

# World News

## ■ Vienna on the Move

The Austrian capital, Vienna, is challenging rivalling Munich's broadly featured LiMux project (see below) with its own Linux-for-the-Desktop move.

Whereas the German city intends to migrate all its desktops to Linux in the long run, the Vienna magistrate decided to ask its employees whether they prefer Open Source solutions or wish to stick with MS Office. 7,500 of the 16,000 desktops will be affected by the poll.

The Austrians, however, beat the pants off their Bavarian counterparts when it comes to the server-side: all of the city's 350 servers are already running Red Hat Linux and Vienna's deployment of Open Source solutions started as early as in

1989 when mail and news via UUCP were introduced. The first Linux servers appeared within the city's IT infrastructure by 1995.

Like in Munich, the Viennese Green Party with its technology speaker Marie Ringler (who herself runs Mandrake Linux on her laptop) is the driving force behind the Open Source strategy. Actively promoting Linux – for example with a Linux installfest in

July and a Live CD based on the XoL distribution developed by the Austrian company Antitachyon – its members actively contribute to the Open Source community. By the way: The CD, branded "Linux for all", was recently copied by the Bavarian Greens. ■

<http://derstandard.at/?id=1748738>

<http://www.sol-linux.com/Private/XoL/>



## ■ LiMux on Ice?

It came as a shock for many Linux enthusiasts when news broke at the beginning of August that the city of Munich in Germany had postponed the development of the so-called base client software due to unresolved patent issues.

It was only in the middle of June when the city council dominated by the Greens and the Social Democrats voted in favor of a graduated scheme worth 30 million Euro, in the course of which the city's 13,000 desktop machines and all servers should be gradually migrated to Linux.

This decision isn't subject to chance, Munich's Lord Mayor Christian Ude immediately tried to calm the waves: "Only yesterday [i.e. August, 3] the city of Munich and its IT specialists demonstrated the strategic advantages of the Linux concept to the city councils of Augsburg and Nuremberg [the 2nd and 3rd biggest Bavarian cities], and were pleased to hear that both these cities, as well as Vienna, are interested in the Munich Open Source solution."

The decision to postpone the tender for the base client, which consists of the operating system and the applications common to all city desktops (e.g. OpenOffice, Gimp, Mozilla) was made in response to two petitions by Green city councillor Jens Mühlhaus. He urges that the Lord Mayor ask the German government to withdraw its approval of the EU Council and Commission's pro software patents directive immediately. Additionally, he points out the consequences of software patent legalization as sought by the Council and Commission (in contradiction of the European Parliament vote about a year ago) for the LiMux project.

The Greens became alarmed by a patent search conducted by the Munich-based Foundation for a Free Information Infrastructure (FFII) which suggests numerous potential patent risks. ■

<http://www.muenchen.de/linux>

<http://www.presseportal.de/showbin>

<http://www.presseportal.de/showbin.htm?id=31139&type=document&action=download&attname=Anhang.pdf>

## ■ The Chinese Way of Linux

When you think "Linux in China", the first association that comes to mind is Red Flag Linux, followed by the pan-Asian server distribution Asianux, of which the first beta 1.0 was released recently. The latter is a joint effort of China's Red Flag Software Co., Ltd. and the Japanese Miracle Linux Cooperation, backed by Oracle and a South-Korean organization, whose name has not yet been revealed.

The development of a Chinese Linux distro emerged to be one of the hottest topics at the – mainly IBM-sponsored – 4th Linux Expo, which took place at the Taipei Trade Center, July, 29 to August, 2, along with a Linux conference focused on embedded Linux.

Linux development in China has strong government backing, whereas Taiwanese developments are community-based. However, recent government and industry drives aimed at developing Linux-embedded applications that conform to the Linux Standard Base LSB, may help Taiwan avoid being pushed to the fringe of the Chinese Linux market.

Commercial and political competition between Taiwan and China on the Linux market between is subtle but critical. The conflict could be resolved if both governments were to adopt a more friendly stance towards developing Linux, as Professor Chao-Kuei Hung, a devoted free software advocate, commented: "Freedom from oppression and human rights for every citizen form the nucleus of the free software movement. However, most governments seem to focus on economic values. That's a pity, as advocating free software can help to promote freedom in general."

Given the current tension between Taiwan and China, developing free software may coerce both governments to start a peaceful and constructive cooperation. Ultimately, the 1.3 billion citizens in both Taiwan and China would benefit in the wider context of freedom – such as freedom of speech and freedom from fear, not merely the freedom of using, copying, modifying, and distributing software. ■

<http://www.asianux.com/>

<http://linux.tca.org.tw/linux-expo/index.php?doc=meeting>

## ■ Women of the Balkans Enter Open Source

The concept of Open Source is becoming increasingly popular among NGOs. However, NGO activists are seldom IT specialists, and this is where the problem begins. Diving into Linux and its applications means that previously acquired Windows knowledge often enough proves useless, and a lot of time needs to be invested in learning.

Working women in particular lack this time since their traditional home and family role leaves them with less leisure time than men. Moreover, professional guidance is seldom available, and often far too expensive; due to limited bandwidth, downloading Linux distributions off the Web is seldom an option.

At the end of the Eclectic Tech Carnival, /etc, in Belgrade/Serbia-Montenegro July 11–18, it came as no surprise that distribution DVDs and Knoppix CDs went like hot cakes. The event, a joint effort by the Amsterdam based NGO Genderchangers and local NGO “Zene na delu” (“Women at work”), provided

local women with the opportunity to get started with Linux and Open Source software in a mono-educative and truly international environment (teachers came from 12 countries).

Apart from Linux installation and command line sessions, Perl and CGI basics, introductions to Gimp, OpenOffice and Mozilla, hardware and security workshops (including *iptables* for the advanced) and the like, cultural events had an important place on the agenda, among them the innovative online theater by Helen Varley Jamieson and company, using their own Open Source software Upstage. These performances were also open to men.

While most participants in Belgrade were young women, a similar Open Source training organized by the Women’s Information Technologies Transfer project (WiTT) in cooperation with the Internet Rights Bulgaria Founda-




tion and held in Bulgaria’s capital Sofia, July, 31 to August, 1 mainly attracted women aged 40–45. Organizer Christina Haralanova attributes this to “the boom of women in technologies during the socialist period”. In contrast to the Belgrade event, this one was aimed explicitly at women representatives from the Bulgarian NGO sector. ■

[http://etc.genderchangers.org/info/current\\_index.html](http://etc.genderchangers.org/info/current_index.html)

<http://www.upstage.org.nz/>

<http://www.witt-project.net/en>



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