements right there by changing room tech support, getting more tables for contribution when needed, etc. However we also wanted to get a better overview of what people liked and did not like so we can inform future events. While there will not be another Drupal Europe, the results could still help DrupalCon Europe and other events. Here are some highlights from the survey results based on 151 submissions we received as of this writing.

First of all, we asked respondents to rate the conference from 1 to 10 (10 being best) and our average rating was 8.44. *Not bad!*

For 14% percent of our respondents, Drupal Europe was their first big Drupal event and most of them found it very easy or easy to network with others. The subset of them who said they were new to Drupal said Drupal Europe was a good introduction. This is somewhat contradictory to what we felt that due to the lack of external marketing we only reached the usual suspects. Of the people having their first big Drupal event, most were out of Germany, for example Kenya, Zimbabwe, Greece, etc. 55% of our respondents were DrupalCon regulars and 31% already been to at least one DrupalCon.

In terms of overall country distribution, almost half of our respondents were from one of these three countries: Germany, United Kingdom or the Netherlands. The diversity gets a lot more interesting beyond that, we had attendees from Tunisia, Zimbabwe, India, Ethiopia, Canada, Ukraine, Australia, Pakistan, Armenia, Russia, Jordan, South Africa, Egypt and Congo. Given the numbers of them, it is also no wonder the Dutch and Belgians hosted their own social night! A potentially important data point is that based on the results, Austrians did not turn out in numbers at all, despite or maybe due to the DrupalCon in Vienna last year. (But

the usual caveats apply about survey respondent samples).

82% of the respondents said they received somewhat or much more value then they expected and only a single respondent said they received significantly less.

A roughly equal number of people said they missed the opening and closing keynotes or to the contrary they enjoyed having more industry programs instead. Similar about the food, we received many praises for the food being varied and not too heavy so people could keep going with their day while others said we should have had more sauces and variety with the food even if we kept the same constraints we set up.

A considerable number of people said they would love to see more in-depth workshops while at the same time a few people said more high level sessions would be nice. A middle ground as someone suggested is to really mark the approach each session takes well in the schedule (which requires a lot of discipline up front from speakers as well).

Several people noted that first-timers tool workshops would be nice ahead in the week so they can be productive on contribution day or at least get to know the tools even if they don't manage to attend contribution day. More visible non-developer teams for contribution day was also requested by many. Here's your chance to recruit design, marketing, project management, translator, documentation, usability testing, event organization, etc. talent for your topics!

As for what should be cut, a recurring line of feedback was to have less sessions as there were too many things going on at once. We designed this conference with 1600+ attendees in mind, and picked optimal distribution of people to room sizes based on that. With around a thousand attendees, some sessions were not that well attended. At the same time, some people pointed out that certain sessions were standing room only. If we were to cut some of the competing topics at the same time, this would have been worse given the same room configuration. We could have merged some session rooms and create bigger session rooms though to adapt to such an event setup.

Our digital signage, website and twitter account were used to keep people up to date with conference changes and program announcements and we did not have pre-keynote segments and opening or closing sessions to inform people. Half of our respondents found this very useful while a third found it only somewhat useful or not very useful. Probably a combination of the two approaches would work best.

Finally some choice quotes about favorite moments:

- "Seeing many of my favorite Drupalers and being introduced to some excellent new folks! [...]"
- "The constant flair that everyone helps each other."

- "Getting (nearly) all of the local association leaders together in a room. Was *really* powerful. We need to do more of this…"
- "Becoming a mentor [...], learning that I can share my knowledge and people are grateful for the support."
- "Randomly having a conversation with someone who then went off [and] had a similar conversation with someone else and connected us."
- "Getting help on Friday and that 'aha!' moment."
- "Celebration of the Drupal Europe team. It reminded me of why I was involved in Drupal for the last 10 years (which has sometimes been hard to remember sometimes, specifically as Drupal and I change over time)."
- "It was the sum of all those little details, Drupal Europe was an ongoing favourite moment."

Final words

This year was fast paced and very activity filled for us. We learned a lot and enjoyed working together thoroughly. While we organized an event in Europe, we've been working with inspiring people from all over the globe from India, Suriname, Canada, Ethiopia and so on to put on the best event we could.

At the same time as volunteers, hardly any of us had a grasp at the extent of the work needed to do to put on such an event. Many underestimated the time and attention required. Some left the team when it became apparent to them that they cannot contribute as much as they hoped and we tried our best to support them. Even in hindsight reading back all the stuff we wrote about what we did, it is hard to believe. We had a very strong sense of purpose of providing this energizing family reunion that is also a great technology conference and we absolutely put our hearts and souls into it.

At the same time when we give volunteer labour we take that time from somewhere else. Whether that's taken from our family, friends, employers, free time, or sleep time. It comes from somewhere. We need to account for it. We'd like to extend our thanks to all companies who supported volunteers in some way and especially our families and friends who put up with us.

As you may have learned in the Driesnote or online, DrupalCon is back in 2019 in Amsterdam in partnership with Kuoni. They already attended DrupalCon Nashville earlier in 2017, and following the announcement, a [BoF was held at Drupal Europe](#) to provide a place for all to meet Kuoni and ask questions. [Three of our organizers will be involved in an advisory capacity in a committee](#) to help transfer know-how and keep the community spirit.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/68158920@N08/30793361258/in/pool-drupaleurope/
Kuoni at Drupal Europe photo by Paul Johnson

We don't think we quite figured out a sustainable way to put on Drupal Europe even though we set out to do so. We would not be able to organize another one with the same team for 2019 for sure as many of us need to shift focus back to their families and jobs. Therefore we are looking forward to how a shared model could work with an event production company directly advised by a community group. See you there! If you need more reasons to come, Paul Johnson created a video at Drupal Europe to showcase the various goals people attend Drupal events of this magnitude with.

> *"It was the first drupal event I attended and I must say I was amazed! I want to go again and do more workshops, more contributions, meet more people. Drupal has such an amazing community! <3"*
> Survey respondent