Proposal for FOSS4G Europe 2020 Valmiera

30th September 2019

OVERVIEW

In cooperation with Valmiera City council and Valmiera Development Agency we propose the FOSS4G Europe 2020 conference to take place in Valmiera, Latvia.

We would like to propose the FOSS4G Europe 2020 conference to take place in Valmiera as the international nor european FOSS4G events have not yet been to this North-Eastern part of Europe. Latvia is democratic republic for almost 30 years and part of the European Union for the past 15 years the conference would be set in an environment that the FOSS4GE event has not been in before. As with Latvia's setting in the zigzag of history the guiding motto behind the conference would be to remember the past but look and live for the future.

Valmiera is a town situated in the historic Vidzeme region on the banks of the Gauja river. About 100 km North-East from the Latvian capital Rīga, and 50 km from the Estonian Southern border. The place dates back to the 13th century; Valmiera was founded in 1283 with city rights granted in 1323. Valmiera was a site of the Livonian Order (an autonomous branch of the Teutonic Order) stronghold - Valmiera castle. To this day the castle's ruins lie in the city centre. Most of the old buildings dating back to the 18th-19th century were destroyed in the fires during the last war. Nevertheless we would like to urge the participants to discover the city and its historic surroundings as an *extracurricular* activity to the conference: hiking the Gauja National Park, kayaking on the Gauja river, bobsleighing in Sigulda, and a visit to the Turaida castle.

Currently the city has about 25000 inhabitants, and it is the hometown of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Valmiera Vocational Education and Training School and Valmiera School of Design and Art. In Previous years Valmiera has hosted the *QGIS developer meeting in 2013*, NASA LCLUC (Land-Cover/Land-Use Change Program) training school on *Monitoring land cover and land use in boreal and temperate natural biomes* in 2010. In 2018 Valmiera hosted the World Latvian Economic and Innovation Forum (~300 participants from all over the world) which was a success and therefore the event will be hosted this year in Valmiera again. In 2019 the city also hosted and organised the BMX European Championships (~1000 sportsman + ~4000 staff as well as many viewers).

We, the local organizational committee will be building on the positive momentum that the previous FOSS4G conferences have created and will be focusing on reaching out to participants who love to be part of the FOSS4G events but find it financially, or because of reasons of health, or environmental stances difficult to travel great distances to international FOSS4G events. We would like to build a conference program that will attract first-time attendees, especially students and people who have been to a FOSS4G conference before and would like to give their first presentation or workshop as this is a way we can help build and sustain our community .

But whether you're a seasoned FOSS4Ger or not (as of yet) we would like to welcome you to Valmiera: Laipni gaidīti!

PROPOSED DATES

The FOSS4G 2020 in Calgary will take place during 24.09-29.09.2020. Keeping that in mind the proposed date frame for conference with workshop day before and workshop/code sprint days after the main conference days:

> 13.07.2020 to 18.07.2020

As far as we know there are no pan-european conflicting events taking place at the time.

VENUE

The event is supported by the local municipality - the Valmiera City Council and the Valmiera Development Agency. Both supporters have possibilities to arrange premises around the city that we can use for the event at a lower cost. The spaces are ready and equipped to receive these kind of events.

The main conference venue place is located in Valmiera Theatre. The Grand Auditorium has seatings for 395 participants and all necessary sound and audiovisual equipment, Small Auditorium has a capacity of 101 participants. The theatre has foyer, a bar, restaurant and reception areas as well as check-in and coat-check services.
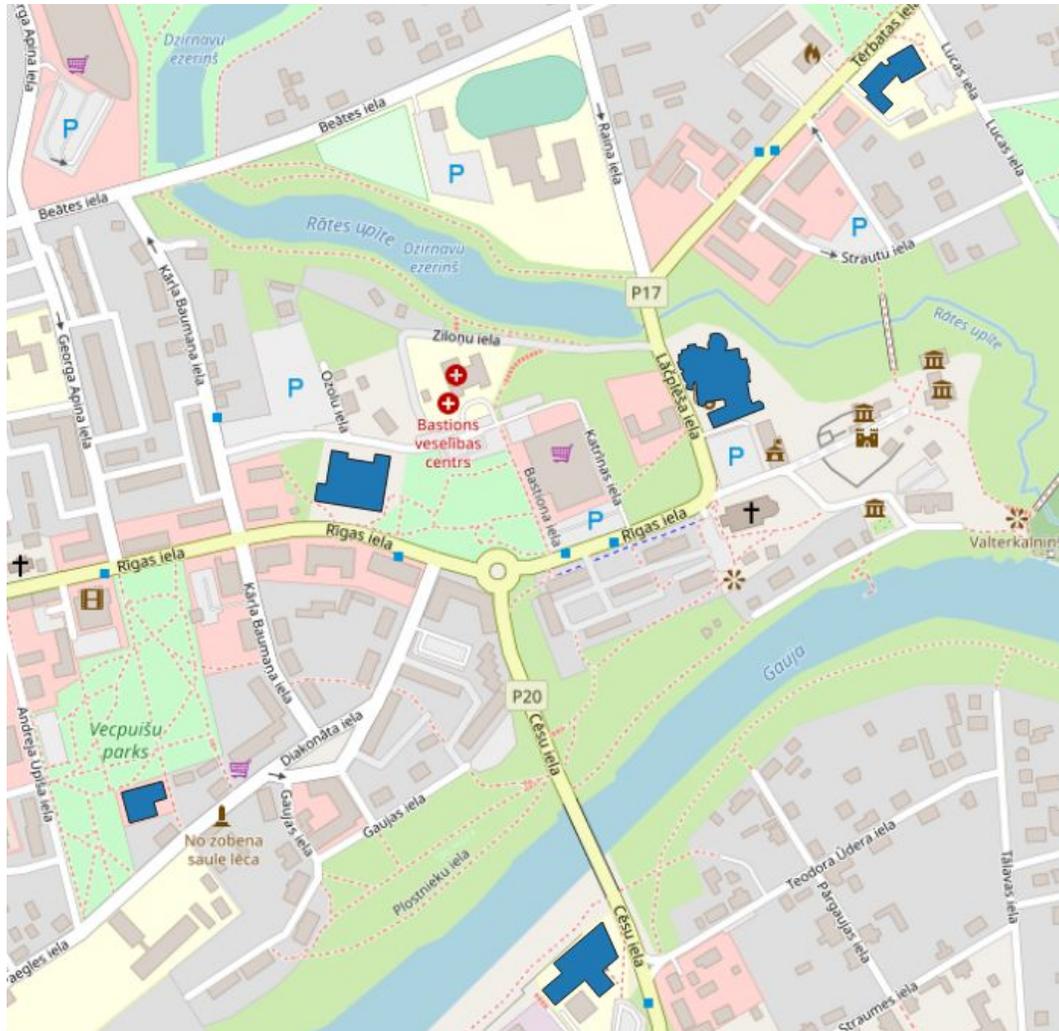
There are two alternatives for the main conference venue just in case (proposed by the municipality). The first alternative is the Cultural Centre with 700 seatings and additional smaller halls and auditoriums. The other smaller alternative is the Vidzeme University College; its central auditorium has 225 seatings.

For workshops and presentation tracks the premises of Vidzeme University College will be used. The University is located around the city centre in two seperate buildings, where suitable rooms

for seminars and conferences are available (https://va.lv/en/business-partners/services/room-hire).

Another option that can be used for example for the Gala dinner (main party) is the Valmiera Concert Hall with a capacity up to 350 people.

The spaces for the venue, conference, workshops, code sprint, hotels and restaurants are all within walking distance.

Map with highlighted main venue places - building of theatre, culture centre, concert hall and university buildings.

LOCAL ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE (LOC)

Since active community in Latvia is comparably small, LOC is rather international than local and is powered with contribution from Estonian partners as well as with help from the wider European community. Members of LOC are:

- Peteris Bruns (Latvia) ⊣
- Maris Nartiss (Latvia)
- Ernests Gabrans (Latvia)
- Ilze Eglāja (Latvia)
- Una Krutova (Latvia)
- Tõnis Kärdi (Estonia)
- Hanno Kuus (Estonia)
- Codrina Ilie (Romania)
- Vasile Crăciunescu (Romania)
- Jachym Cepicky (Czech Republic)
- Astrid Emde (Germany)
- Saara-Maija Pakarinen (Finland)

Expanding LOC with wider coverage of countries should also contribute to spreading the word about the conference and attracting more participants from the region.

The following program committees will be organised:

- General
- Academic tracks
- Workshops
- Code sprint
- BoF sessions
- B2B meeting
- Posters (especially thinking about attracting students)
- Exhibit area (for sponsors)

Social events:

- Icebreaker
- Gala dinner - Main party
- Guided tours (Valmiermuiža, Gauja) or marked hiking trails by the river.

Code of Conduct

The conference will be adapting a Code of Conduct in collaboration with the OSGeo Code of Conduct committee and the experiences of past conferences.

Program Draft

Overall conference layout proposal from 13th to 19th of July 2019 (S-code sprint, W - workshop, C-conference, W/S - workshop and sprint in parallel, R - run in forest).

Workshops

The first two days of the conference are reserved for workshops. We are planning on allocating half-day slots with a provided lunch-break for participants in between. If required by the workshop presenter the slot could be extended to full day. We will be able to run workshops in 3-4 parallel sessions so slots for a total of around 10 workshop slots are available depending on full or half day workshops will be provided. The workshop auditoriums are not equipped with PCs and participants are expected to use their own workstations to participate workshops.

Main conference

The main conference will start on 14.07.2020 with a plenary session. The plenary will include a welcome speech by the chair of LOC, Valmiera city mayor could do a welcome as well, state-of-osgeo and a keynote speaker.

We will be able to run 4-5 parallel sessions so in total we have 80 to 100 slots available for presentations. The call for proposals will be open to the public and advertised publicly. The selection of presentations will be done through community voting.

The tracks will be expected to start at 9:30 and last all through the day until 17:00. Each track is made out of three presentation slots max. A presentation slot will have a total of 30 minutes: 20 talk + 5 QA + 5 for changing auditoriums. If needed there may be provided also double time presentation with 45 min talk +10 QA + 5 for changing auditoriums. In between tracks we will have half an hour coffee breaks. A provided lunch break is planned for 1 hour between 12:30-13:30. The first track of each day will be a plenary with one or two keynotes, lightning talks, or easy-go everyday latvian lessons.

Code sprint

Following the tradition of previous FOSS4Gs a codesprint will be held at 17.07.2020 and 18.09.2020 in Vidzeme University. Drawing on previous FOSS4GE experience we are expecting some 30-40 people to participate. A separate registration page will be set up on the OSGeo wiki for that. We expect to be able to cover participants coffee, soft drinks and lunch needs.

Social events

Ice-breaker

The ice-breaker is a traditional part of any FOSS4G conference. It is a perfect place for catching up with old friends and making some new. Ice-breaker is planned at the evening of 14th July and available for all conference attendees. Our first guess for ice-breaker is Valmiermuiža beer factory and restaurant. https://www.valmiermuiza.lv/en/visit-valmiermuiza/brewery-tours/

Gala dinner (main party)

By name the gala dinner is a very official event but keeping in line with FOSS4G traditions and dress-code you are not expected to wear your evening dress or tuxedo. But you can if you want to. Main party is planned to take place in Valmiera Concert Hall. It's nice venue and is capable to host planned amount of people. Party would be planned with local music band and/or culture performance as well as food and drinks.

Guided tours

There are a couple of opportunities, to name one more less ordinary, local guide inspirational story about Valmiera in Gauja river "tramb" - https://www.gaujastramvajs.lv/

Family friendly

For participants coming to conference together with family and kids in cooperation with tourism information centre can be provided activity programme for conference days. To understand real needs and our possibilities we will ask participants during registration identify need for such option.

Budget estimations

Budget is expected to be around 55 to 70 thousand EUR, depending on the amount of participants. Expected conference fee would be from 150 EUR early bird ticket to 230 EUR afterwards. There isn't planned to have any optional ticket for Ice-breaking party or Gala-dinner (main party), all is included in the ticket price. Estimated revenue from event would be ~65% from

ticket price and 35% sponsorship. There is Valmiera city council commitment to contribute by sponsoring event venue. Details still to be clarified, but venue costs should be covered by at least 70%. Detailed budget breakdown can be found in the link below.

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ij_Zrpj7yG2ENyaCbaHZF4XSLTHoypcAqb7HmrN_frU/edit#gid=1122554603

TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS

As base can be used as far identified accommodation situation significantly has changed
https://issues.qgis.org/projects/qgis/wiki/9_QGIS_Developer_Meeting_in_Valmiera_2013

Coming to venue for most of the participants can be divided into two parts - getting to Riga and getting from Riga to Valmiera.

Valmiera can be reached by train, car, foot, bicycle, boat...

Traveling to Latvia and Riga

By plane (recommended)

The easiest way to get to Latvia is by plane to Riga international airport (RIX). Riga has direct flights from 106 places. Riga is serviced by low fare companies Ryanair, airBaltic, WIZZAIR, Iberia Express, Norvegian air and other companies, like, Lufthansa, Finnair, Czech Airlines, SAS, Aeroflot etc.

Homepage: http://www.riga-airport.com/en/main/about-company

From and to airport one can use a city bus No. 22

It is possible to buy a ticket in the buss (2.00EUR), in Narvesen or ticket machine 1.15 EUR

Timetable: http://saraksti.rigassatiksme.lv/index.html#bus/22/a-b/0079/en

Ticket types and prices:
https://www.rigassatiksme.lv/en/tickets-and-e-ticket/types-and-prices-of-tickets-1/ticket-for-a-certain-number-of-trips/

The central train station and central bus station in Riga are located in a 10 min walking distance. The 22nd bus stop (from and to the airport) is located nearby train and bus stations.

A map of the center of Riga with the central train station and Riga international coach terminal:
https://osm.org/go/0wJdeY1uJ-

<u>By train (recommended for participants from or travelling via Russia, Belorussia and Estonia)</u>

Train connection are only with ex soviet union countries. Direct train connections are with Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Minsk, Vitebsk, Vilnius.

Time table and connections: http://l-ekspresis.eu/en/

<u>By bus (recommended for participants from or travelling via Estonia and Lithuania)</u>

To reach Latvia by bus one can use some of listed companies, offering bus line connections to most of European capitals and largest cities:

- https://ecolines.net/lv/en
- https://www.eurolines.lt/en/
- https://www.luxexpress.eu/en/routes/

<u>By ferry</u>

Riga is connected to Stockholm by a ferry line operated by Tallink https://www.tallinksilja.com/book-a-cruise

For participants from Finland there may be considered ferry option from Helsinki to Tallinn and following around 3,5 h drive to Valmiera by car.

<u>By car or by bicycle</u>

You have free hands, but remember - Riga and Latvia is not connected with any highways. Major roads are in good conditions including Riga - Valmiera, but smaller roads may be not top-notch. Unfortunately bicycle infrastructure in Latvia isn't well developed.

There are also many car rental opportunities at the Riga airport and Riga. There are limited opportunities for car rentals in Valmiera city.

Traveling Riga - Valmiera

<u>By Bus</u>

Riga international coach terminal is servicing also inland routes. At terminal one must buy a ticket to the buss Rīga-Valmiera to station "Valmiera bus station" (just ask "nearest to Valmiera" and will be fine).

Normal ticket price 4.75 EUR and travel time 1h 50min (~ 114km). Tickets should be bought at any of ticket offices (just look for an end of a queue) in advance (at least 15 min before departure). It is possible to buy the ticket in the buss (accepts cash and bank cards).

Timetable:
https://www.1188.lv/en/transport/buses/rigas-sao/valmieras-ao/105317/105331/day/2019-09-02

By Train

From Riga

All local trains have only second class carriages (unnumbered seats, no extras). Valmiera is located on the rail line Riga - Valka/Valga. From Riga one must buy a ticket to Valmiera.

Normal ticket price 4.24EUR and travel time 2h 20min.

Timetable:

http://www.1188.lv/satiksme/vilcieni/saraksti?from=R%C4%ABga&from-id=9578&to=Valmiera

From Tallinn (Estonia)

It's also possible to change trains in Valga/Valka twin cities at the border of Estonia and Latvia, and arrive from Estonia (Tallinn, Tartu are the main cities on the route).

Ticket price for Tallinn-Valga/Valka train is about 17 EUR (1st class tickets 20EUR) and travel time around 3h 10min. Tickets can be purchased on the train (cash or card), or pre-bought online (see the timetables website below)

Timetable can be searched at http://elron.ee/en/

The Valka-Valmiera train runs currently twice a day: at 5AM and at 2:40PM. Tickets cost 2.15EUR and the trip takes about an hour.

By Car or by bicycle

Valmiera is connected to Riga with road A3 Riga - Valmiera - Valka/Valga - Tartu. From Riga take road A2 (Riga - Pskov) and then turn to A3. Be aware - some road signs are located just next to turn - don't miss Your turn! Satellite navigation devices have most of major roads, still smaller roads and other information might be sparse (at least for TomTom users).

Depending on arrival time and number of participants coming from and to Riga, we are ready to organize some reasonable special FOSS4GE transportation by car or bus (Just ask us if we have not started or proposed that!).

Hotels are located in approx 5-30 min. walking distance from the venue place.

Taxi prices starts from 2.00eur

City Bus tickets:

- Single trip at bus driver - 0.60EUR
- One day ticket at bus driver - 2.30 EUR
- One week ticket (Monday - Sunday) at [Valmiera Tourist Information Centre](#) - 6,00 EUR

Accomodation

Valmiera city and surrounding area can provide opportunities to have accomodation starting from as low as 10 EUR/per person in dormitories to 70+ EUR/per room or apprtment. There is limited opportunities to provide 4* hotel room services, but other wise there is plenty of opportunities to choose and stay in Valmiera.

Hotels

There is one 4* hotel located in Valmiera with capacity of 51 beds - Hotel Wolmar.
http://www.wolmar.lv/index.php/en/

There are other hotels available as:

- Hotel Naktsmajas with capacity 119 beds https://naktsmajas.lv/en-gb
- Hotel Vidzeme with 8 beds
- Park of Senses leisure complex with capacity 10 beds https://www.sajutuparks.lv/en/hotel/

Apartments

There is more than 15 apartments available for rent with capacity from 2 to 6 people. List of available apartments can be found by booking.com services or
http://www.visit.valmiera.lv/en/accommodation/apartments/

Student dormitories

Event is going to happen during the summer period when students are on summer holidays. This brings great opportunity to provide student dormitories what could be one of the options in interest for participants. As a minimum there is a plan to arrange special offer from Vidzeme

University student dormitories and Valmiera Vocational Training Center dormitories. Capacity of dormitories is over 500 beds in total.

Free time and leisure options

In case you or your family want to spend free time in Valmiera or nearby the best option is to visit Valmiera tourism information centre (TIC) or visit TIC homepage http://www.visit.valmiera.lv/en/

Other

Languages and useful phrases

The official language of the event is English. Other languages expected to be spoken by participants are Latvian, Russian, German, Polish, Italian etc.

The official language spoken in Latvia is Latvian. Most of the servicing personnel are able to communicate in Russian and English. Communicating in English outside of tourist servicing places might be cumbersome (YMMV).

Useful phrases with pronunciation: http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/latvian.php

About Latvian language and many useful phrases (without audio): http://wikitravel.org/en/Latvian_phrasebook

Other useful phrases:

- I am communist as I support free software - Es esmu komunists, jo atbalstu brīvo programmatūru
- Which way is north? - Uz kuru pusi ir ziemeļi?
- Narrow gauge railway - šaursliežu dzelzceļš

Other useful information

- Latvia is part of the Schengen zone.
- The currency of Latvia is Euro.
- Most of the major bank cards are accepted everywhere.
- ATMs (cash machine, a hole in the wall) are common in all towns and larger villages.
- Notice - bank cards without chip (magnetic stripe only) might be refused service at shops!
- Cheques outside of Banks generally are not accepted.