World News

Debian's Spanish Stronghold

Do you know how many Spaniards are active in Debian development? We didn't count but there must be a lot. When the Government of Extremadura invited Spanish Debian GNU/Linux developers to attend the first national Debian Conference in Casar de Cáceres, December 12-14, around 60 developers followed the call.

The name Extremadura may ring a bell. It is famous for its own regional, Debian-based Linux distribution called LinEx (see issue 31, p.13) which is cur-

rently used by no less than 80,000 people as surveys show. Unsurprisingly, the two computer facilities at the conference location Creofonte, a modern center equipped with library, conference rooms, wireless and ethernet access, were fitted with preinstalled LinEx-PCs. These so called NCCs ("news centers of knowledge") give citizens free access to

the internet and offer both computer courses and official LinEx certification.

Prodded this way, the developers worked on solving Debian bugs, uploading patches and contributing to other tasks related to the Debian project. In addition, they founded *Debian España*, a new association to promote Debian and free software. Its main objectives are to bring together developers and users, and to do research in the field.

http://www.hispalinux.es/ ~ amaya/debconf-es/



■Chinese Awards Aplenty

2003 is history – time to celebrate last year's outstanding contributions to the Open Source world. In Taiwan, the Software Liberty Association of Taiwan (SLAT) did this by giving 18 awards to individuals and organisations from the local free software community.

The 2003 Taiwan Free Software Community Awards for Outstanding Contributors went to Jia-Min Deng, for revamping the Chinese character sets for Linux; to the initiator of the Chinese Knoppix distribution, Fa-Ann Hsieh; and to De-Ming Tsei, a devoted writer of Linux textbooks. In the category Outstanding Software, Open WebMail, CHEWING (a Chinese phonetic input method for Unix systems), and the School Free Soft project (SFS) received awards, while the Chinese OpenOffice maker, Ke-Huan Lin (the initiator of the Chinese GnuPG, WinPT, BkGnuPG, Kwiki, and pVoice distributions) and Hong-De Lin (initiator of the Chinese Mozilla distribution) won the category *Outstanding Translated Distributions*.

Appreciating the value of Outstanding Documentation, SLAT handed out prizes to the GNU Chinese Translators Team GNU/CTT, to Ke-Huan Lin for his contributions to GnuPG, Perl and FreeBSD, and to Jun-Hsing Shen for writing the FreeBSD Chinese HOWTO. The Chinese Linux Extension (CLE) team, the Tainan Linux User Group (TnLUG) and the team behind the Elixus.org wiki were voted Outstanding Societies. The prizes for Outstanding Websites that Help Develop the Linux Community went to the Linux-Fab.com portal, to http://free.tnc.edu. tw/, and to Study-Area.org, a self-teaching center for Linux and FreeBSD.

All award winners share the prize money worth NT\$ 270,000 (approx. US\$ 9,000).

 $http://www.slat.org/index_html.en$

Russia to follow EU's Linux path

Although Russia is not likely to become a member of the European Union soon, the country is trying to adopt the EU recommendation for the use of Open Source software. Hence it did not actually come as a surprise when the Russian Federation's Ministry for Telecommunication and IT Deployment reached an agreement with IBM last year to found a Linux Competence Center at Moscow's technical university. The center is due to start operations in 2004 and will support profit and non-profit organisations in the use of Linux-based system solutions. It is expected to be implemental in pushing Linux products onto the Russian market, and will also localize Open Source software.

A few days after this announcement, the Ministry announced its own migration plans. According to the program a third of its offices will be moving from Microsoft to Linux.

Meanwhile, private initiatives have been equally busy. While K-Form recently opened a new portal to support Linux-based business-solutions, even "Radio Svoboda", the Russian section of "Radio Liberty", made a contribution towards popularizing Open Source software. The transcript of the live discussion between the leader of the Russian Mozilla project, Valentina Vaneyevna, ALTLinux Vice Director Aleksey Novodvorsky, and the leader of the Russian OpenOffice team, Anatoliy Yakushin, can be found online.

Official signals from the neighboring Ukraine are less encouraging. Although schools, scientific centers and universities have insufficient funds to pay their tutors' salaries or invest in modern equipment, the Minister of Education and Science, Vasyl Kremen, expects them to use Microsoft products. His memorandum was met by barrage of criticism: Almost all Microsoft software at the country's educational institutions is unlicensed.

http://europa.eu.int/ISPO/ida/jsps/ index.jsp?fuseAction = showDocument& parent = news&documentID = 1647 http://www.k-form.ru/ http://www.svoboda.org/programs/sc/ 2003/sc.112503.asp