

Drupal Dev Days 2014 organizers report v 1.0 (2014. April 22.)



Hey there! The organizer team is still energized after our experience putting together Drupal Dev Days Europe 2014 in Szeged, Hungary between 24 and 30 March. Several people asked about details and we wanted to document the event for future event organizers to share what worked best for us.

We prepared this report for you so if you experienced Drupal Dev Days Szeged, you can look behind the curtain a bit, or if you heard about it, you can see what we did to pull off an event like this. If you were not there and did not hear about it, first watch the video above to get an impression about it. Then here is some feedback we got afterwards to get you an idea. Do you want to see tweets and articles like the following about your event? Read on for tips!

DevDays Szeged was a landmark for the Drupal 8 release cycle. Participants marveled at how productive and well-organized the event was, and core maintainers commented they'd never seen such momentum in the RTBC queue. -

<https://groups.drupal.org/node/417273>

This #drupaldevdays was the best so far imo. Unforgettable! -

<https://twitter.com/drupalero/status/450371090536472576>

The Drupal Dev Days sprints were a highlight, we had more front-end sprinters than we've had at any event worldwide so far. Ruben and I were running out of issue to hand out they were so fast. - <http://wunderroot.co.uk/blog/how-wunderroot-contributes-drupal-8>

[...] they were working so hard [...], that Drupal.org hit its VLAN transit limit on outgoing traffic. Because of that the website was **very** slow for everyone in the world for a few hours. We were essentially a DoS attack on Drupal.org. - <https://association.drupal.org/content/drupalorg-team-week-notes-23-drupal-dev-days-szeged>

[...] the best #drupaldevdays ever!! Tons of #fun and #drupal and nice people. Thank you to all who made it possible!! - <https://twitter.com/plopec/status/450408758255288321>

An incredible week at the #drupaldevdays sadly comes to an end. Thanks for such a perfect event; I had a **great** time! - <https://twitter.com/tstoeckler/status/450112994945814528>

Feeling very sad to have left #drupaldevdays. The organisers did a stunning job. Szeged you should be very proud. Bring on next year! - https://twitter.com/emma_maria88/status/450359563976736770

[...] What an exceptionally well organized conference - great respect to the whole team! - <https://twitter.com/drunomics/status/450571158333980672>

[...] I've never been more full of the "Drupal spirit!" [...] Drupal Dev Days in Szeged was fantastic. - <https://ohthehugemanatee.org/blog/2014/03/29/drupal-dev-days-szeged-2014/>

#DrupalDevDays was incredibly inspiring. Thank you organizing team, presenters, sponsors & participants for an amazing week! - <https://twitter.com/kvantomme/status/450357371299463168>

#drupaldevdays was an amazing event the Drupal family should be really proud of. No words for such an awesome team that made it happen. - <https://twitter.com/penyaskito/status/450209727147167744>

So long, #drupaldevdays ... what a wonderfully organized event, and an amazing week in Szeged. Best Drupal event I've attended yet! Thanks! - <https://twitter.com/jeremythorson/status/450318812387491841>

I've just arrived to Madrid, it was a amazing week at #drupaldevdays, it was my first but not my last #drupaldevdays!! See you next year! - https://twitter.com/jose_lakatos/status/450344978628497410

Check out <http://eventifier.com/event/drupaldevdays14> for more photos and tweets.

Intro to Drupal Developer Days

Drupal Developer Days is a traveling conference that was initiated in 2010 in Munich, then was organized in Brussels, Barcelona and Dublin. Drupal Developer Days has been a low-budget topic-specific Drupal event going back to the roots of the developer spirit with a target audience of programmers and site builders. In previous years the flag has been carried but there was always only one contender for the event. In 2014, Hamburg/Germany and Szeged/Hungary were up for organizing. Hamburg stepped back as the Szeged team had a lot more pre-organization, research and volunteers lined up ahead of time. That is how 2014 ended up in Szeged, also the host city for the famous 2008 EU DrupalCon.

DDD financial history

The financial model for Drupal Developer Days is that they are aimed to sustain the conference as well as to grow the local community both through the event itself and financially from the profits. Since Drupal Dev Days Barcelona *if there's a profit, half of it stays with the local team and half goes to next year*. Barcelona passed on 1.5k EUR to Dublin. Szeged started off with a 6k EUR seed fund from Dublin, and ended with a profit between that of Barcelona and Dublin.

DDD schedule setup and sprints

The conference schedule also evolved through the years. For example, Szeged decided to do 3 days of sessions intermixed with workshops, while Dublin and Barcelona had 2 days of sessions preceded with a (much lighter) workshop day. We thought such long travel needed to get to Szeged is only worth it if the fun lasts longer.

The sprint part of the event also grew bigger and bigger through the years. Barcelona had the multilingual sprint with sponsors helping with funds of other sprints, preceding the sessions, and Dublin already factored this into the event costs but did not advertise the sprints as part of the schedule and did not schedule the sprints to the main venue for the full extent, but had alternating hotel venues instead.

For and against Drupal Dev Days Szeged

Here are a few things we needed to consider when taking on and then organizing and promoting the event.

1. Szeged is “in the middle of nowhere” compared to bigger European cities served by their own airports. This is hard to refute, but it often happens that you need to do ground travel for an hour+ to get to your destination at many big cities when you arrive at their airports. Being tucked away in a nice small town can actually be useful for developers to be more focused. Besides, we also organized shuttle buses to compensate for the complexity, even though many people did not recognize or consider these.
2. Drupal Dev Days is a developer/site builder focused event, opposed to e.g. Drupalcons and CXOs. As a consequence, there is definitely less likelihood of possible clients visiting

the conference and therefore companies get less leverage when sending developers. Attendees may not meet any clients and may not make new business. Still, some would consider this facet as a benefit of Drupal Dev Days, since developers can focus on building and learning instead of fragmenting their time between sessions, customers and parties.

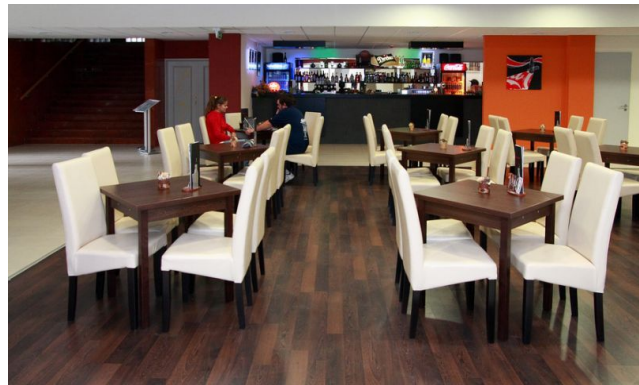
These two factors were clearly issues for the team in acquiring sponsors and also attendees. We very deliberately built a confident and bold image for the conference, and then built up proof step by step with big name attendees, sponsors, high profile session topics, sprints, etc., which gradually helped sponsors and attendees to believe in the event. In the end, we were also very focused on delivery and just became plain lucky on many occasions. We hoped that the DrupalCon 2008 memories and the Dev Days brand would provide much more default belief in the community for this event than they did.

Drupal Dev Days Szeged plan

The plan for Szeged was to strengthen the tradition of the sprints, bring them into the main schedule by promoting the event with a full week of programme, including a strong session part in it, too.

Although Szeged had a very good image in the heads of many community members based on DrupalCon 2008, lots of people did not know about it or experience that. Moreover, several attendees from 2008 are not developers or site builders anymore, so they did not belong to our target audience either. As a result, we originally planned a slowly starting sprint week with 20-30 people on Monday, and the session days (Thursday-Saturday) culminating in some hundreds participants. The outcome blew out all our expectations: we had 150 people sprinting right from the first day! The following sections outline different pieces of how we got there.

The venue



In previous years, Drupal Developer Days had participants ranging from 200 to 400. We compared several possible venues in Szeged when proposing the city for the event. We knew we were looking for something different to the huge university building we used in 2008. The [IH](#)

[Event Center](#) venue in Szeged was chosen to fit the attendee numbers while providing the option of extension if the event proves to be more popular. There was a spacious main conference room upstairs and 3 bigger and 1 smaller session rooms downstairs as well as a cafe/bar in the heart of the building. In the given space, we could reconfigure things anytime we needed: bring out more tables, get more cables, rent one more room, etc. Technicians were also helpful to provide the required technical conditions. While the venue proved to be just enough for the event, it would have been also nice to have a “silent” room as well as 1-2 extra rooms for business meetings. We think this venue was in the sweet spot for this event due to:

- Being rented every day from 8am to midnight (except for the last day) helped us to avoid venue changes for the evening sprints (as it happened on previous sprints). Moreover, building out all the sprint rooms and stable internet in one venue pays off if we can use it at all times.
- Café included in the venue with a lounge area allowed people to buy coffee/tea/drinks all day, not just when they are offered by event catering. Besides, the café also functioned as a bar, so people could buy drinks for the night-time sprints, too.
- Flexible venue regulations allowed us to take separately ordered food, drinks, etc. into the sprint rooms. This may sound natural, but it is totally not a given at many event venues, especially at some bigger universities with strict rules.

If you want to have a great venue, you can follow the above recipe, and also look at how we combined this with catering and hotel offers to form an even better combination.

As for the drawbacks, the projectors and the projection surfaces in the smaller rooms could have been better at the venue. We did not think we needed to check them up more thoroughly in front, but this was a mistake.

Hotels



In preparation for the event, we checked local hotel reviews and made a comparative analysis of the various hotels in Szeged. Based on this data, we selected a range of recommended hotels and also negotiated for hotel discounts in nearby hotels (Novotel and Tisza), providing rooms

from 2 to 4 stars. [Hotel Novotel](#), being right next door to the event venue was a very good deal for the attendees: it had good and very reasonably priced rooms, amazing breakfast with a wide variety *included in the price(!)* and also flexibly provided space in the lobby/bar area (for business calls, billiards, after event and after party discussions). Most of the people booked rooms in Novotel, and we also had our scholarship recipients staying there.

With great breakfast included in the hotel deal, lunch served in the venue (including sandwiches that were often still available hours later), the only meal people needed to care about themselves was dinner (but there were also multiple options for the latter).

Drupal 8 sprint and scholarships

Working on Drupal 8 was a very important part of this event both due to the Dev Days philosophy and the growing sprint component as explained above as well as to Drupal 8's state in development. However, several top core contributors in the community are freelancers and need money to attend events. We knew that we need core committers and at least the testbot maintainer onsite for smooth work, so that reviews can work flawlessly, and if there is any problem with the testing system, we can resolve it quickly. Lack of these folks was a major issue at prior sprints.

Therefore, we made a bold decision to spend considerably more on scholarships than any prior Dev Days: fly in, cover the shuttles and provide accommodation for 9 great people who would not have come otherwise. This ended up as a boon for the conference: both by attracting a large number of people and by the numerous great (we dare to say DrupalCon quality :) sessions presented by these great folks. Though many people probably did not recognize this still, it is always a great experience to have these big names on site, whom you can meet up with *and* work with for a whole week!

Session formats and deadlines

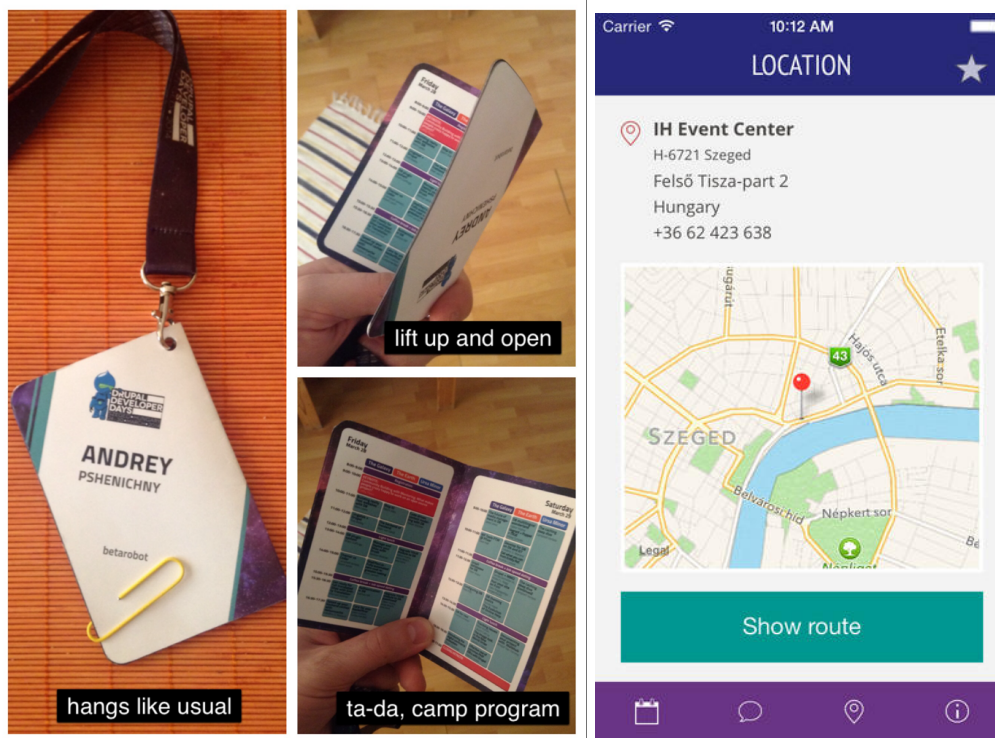
Taking into consideration the previous event experiences, we tried to schedule comfortable slots for all sorts of topics, so we had session types ranging from 20 and 40 minute presentations (plus 5-10 minutes for questions) to 2h and 4h workshops. Proposed sessions resulted in 64h content to pick from with the following distribution P20: 10, P40: 37, W2: 3, W4: 4. This proved that our approach to offer various timeslots was right and everyone could find the best fitting type for oneself. These slots also left enough time to balance any programme delays on site and for attendees to move on to another location.

Some of the prior events made the mistake that they started session submissions and published the schedule at the very last minute (i.e. only 1-2 weeks before the event). We knew that coming to Szeged requires more planning for attendees, even though financially it was less of a burden for many people than visiting big name cities in Europe. So we set session submission deadlines to January 15, with the event starting on March 24. We stuck to this deadline especially because we got lots of great proposals by that time, but we also need to mention that many session proposals arrived on the last day! It was important for us to be able to present a

strong session programme in time to promote the event and find sponsors. Doing this early enough helped the event development a lot. If your event is located not in a default “go to” place for people, consider doing this as well.

One regular Drupal event experience that we wanted to avoid was the morning keynote. Especially if there is programme scheduled for the preceding day, people are often too tired to get up and finally there may be very few people attending this event highlight... To avoid this issue, we planned to integrate the keynotes in our programme at later times. We were juggling with the schedule, but we realized that our choice to include longer workshops in the programme hindered us scheduling the keynotes at midday, since they would have come in the middle of the workshops. As a consequence, we finally needed to keep the keynotes in the morning even if we made our best not to do so. But if you can avoid having keynotes in the morning, we would suggest you to do so.

Schedule distribution



Ironically Drupal Dev Days does not have a good track record of digitally displaying the schedule on the website. Dublin did not have an HTML based session grid and we also gave up after trying for a while. Wrangling with the display of a complex schedule like ours, where there are both short and very long parallel slots in different rooms, was a challenge.

Finally, we reached back to good old paper and designed a schedule to be printed on posters for the venue as well as to be included in the badge of attendees that they can have on them at all times (photo credit @betarobot). As for the badge, we originally planned “double-sided” badges

with names and info on both sides for easier readability, but its extension with the schedule also gave us a chance to include the sponsors and some further useful information in the little booklet. We paid great attention not only to the content but also to the orientations: since the booklet hangs on a lanyard from a corner, it hangs in a 45 degree, so the names also needed to be printed in that orientation, while the inner content had to be printed upside-down to be easily readable when wearing the booklet in the neck. We got each badge personalized and digitally printed. For a week long event and having the schedule included in the badge, it needs to be produced durable, so we picked a relatively thick paper and got it foil-coated. You may be surprised but even with a custom lanyard this was not at all expensive, but rather worth for the money (especially when you consider the many lost event schedules when printed separately!). This badge style was inspired by Facebook's F8 conference badges:

<http://fontsinuse.com/uses/37/f8-conference-badges>

As for digital schedule availability, we also made the badge PDF available on the website. We did not plan for mobile apps but Swentel was so kind to make a variant of his DrupalCamp app available for Szeged [on the Android app store](#) and Appreciate NV made an [iOS version as well](#).

Pricing, enticing people to register

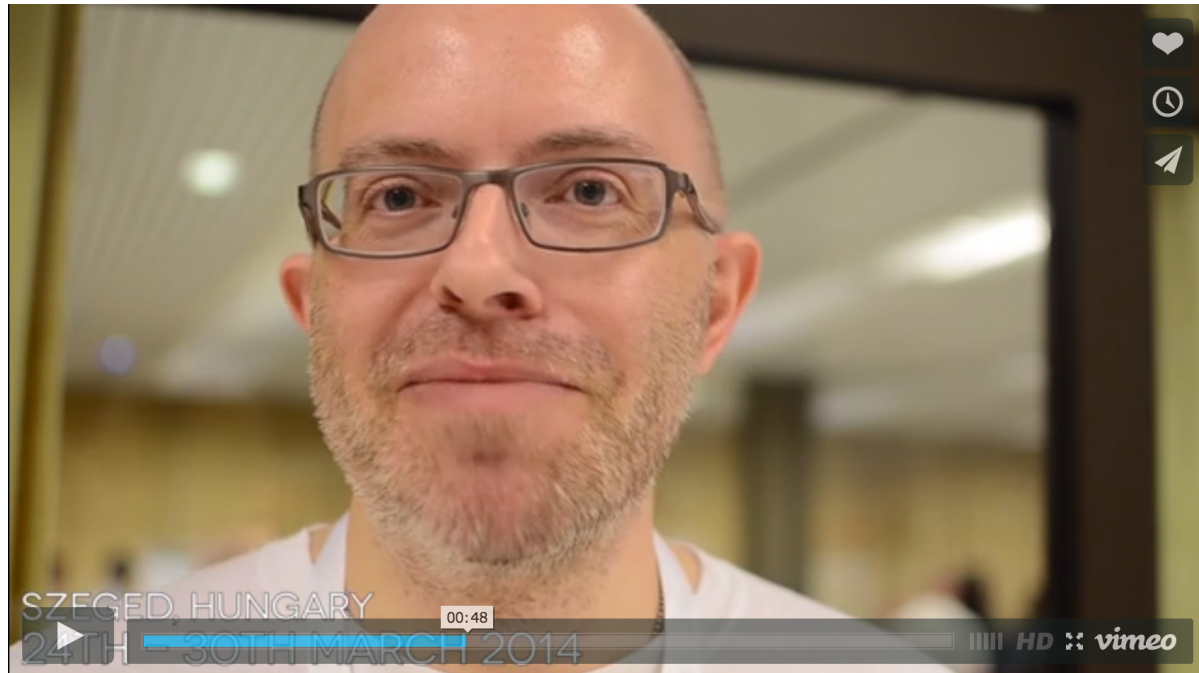
We really wanted to make the event that everyone can afford. Szeged itself is a very affordable city to stay at: you can go to great places to eat and party for very reasonable prices. Although we increased the number of session days and we brought in the sprint to the main programme, we did not want to raise the ticket price considerably from that of Barcelona and Dublin, so we set the ticket price at 30 EUR for the whole week. Given that we ended up offering lunch, coffee and drinks all week, *it probably costed more for those who did not come to the conference and ate out every day during the week*. But in Szeged you got a whole conference package with Drupal pros included in the price! So what's not to love? In spite of our efforts, the fixed 30 EUR price was not enough to entice the community for earlier registrations, so we made the following steps to entice people to register sooner:

- We arranged for discounted hotel deals available until January 15 (which was later extended to February 20, and then discontinued). Reason behind: if you book your hotel, you also buy your conference ticket, right?
- We ran a promotion offering one of the 15 conference T-shirts or one of the 5 PHPStorm licenses sponsored by JetBrains for attendees signing up before February 2, and winners were announced and got their "prizes" at the event.
- We ended up raising the ticket price to 50 EUR from March 1 because we were really in a position where we needed to know the number of attendees.
- We finally limited the total ticket sales to 300 attendees but let individual sponsors buy tickets even after that. We got over 10 individual sponsors registering after other types of tickets were not sold anymore.

In hindsight, we suggest you implement an early-bird, normal and late bird pricing model, which we also ended up with, even if we did not plan for that. Our pricing of 30/50/100 may not be the

best for your event, but consider steps big enough between the levels that they are enticing. For us, mixing in other components, like the hotel deal and special promotions, were interesting additional elements as well.

Promotion



As discussed above, the promotion of the event turned out to be quite crucial. We needed to communicate clearly and in targeted forms to potential attendees and sponsors. Szeged was not a default choice for either group.

First of all, we wanted to reach back to the conference theme of Drupalcon 2008, that is to the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, and we made Marvin a central figure in 2014. We started off with traditional marketing at DrupalCon Prague where DrupalMarvin took the stage to announce the event and we handed out flyers to people leaving the closing keynote branded with the DrupalMarvin logo (thanks comm-press for creating them). Consult with the DrupalCon closing keynote organizers to get your announcement in as applicable.

We also got huge help from John Heaven of comm-press in [creating a video with short impressions](#) of the event in 2008 from high profile community members to help others understand how fun it can be. It became a thread that we attempted to get people talk about their personal enthusiasm in their own voice.

To keep the event on the radar of Drupal Planet, we worked with several groups to blog about the event. [Pronovix](#), [Gábor Hojtsy](#), [comm-press](#), [mogdesign](#), [Gábor on the Drupal Association blog](#), etc. We also arranged a [podcast with Modules Unraveled](#) to talk about the event. We were a

promoted event in [This week in Drupal core](#) for several weeks, too. Remember that having a Drupal core and drupal.org sprint at your event helps to get better Drupal media coverage for sure.

Our event was probably the first to *very, very, very actively* use twitter and even facebook as a communication channel. We responded to questions there, promoted others' enthusiasm, session related tweets, etc. We also used the twitter account live at the event to resolve issues and connect people as they arrived or left. We connected people in Szeged before the event and in Budapest after the event so they can have a great time even outside the "official event" time.

And this brings us to a unique tool we had on the website: the ***Infinite Improbability Drive (IID)***. As with the video shot in Prague, we looked for people to say good things in their own words and spread the excitement. With a crazy storyline around DrupalMarvin and the fate of the galaxy, we integrated social media tools in the site and set out to generate activity on facebook, twitter and on the site itself. We set challenges to be reached based on the number of facebook likes, unique visitors, registered attendees, votes on proposed sessions, tweets, photos tweeted, etc. This brought in another real fun element because we promised crazy things to happen with each milestone reached. And the attendees delivered! :) And then we delivered at the event! :) As a result of the community reaching the IID levels, Kristof played the hurdy-gurdy, Gábor sang live acappella, Marvin was giving out free hugs, and we threw a good hundred [Túróruði](#) in the audience at the closing keynote. Most of the counters used for the IID were automated (thanks to Ernő Zsemlye).

Drupal Dev Days 2014 brand, website and ticket sales

As discussed above, we returned to the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy inspired theme also used in 2008, which lead to DrupalMarvin as our mascot pretty directly. The logo and its various incarnations are the work of Bálint Fekete and Vincent Le Gars. The printed materials, schedule, badge etc. were designed by Péter Marosi.

The initial one page website was created and contributed by Integral Vision. In 2013 September this was very useful for starting the promotion of the event especially at the announcement in Prague. We wanted to include a lot more interactive components though later on, so the single page website was up for replacement with a Drupal based interactive solution.

Further website builds were done by Pronovix with solutions to submit sessions and workshops as well as handling ticket sales. We decided to only let people register via ticket sales, so we knew those on the site already have tickets. This was somewhat controversial as it required possible speakers to register ahead even if their session was not accepted. However it was definitely easier on us since it required no nudging on people to register for the event once they were on the site. Where we used external methods for signups (sprints and shuttles), we encountered people who signed up for those but did not have tickets so contacted them one by one to ensure they would have tickets.

We used [Eventbrite](#) for selling tickets because it made it easy to set certain price points, time and quantity based limits, make reports, map attendees, hand out promotional codes, etc. We used the promotional codes feature extensively to handle tickets included with sponsor packages, to register scholarship winners, to support transferring tickets, etc. Eventbrite also made it easy for people to buy several tickets on behalf of others at once and provide their details individually in the registration process. This made it easier to register for companies. We had experience with using Eventbrite as a standalone companion to a static site with [Drupalaton](#). This time we needed to integrate with the Eventbrite API to register attendees on the Drupal site with the previously provided data right after they got out of the Eventbrite registration workflow. We used <https://drupal.org/project/eventbrite> for this task. This worked very well at the beginning, then the API became unfortunately unreliable for a while (making us manually registering attendees on the site based on the Eventbrite list) and then worked well again.

Although we initially thought a one page static website would work, our promotion plans, the Infinite Improbability Drive, our goal to showcase featured speakers and their sessions, etc. clearly required us to do a dynamic website at the end.

We did not add a forum section to our website in the hopes that discussions about BoFs and other coordination would happen on social media which would have helped our promotion. We did see a lot of activity on Twitter, but not on Facebook in general. Our general experience is Drupalers are a lot stronger on Twitter vs. Facebook. In hindsight it would have also been useful to add a news section which is hooked into Drupal Planet. Although this would have been very easy to add, we did not have one. We worked with different blogs instead to post various things about the event.

The majority of the website content instead was informational about Szeged, helpful for attendees to book hotels, make travel arrangements, get informed about their destination city, etc. The feedback proved that the detailed information appearing in the website made it clear that attendees are taken care of here.

Sponsors

Even though we continued on the tradition of Drupal Developer Days, sponsors were not at all a given for this event. There are a lot more strong local events now than were in 2008, and companies may make more money at local events compared to an international developer focused event (especially at a remote location). So we needed to find sponsors who are interested in reaching developers (service providers and those looking to hire) as well as to provide the right benefits for sponsors to appear throughout the event.

Personal connections in the community helped a lot in signing up the first few sponsors and we got considerable help from the Drupal Association as well both by winning a [Drupal Association Grant](#) and with their work connecting us with potential sponsors.

We worked with several sponsors who were originally not interested but with more information on the event, the featured attendees coming, other sponsors joined, etc. helped make them the (good) decision.

In the end, we delivered more visibility to sponsors than promised. We kept tweeting about each new sponsor as they came on board, and the higher level sponsors were mentioned continually. We included sponsor logos in the badges hanging in every attendee's neck, in the printed schedules on the walls, in the PDF schedule downloadable on the site, in the slides appearing before keynotes, etc. We even had a video looping at the entrance with sponsors. We gave lunch and coffee sponsors special visibility at their sponsored lunch and coffee slots. We put up daily sponsor logos on the sprint room for sprint sponsors. Some sponsors got so enthusiastic that they brought in branded coffee cups and chocolate bars or in another case organized a free beer product demo event.



We also decided to give individual sponsors more visibility. Although prior events barely mentioned them, we wanted to highlight them as much as possible. Drupal runs thanks to its contributors and sometimes that contribution is monetary. This is especially valuable from individuals who are not looking for immediate returns. We planned for 15 individual sponsors and way overachieved with 33!

Although we put lots of thought into the sponsor packages, what we found is that it was much easier to convince companies to buy into the 400-500 EUR range compared to the above 1,000 EUR packages. This was probably for a combination of reasons explained throughout this document. We ran out of packages in that range fast and needed to open the coffee sponsorship packages to offer more options there.

Package (EUR)	Slots planned	Actual sponsors
Platinum (2500)	3	1 (+ 1 in kind)
Gold (1500)	6	5
Silver (500)	9	9
Lunch (1200-2800)	3	1
Coffee and snacks (450)	None, created due to need	4
Sprint (400)	3	3
Individual (100 EUR)	Unlimited (planned 15)	33
Social event (2400 - 3600)	2	0

As a small show of gratitude we wanted to thank all sponsors for their dedication with a gift fairly Hungarian in nature. We decided to prepare slightly enhanced conference bags with small gifts for each individual sponsor and for company sponsors in the amount of tickets included.

Please take a minute to review our sponsors at <http://szeged2014.drupaldays.org/sponsors>

Budapest to Hotel (and back) direct shuttles

As Szeged doesn't possess an international airport and is approximately 200km away from Budapest, the capital of Hungary, flexible transportation of the attendees seemed to be an important issue. As a first step, we provided [detailed information and suggestions](#) about how to get easily to Szeged that must have been useful for many people who arranged their transportation individually and came by train, bus or car.

To make travel really easy though, we also provided direct return shuttles between Budapest Airport or city center and Szeged. For compiling the needs, we provided a Google Docs sheet with limited visibility to collaborators, so travel details and personal data is hidden from the public. Anyone could sign up for the shuttle until a definitive deadline. We sent on all the information to a shuttle company, which organized the shuttles and confirmed and contacted the passengers directly. After the given deadline, attendees could make their booking directly at the shuttle company.

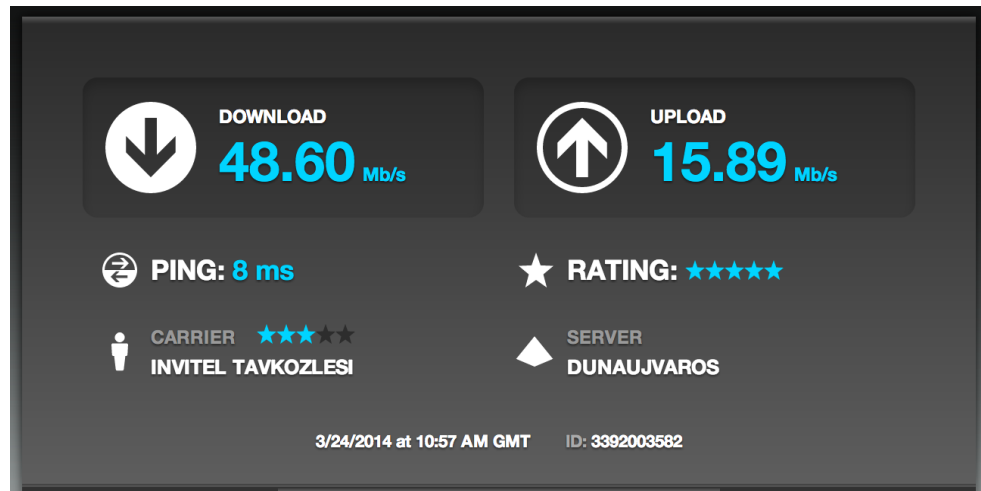
What we learned with the shuttle service is that it is really important to handle language difficulties (drivers mostly did not speak English well) and be prepared for changing needs and provide more flexibility.

Budapest arrival and sightseeing



As Drupal Dev Days is also about having fun, meeting other Drupalists and do some tourism, we intended to organize a sightseeing tour in Budapest for those who arrived a bit earlier to Hungary. We had local volunteer organizers on board who happily gave a short tour introducing some of the main tourist attractions to the group on the preceding Sunday. In addition, Cheppers offered their office, located right in the city center, for keeping the luggage in a safe place and also serving as a meeting point. They welcomed everyone in the office who needed a rest after a long travel, was waiting for the shuttle or just wanted to leave their luggage there.

Network connectivity and WIFI



(Speedtest by chx: <https://twitter.com/chx/status/448051383150063616>)

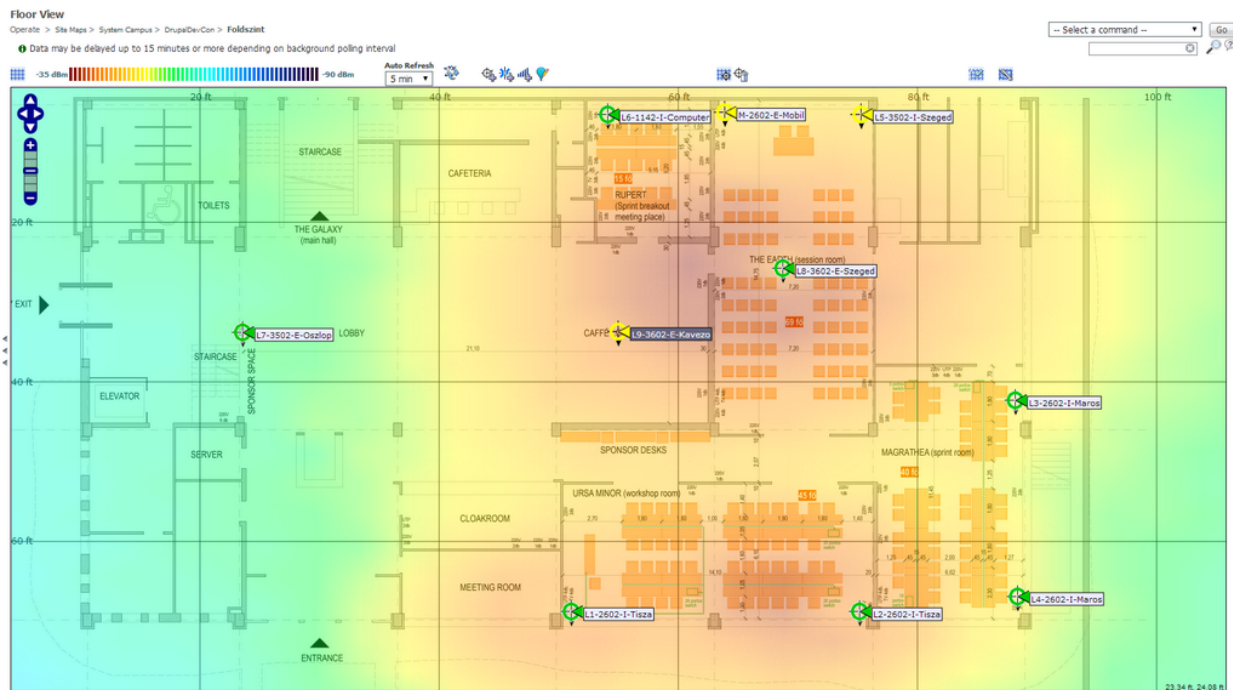
Once we had all these high profile people signed up, all the sprints organized, we really did not want to let them down with bad internet availability. If something is key at a Drupal event, it is the internet. And most venues will not be able to understand this at the start, you really have to educate them on the heavy internet needs of the event. If they tell you “we have internet”, they most probably don’t mean it on the scale needed.

We suggest you discuss the precise needs for internet with the technicians or organizers at potential event venues in advance. We also did these steps and discussed the experiences about WIFI with the Dublin and Barcelona organizers.

First of all, we looked at having reliable backbone connections at the venue. A regular off the shelf connection may be problematic as even if it offers 99.9% reliability, it may be that the 9 hours when it is down ($365 \times 24 \times 0.001$) coincide with a day of the event. This sounds far fetched but did happen at a high profile event recently. You can solve this with higher reliability contracts or as we did by having a backup. We decided that the best solution is if we have two connections from two separate providers using two different technologies. So if one goes down, we can still rely on the other. In the end, we ordered one more identical line from the original provider as well for increased speed. So we ended up with 3 lines from 2 providers using 2 technologies:

- One optical line from Invitel (150MBps down, 60Mbps up)
- One microwave (over the air) connection from across the river from Digi (60Mbps down, 25Mbps up)
- Another optical line from Invitel (150MBps down, 60Mbps up)

We ended up using the two optical connections in parallel to maximize bandwidth with a fallback on the over the air connection. While the venue would normally have had only one line, they were very flexible with us and helped building out this system.



Whatever backbone connection one has, it does not help if there is no good WIFI in-house. Solving WIFI for 300 people is not possible with regular home access points. The number of clients they could handle is so low that you would need to put a lot of them together which results in interference and ultimately no WIFI.

To make sure we can fulfill the WIFI needs, we signed up CISCO Hungary to support as a platinum sponsor for the event. They provided us 15 access points, switches, controllers and routers for no charge. Two experts from the CISCO Academy at the Department of Software Engineering, University of Szeged worked on the preparatory work (planning, configuration and installation) which took approximately 2.5 weeks. They were also on site all week in rotation to solve any issues that arose at the event. This ended up being a win-win situation because they are now writing a paper on their experience and have a lot more hands-on experience now to train future CISCO engineers.



The two optical connections used in parallel provided unprecedented bandwidth to attendees. So much that it resulted in problems at drupal.org on the first sprint day (Monday). However, the average bandwidth use was 30Mbps down / 10Mbps up with peak bandwidth use on the Wednesday sprints at 90/30Mbps (with 200+ people sprinting). Our highest number of devices using the network at once was 358 with 300 people attending on average.

In retrospect, our setup could have handled almost twice as much traffic and also almost twice as many devices. As we know now, you probably don't need all of this and can be fine even with half of this setup for a similar event.

Network events we handled and you may face as well:

1. On Monday, our abundant bandwidth was used for lots of parallel fresh check outs from git.drupal.org and to access Drupal.org development sites in dozens. This made Drupal.org hit its VLAN transit limit on outgoing traffic. Because of that the website was very slow for everyone in the world for a few hours, until the infrastructure team raised the limits. We did not have infrastructure people on-site, so we needed to wait for the US team. These limits are designed to protect Drupal.org from denial of service attacks.
2. Still on Monday, we hit a connection limit on freenode IRC. We failed to request a higher limit for the IPs used by the event. We worked with chx to get the limits raised. Once that was done, IRC was back to normal. So do remember to ask for higher IRC limits!
3. On Tuesday, the primary cable used to connect to the optical backbone lines failed. This resulted in us falling back on the over the air internet service automatically. That was considerably slower. Once this was resolved, we were back on the main optical lines.
4. However, due to a software bug, the broken cable confused the switch and it was not handing out the full bandwidth anymore. We booted up our backup switch, moved some access points over, switched the optical lines to that and rebooted the original switch. Once that was done, we did the whole process the other way, so everybody was back on the highest bandwidth possible. We did the whole process without the internet being down for any length thanks to the backup switch and the experts on site.
5. Once there were hundreds of people at the event, the proximity of the access points became a problem. Even with their signal strength lowered, they interfered too much. By turning off the central access point in the cafe and making it only monitor the network, we resolved that issue.
6. Finally, as with any Drupal events, there was a very wide variety of operating systems and devices in use. There were a couple people with special problems connecting to the internet which we handled as best as we could on a one-on-one basis.

Our traffic totals were as follows (note the 12GB of twitter use only through the week!):

Application Cumulative Stats			
App Name	Packet Count	Byte Count	Usage(%)
http	138020773	131.89 GB	35.00
ssl	120770932	89.84 GB	23.00
binary-over-http	37639002	43.52 GB	11.00
google-services	61585755	34.27 GB	9.00
ssh	20889837	20.30 GB	5.00
http-alt	14112263	14.93 GB	3.00
twitter	26483441	11.78 GB	3.00
gtalk	19683252	10.22 GB	2.00
video-over-http	9487395	10.20 GB	2.00
itunes	9310794	9.39 GB	2.00

Beyond the WIFI, there was also another important issue to plan with: electricity. It is also advised to check the venue in advance if there is enough capacity of electricity, have enough power outlets and if not, prepare for it in advance by buying *many* extension cords. You'll probably need more extension cords than you think you do. We ended up buying a dozen more throughout the week. There is a saying that the easiest way to make friends at Drupal events is to bring an extension cord with you :)

Catering



Catering is probably the most expensive component of an event, so we needed to be very careful in what we organize and had countless different variants for covering it. We did promise catered light lunch for the session days. This is important because it allows for a much shorter break in the session schedule vs. going out to a restaurant that will easily take 2 hours+. We also really wanted to do catered lunch on the sprint days. Once we found a sponsor who was willing to support that, it was not a question any more.

As with most event venues, we worked with a catering partner that came with the venue. They were amazing to work with and could solve all our requests. We knew that for sprints, it's important to have lunch in the venue, so the flow of the sprint will not break. Another essential component of Drupal event catering is coffee. Don't laugh! With lack of coffee, who knows what may happen! So we added coffee to all lunches, added coffee breaks on



session days (where you could get multi-layered latte's like the one in the picture, yummm) and ensured the café in the building would be open all day up until midnight to serve random needs.

We decided to go lower budget for the sprint days and order sandwiches to start with. In fact, this turned out to be a fantastic decision for availability of further food, because leftover sandwiches could be consumed even later on during the day. This worked well for the first three days, but by the fourth day people understandably got a bit bored with the sandwiches.

We factored this in and planned to start hot catered food on the session days. We asked for Hungarian specialties. One of the most risky ones, the fish soup was a conference favorite. To keep costs low, we combined the hot food with sandwiches even on the session days. This turned out to be a boon again because it provided leftovers for the afternoon, while the hot food would not have worked the same way. We did tweak the ratio of hot food/sandwiches in favor of the hot food for the second and third session days cutting back sandwiches to better serve the needs we have seen.



On the last day we knew people would leave at random times, so neither sandwiches nor hot food would have worked. Instead we ordered lunch bags with a large sandwich + chocolate bar + apple + bottled water, so people can grab one as they leave and take it with them even on the road. This again turned out to be a good choice, and we collected the leftover water bottles and chocolate bars and brought them over for the sprinters still staying around in the Novotel at the end of the day.

One of the things we thought would be important for catering was serving various needs like gluten-free, vegan, lactose intolerant, etc. We collected individual needs and got our caterer prepare meals for these needs. Attendees not always picked up their special meal though.

Stats around consumed things *in the venue* (including catered and self-paid):

- 240 l beer (all self paid)
- 1000 servings of coffee
- 120 kg bananas
- 300 kg sweet snacks
- 480 l water
- 5500 sandwiches

Social programs / evenings

There are all kinds of great people attending Drupal Dev Days. While some want to stay around in the venue all night to work, others look for different kinds of fun. We found it challenging to organize evening programs because it was hard to tell how many people would come, even if we surveyed attendees up front regarding their attendance plans. On the first few nights, groups self-organized around some individuals who took on booking restaurant space and/or picked bars. There was obviously no restaurant to take hundreds of people, so we rotated around several good ones at different days in changing groups.

We wanted to do a “closing” dinner though on the last session day’s night with catered dinner. Everybody prepaid for their part and we had space for about 84 people, but filled that in easily at the event. While signups started slow, several people ended up being left out. We totally maxed out the available space.



Finally, at one night the sprinters at the venue decided to order in 63 pizzas instead of going out. We did not pre-check this huge amount with the venue catering partner and strongly suggest you clear these situations out ahead of time with your catering partner. In our case they were fine with it in the end, but not as a regular thing. Watch out, this may not work with a less flexible catering partner!

Rough budget

Note that these are not absolutely final numbers, there is still some dependency on exchange rates and service/bank fees as most expenses were in Hungarian currency.

Description	Income (EUR)
Previous DDD seed fund from Dublin	6.330
Drupal Association Community Cultivation Grant	1.740
Corporate sponsorships total	18.900
Individual sponsorships total	3.420
Ticket income total	6.260
Onsite donations (t-shirt, towel)	1.440
<u>Total income</u>	<u>38090</u>

Description	Expense (EUR)
Scholarships	4.000
Conference materials (badges, lanyards, bags, stickers, signage, t-shirt printing)	3.040
Monetary expenses with internet setup	1.250
Venue rent (rooms, cloakroom, cafe)	6.540
Catering (coffee breaks, lunches, fruit)	17.000
<u>Total expenses</u>	<u>31830</u>

Looking at it with an input-output view, we received half of Dublin's profit (that is 6330 EUR) and almost retained that amount making about 6260 EUR in profits. Once again these are not final numbers but they should be good as estimates. Following the tradition of Drupal Dev Days we would transfer half of that to 2015. In other words, we burned 3k EUR. We believe we invested this in Drupal 8 and the Drupal community in general in the best way we could.

As you can also see from our budget structure, we invested considerably in scholarships already at the time we did not know if we can make a profit at all or even offer lunch for the sprinters. Catering for 7 days is definitely not cheap but was needed to keep sprinters engaged as much

as possible and the conference schedule flowing seamlessly on session days. You can also see that although we set up unprecedented internet connection, the monetary needs of that were not at all outstanding thanks to sponsors and expert volunteers. Finally, the venue rent is not something you can avoid if you expect 150 sprinters coming from the first day and more onwards, but we found the cloakroom was not very popular (especially in light spring weather), so you may not need that. Our venue rent was considerably affected by our insistence to rent everything up until midnight including keeping the cafe/bar open as long which was central to our success.

Note that when you need to handle money on the tens of thousands of euros scale, this cannot work off of your personal bank account. You need a fiscal entity to do proper invoicing, accounting and ensure everything is done according to local laws. Several European countries have a local association of some sorts, in Hungary this is the Association for the Hungarian Web (Magyar Webért Egyesület) which is acting as a fiscal entity behind Hungarian Drupal camps, Drupalaton, the Hungarian Web Conference (which covers a broader technology range), etc. The Association for the Hungarian Web acted as our fiscal entity for Drupal Dev Days, sponsors and suppliers signed agreements with this association and you got your event ticket from this association, too.

Volunteers

[We've had 30 amazing volunteers who signed up to help with the event.](#) We printed special yellow shirts for them so attendees had an easier time identifying whom they can ask questions from. This is a good practice that we also suggest for your events if you can afford it.

Organizing volunteers though was an area where we could have done much better as we did not have a clear plan to giving meaningful tasks for many of them. Several people organically helped with setting up tables in rooms, sitting in the registration desk, collecting signups for the closing dinner, collecting donations, etc. We were really lucky though - numerous volunteers took initiative without precise instructions, they knew who to turn to when anything came up. If the issue was that serious, they knew that someone from the core team would be able to help, but maybe a better organized volunteer team could have achieved a lot more.

Recording the event, photographs and video

There are numerous great photographers in the Drupal community who are keen to take photographs of events and do it anyway. There are several great photo sets from them that we know about:

- <https://www.flickr.com/photos/beta-robot/sets/72157643155409644/>
- https://www.dropbox.com/sh/9nb0h782hdli3bq/QzV2Z77b_B#/
- <https://www.flickr.com/photos/54834269@N02/sets/72157643200704913/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.831656800183485.1073741833.109846449031194&type=1>

Tamás (TeeCee) Szügyi volunteered to take photographs at the event, so we also had an “official” photographer, but this is by no means necessary for an event. See his photographs at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/29978062@N04/with/13490956544> - he took the group photo and the organizers photo as well.

We wanted to ensure lots of fun photos are posted about the event in general so our final Infinite Improbability Drive (see above) challenge was to post 420 photos on twitter. This was [perfectly accomplished](#) and we picked several of those for the final image slideshow that [resulted in a Youtube video](#).

Recording session videos is a whole different question.

1. Some events use Google Hangouts initiated from the speaker, so the screen is recorded with a shared user account collecting the videos automatically in one place. We did not want to distract speakers with this, did not have volunteers to set this up and wanted to avoid several live video streams possibly clogging the bandwidth.
2. The Drupal Association has [AV recording kits](#) flying around the globe. These were not anymore available for our event.
3. We did not want to invest in the toolset as some parts are very expensive and then we don't need them lying around in storage.
4. Although we were unable to commit to video recordings, Tamás (TeeCee) Szügyi suggested they could look into recording as well. Some sessions in the main room were recorded with multiple cameras while most others with a single camera. We have so far been able to get ahold of those recordings.

Random acts of kindness

There were several things we simply did not plan (well) with but happened amazingly nonetheless. These are testimonies of the amazing community standing up to fill in holes where they see them and their efforts really augmented the organizer team's part really well.

- Aaron Porter was one of the most amazing volunteers we could have. While we did not find suitable things for him at the start, we found out how great salesman he is and asked him to help collect donations with the conference shirts. He pulled this off the best way possible, so much so that people were literally knocking on our door only half way into the event that the shirts are out but they want to buy more. We definitely under-planned with the 100 gray shirts ordered paired with Aaron's exceptional salesman approach.
- While we did not plan parties for all nights, companies stepped in and sponsored free drinks on some nights at specific locations. A testimony at how things come together when an event runs well.
- For the sprint's effectiveness, xjm's construction paper issue organization approach was really powerful. She came up with topic specific overviews of issues with relations and

stickers for several of them. This helped people visualize important issues and entice them to work on them. The RTBC/fixed paper filled in by the end of the week with no space to spare.

- Jesse Beach individually decided to bring in a set of bunny ears for people working on / resolving hard issues, funny stickers and other props. The bunny ears were so successful they re-appeared at NYC DrupalCamp in the US as well.
- A sponsor decided to send over shirts to hand out based on criteria defined by the organizers. We decided to distribute the decision-making option among sprint leads, so people working real hard on different topics could get a bit more special recognition for their effort.
- Some sprints sponsors added sweets into the mix for sprinters and Wim Leers brought over 1kg of Belgian chocolate which Sascha Grossenbacher upping that with 1.5kg Swiss chocolate.
- Zsófi Major, one of the lead organizers decided to crochet a real world version of DrupalMarvin. She did not expect what would follow at all. Marvin became an instant sensation at the event with whole story lines happening to him. On one day, Marvin was kidnapped with demands to commit certain core patches, and then escaped and was hiding in the bushes. Marvin was seen enjoying the sun, drinking coffee, presenting a session, chatting on IRC, partying, etc. People *really* loved Marvin.



Thanks for reading!

Huh, that was long, wasn't it? Hope it was worth it!

Once again, we'd like to thank every single attendee for coming and making this event amazing! Whether you sponsored, volunteered, sprinted, presented, organized something or just smiled at others, you made the event better! It would not have been possible without you! We tried to mention as many people as possible, but it is inevitable that we may have forgotten some. Forgive us for that. We hope you make your events amazing too! :) See you there!



Cheers,

The Drupal Dev Days core organization team (from up left: István Palócz, Márta Maczel, Gábor Hojtsy, Zsófi Major, Andrea Radó, Viktor Janurik, [Bogi, our photographer's lovely daughter] and Péter Cseh)

Questions? Comments? Use <http://szeged2014.drupaldays.org/contact>