

YAPC::Europe
2007 Survey Results



A Report by
Vienna Perl Mongers
of

Feedback & Suggestions
from attendees of the
2007 YAPC::Europe Perl Conference

Introduction

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Organising YAPC::Europe 2007 was a very interesting, rewarding experience for Vienna.pm. Although we did start as soon as we knew we won the bid for the conference and met very regularly after that, we feel that some things could have been done better. Some of them are reflected in the survey, some of them were hidden well enough from attendees to actually notice.

Still, we feel that the conference was a success with people enjoying the talks, the hallway track and Vienna. For us it certainly was and we'd again like to thank everyone that helped or just attended and made it a fun (even if sometimes stressful) three days.

This document includes many fragments from comments that were received from attendees of the 2007 YAPC::Europe Perl Conference during a survey taken after the conference had completed.. Each survey provided the attendee with the ability to provide suggestions for future events and feedback on the 2007 event. As it turned out the attendees who used these boxes, pretty much used both interchangeably.

Following each set of fragments are our perspective on theme of the suggestion and feedback we received. These are our own personal thoughts, and merely stated to hopefully explain why some things happened the way they did.

One thing to bear in mind while reading this report, is that everyone's time and effort in putting on the conference was given freely. We did it because we enjoy programming Perl and wanted to have the chance to give something back to the community. All the organisers have full time jobs and were fortunate enough to have partners and family who were willing to put up with losing us for several nights over the last year, in order to bring the conference to Vienna. So a big thanks to them for letting us do it :)

So with that introduction out of the way, what follows are just a selection of the comments we received from the survey and our thoughts, which will hopefully provide a glimpse of the effort involved in organising a conference and why not everything always goes according to plan.

The 2007 organisers of YAPC::Europe

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Suggestions and Feedback

"i missed larry's and damian's "perl 6 update" while attending dominus' "higher-order parsing techniques" -- how can they both be scheduled at the same time???"

Vienna.pm:

Yes, that was a tough decision and it was taken after long internal discussions. Putting up anyone less prominent against either of these two speakers would have been a very unfair thing to do as they probably would have spoken to themselves and their mum.

So we had two options: giving them a slot each with no one else on any other track or having their talks at the same time.

We had a lot of very interesting talk proposals and had to reject one third of the offered talks. So giving Larry Wall/Damian Conway and MJD exclusive slots would have meant rejecting another three talks.

So we decided to have them at the same time. We know this sucked, we had the same problem of having to choose where to go to ourselves, but everything else felt very unfair to all other speakers.

“Never pick a venue with seating designed in the 70s :-)", “seating was bizarrely uncomfortable”, “More intimate venue”, “Please, please, please make sure that seating is better at future conferences.”

Vienna.pm:

Finding a venue for YAPC is probably the most important task for the organisers. We felt very lucky to have secured the University of Economics and Business Administration very early on. There are a lot of reasons why we think it made a great venue, by far outweighing the above problems:

- plenty of different lecture halls in all sizes to pick from
- microphones, beamers etc. all provided for
- people to call if microphones, beamers etc. didn't work
- lockers, seating in the hallways, drinks and snacks at vending machines, wlan provided
- students who would work for fairly little money (but knew the venue well), which allowed us to actually attend some talks ourselves
- two organisers working there meant that we had offices we could use to store things safely, print and copy things at short notice, quickly borrowing missing things like staplers and cook tea in the morning ;-)
- easy to reach by public transport
- a cafeteria that could easily handle that amount of hungry people within a short lunch break
- and all that (almost) for free!

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I wish that all visitors of the YAPC could be able to join the dinner.

Vienna.pm:

Ah yes, the conference dinner. We thought that having a dinner would be a very important part of the conference. Especially with the topic we chose, but we simply didn't expect **this** number of people coming to YAPC::Europe 2007. We were looking at restaurant with a capacity of about **150** people, in the end 348 people were signed up for the conference. Finding a restaurant for the lower estimate wasn't easy, finding a bigger one for even more people will prove even harder for future organisers. Still we think that one big dinner is a good thing. Just make sure there's enough beer ;-)

“Print the nick on the nametag.”

Vienna.pm:

This probably is useful information for future organisers.

“The social side was really important for me this time around so I would urge organisers to think about this for future conferences.”

Vienna.pm:

The pre-conference meeting Tuesday evening worked really well. We were very surprised by the number of people who turned up. And we were lucky that the weather was nice enough for people to sit outside and the restaurant being big enough. Having some attendees signing up there rather than next morning also seemed to work well. Although admittedly we still ran late on the first morning of the conference, underestimating the time it takes to register >300 people and hand out goodie bags and t-shirts.

Other pre-organized social events (walks around the city, some sort of official location for all nights during the conference) would probably help some people meet even more fellow perlmongers. It might even help just putting in a few suggestions in the wiki, as we also found that we simply didn't have the time to organise those as well as everything else.

“Put the schedule of talks per room at the room entry”

Vienna.pm:

Yes, we definitely didn't communicate the schedule (which unfortunately had to be changed at short notice) well enough. One problem we had was not having permission to stick anything to walls or doors. We printed schedules at short notice to be handed out from the conference desk, but people had to ask for it in order to get one. Having some put up at prominent places would have made things easier.

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Summary

All in all the comments were positive, and some included some good suggestions that we intend to pass on to future organisers. While we felt we needed to explain ourselves, please don't feel we have picked on you specifically if you recognise a comment you made, it was just your particular statement enabled us to give a suitable response.

Of the 340 attendees invited to complete the survey, 205 responded. Once again, following the trend of 2006 Survey for Birmingham, this is an exceptional response and in normal circumstances we shouldn't have expected anything more than about 10%. The fact we got over 60% is amazing. So thank you to everyone who took the time to submit your surveys and contribute to making the YAPC::Europe a better experience for everyone for the future.

See you in Copenhagen in 2008.

Andrea Pavlovic
on behalf of the 2007 YAPC::Europe Organisers