



FOSDEM 2025

**Anecdotes from
25 years of
FOSDEM**

The Name

OSDEC: Open Source Developers European Conference

OSDEM: -> Meeting

FOSDEM -> Free



The Timing



A conference in Paris, a commercial Linux conference

OSDEM was the counter-proposal: Open Source Software

Now: We get ULB the weekend before classes start

The Venue

Six weeks before OSD&M, we didn't even have a venue...



The Messaging

OSDEM sent posters to other universities to advertise

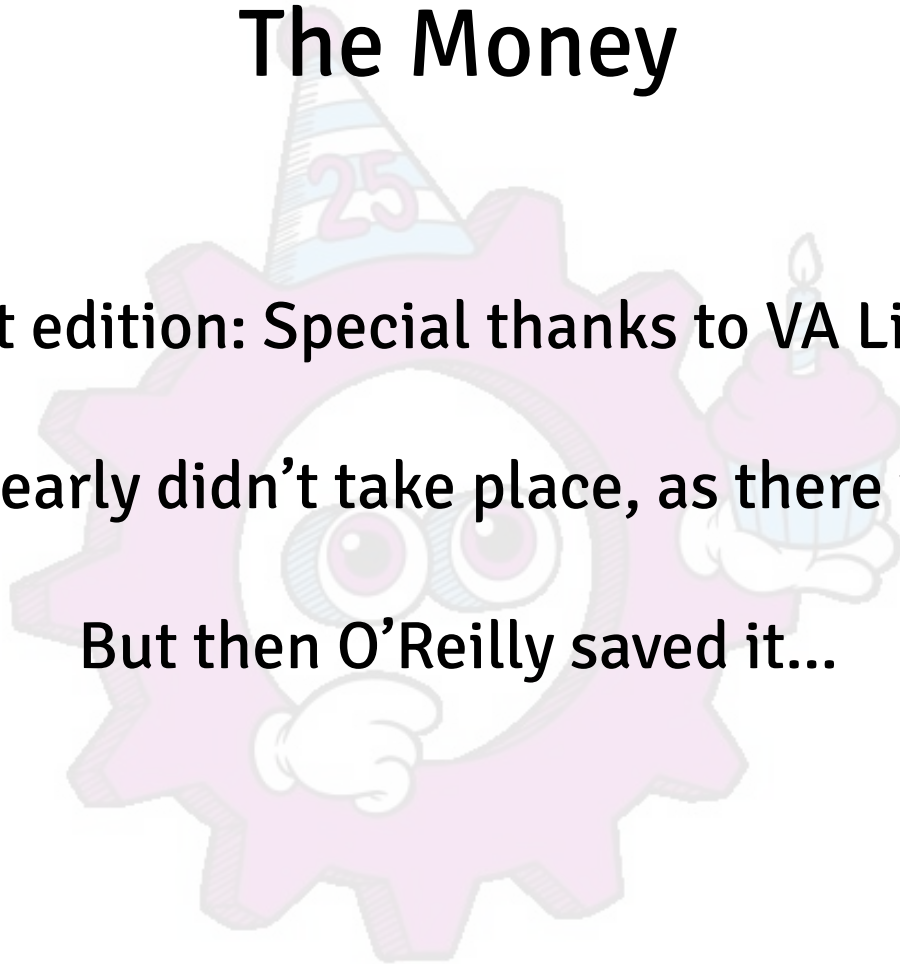


The Money

First edition: Special thanks to VA Linux!

Second edition nearly didn't take place, as there were no sponsors

But then O'Reilly saved it...



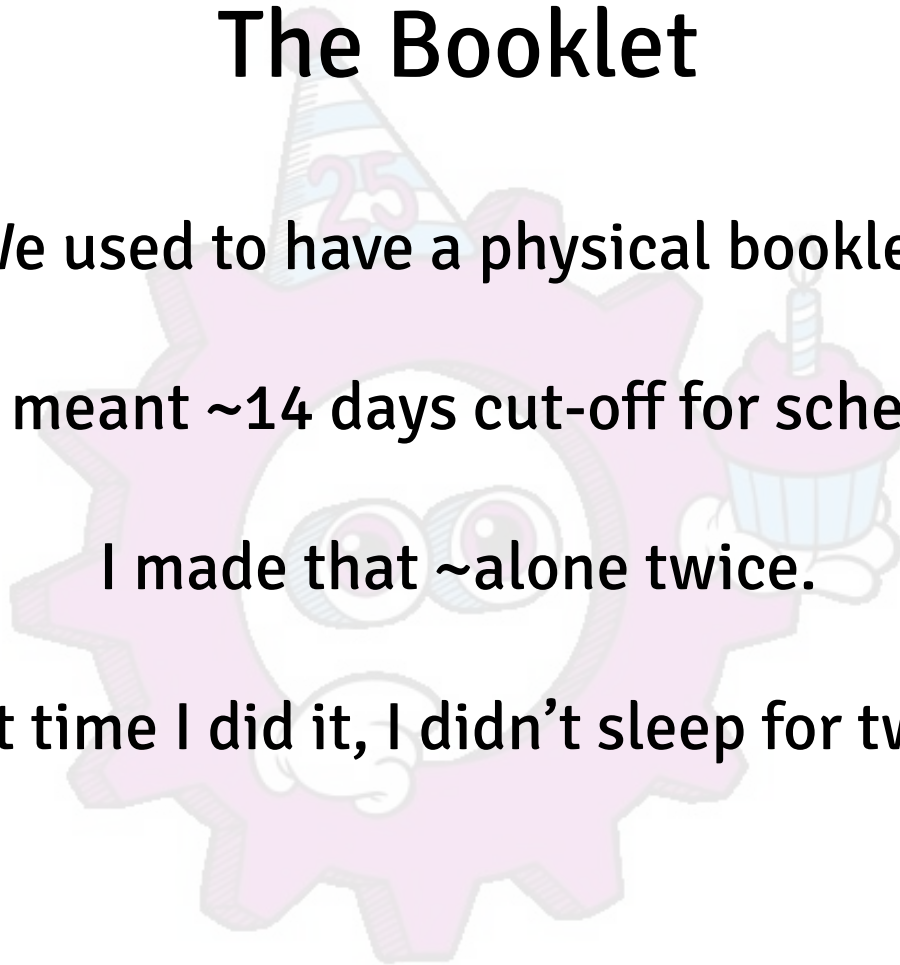
The Booklet

We used to have a physical booklet.

That meant ~14 days cut-off for schedule.

I made that ~alone twice.

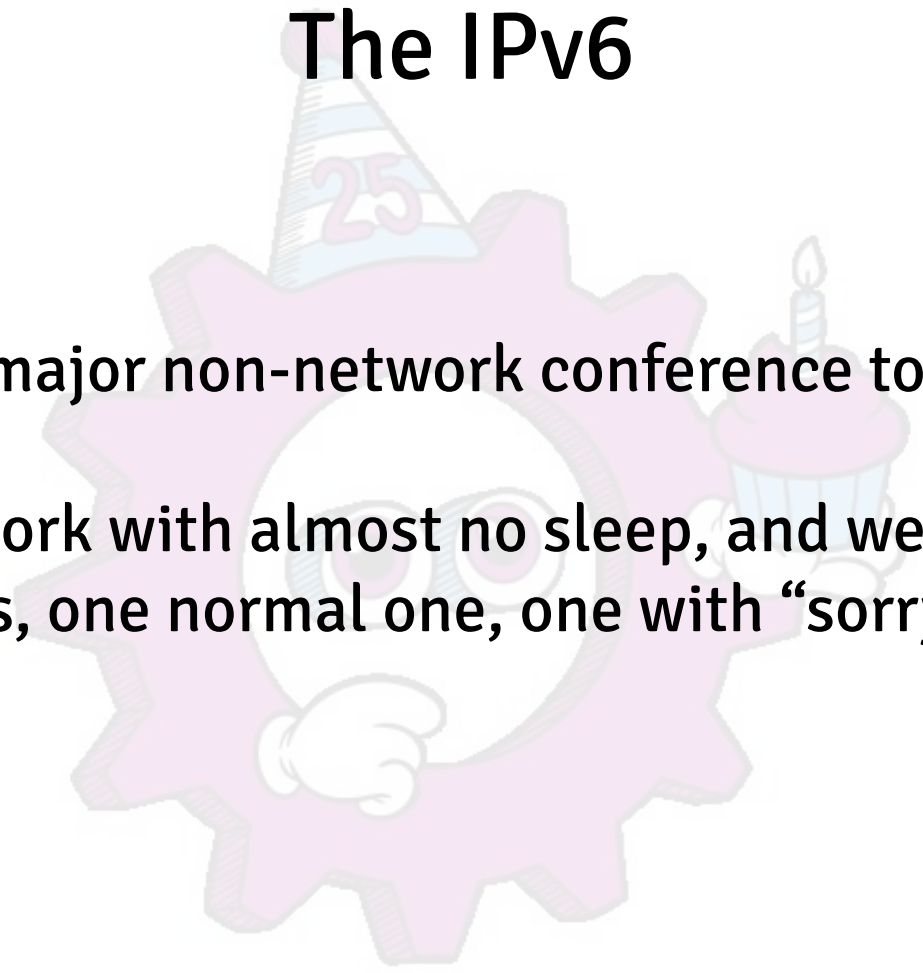
The last time I did it, I didn't sleep for two days.



The IPv6

We're the first major non-network conference to default to IPv6

It was a LOT of work with almost no sleep, and we had two opening talk slide decks, one normal one, one with “sorry, not Internet”



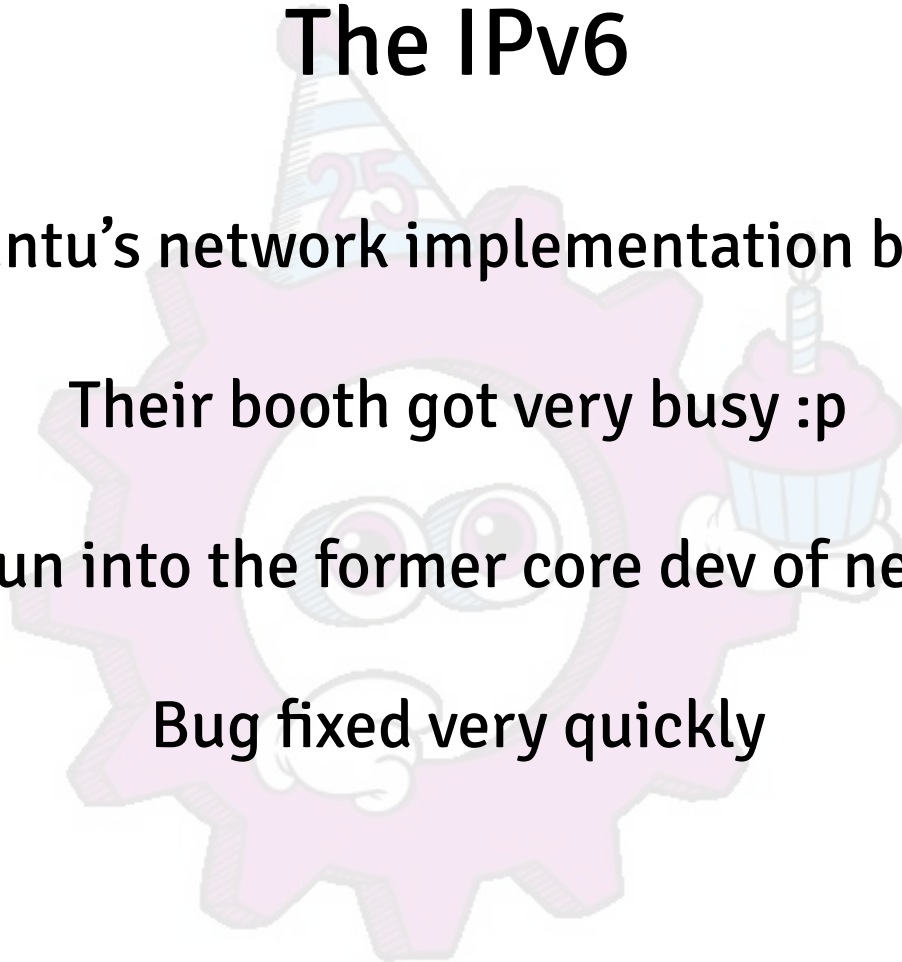
The IPv6

Ubuntu's network implementation broke

Their booth got very busy :p

I happened to run into the former core dev of network-manager

Bug fixed very quickly



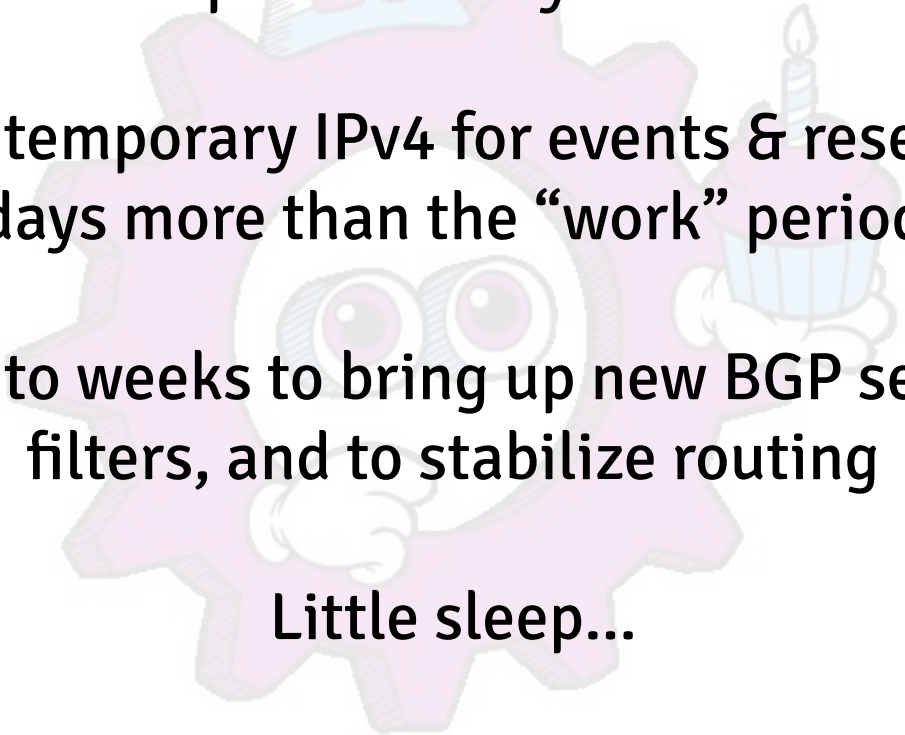
The IPv4

As IPv4 address space got more sparse, CoLT was not able to sponsor it any more

RIPE NCC offers temporary IPv4 for events & research, with a few days more than the “work” period

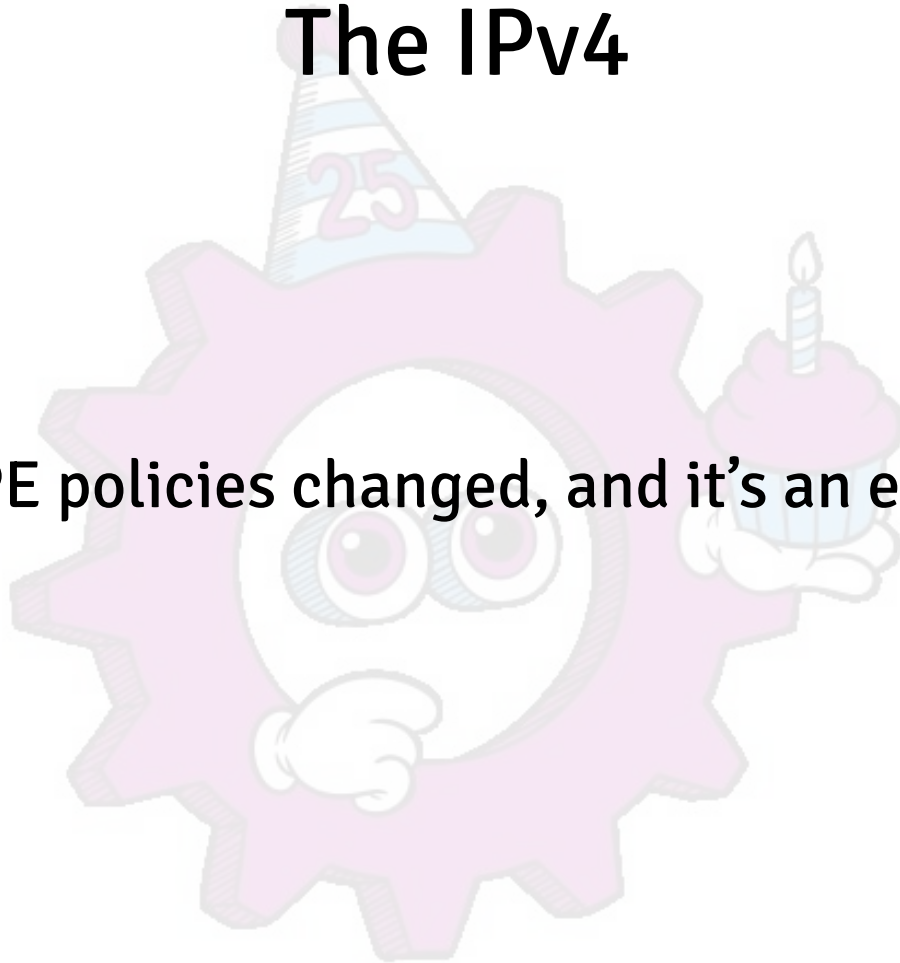
And it took days to weeks to bring up new BGP session, to update filters, and to stabilize routing

Little sleep...



The IPv4

So I got the RIPE policies changed, and it's an extra month now



The officials

It wasn't planned this way, but this year we have a Member of the European Parliament speaking in the smallest room we have...



The fiber

In 2010 we pulled our own fiber from O (non-public building) to H for network. 8 core fiber, through fire shafts, through the parking lot, through a small pond...

7 fibers broke, we had to fix one with the splicer ResULB loaned us

No splice jackets, so we secured it with Scotch tape...

The fiber



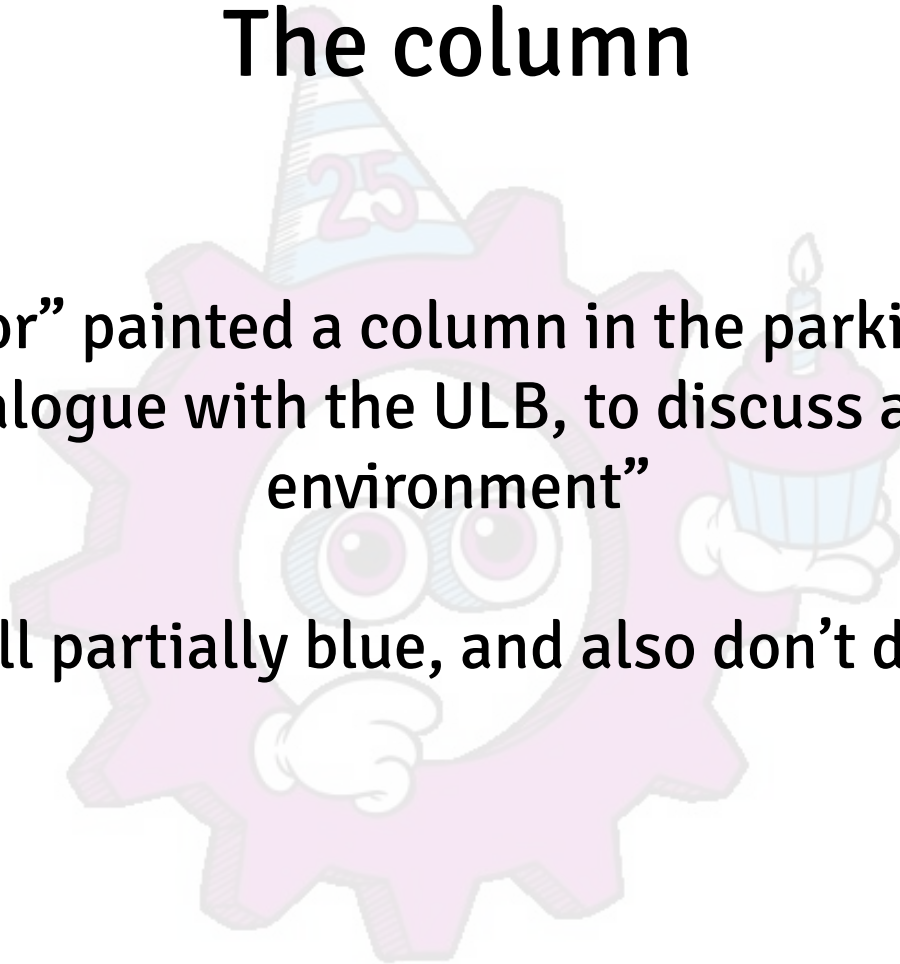
And once it was fixed, we realized that the TX/RX was swapped, and O building was locked.

Mr. Binon from ResULB drove back to Brussels from the Ardennes on Saturday, starting at 04:00 in the morning to open O for us...

The column

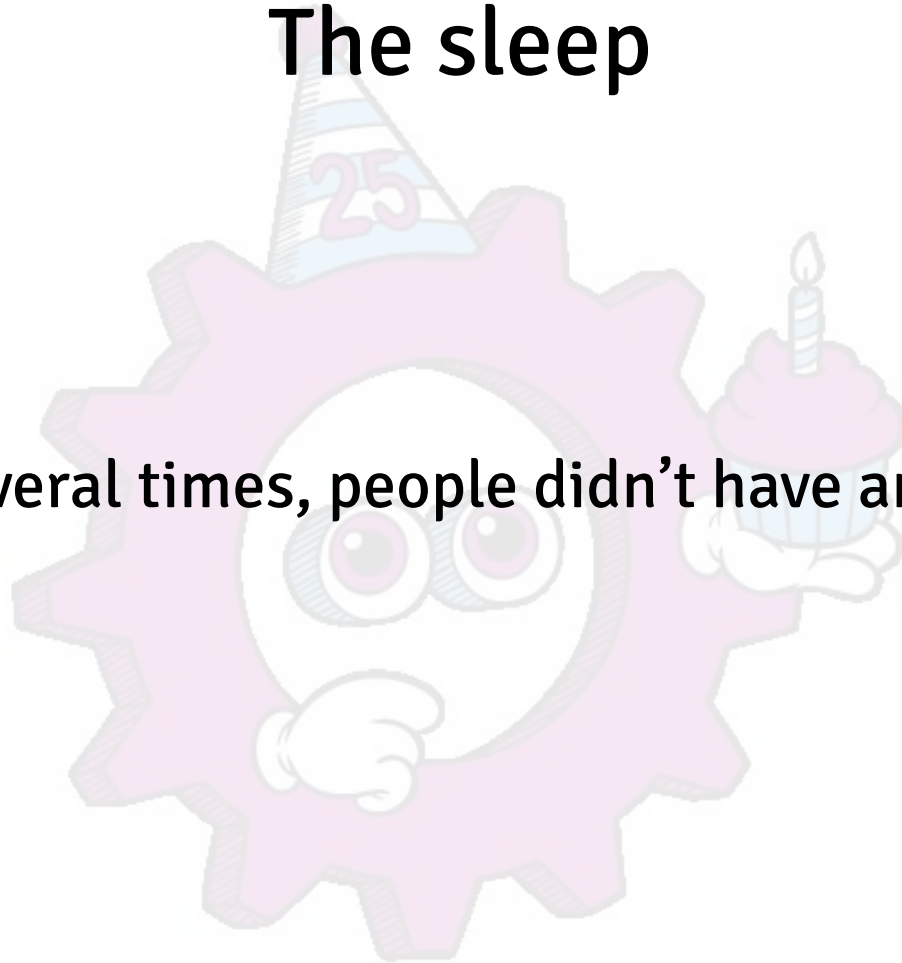
In 2018, a “visitor” painted a column in the parking lot blue to “to enter into a dialogue with the ULB, to discuss and improve the environment”

It's still partially blue, and also don't do that.



The sleep

Several times, people didn't have any...



The Infra & WiFi

It used to not work :)

And we had physical hacker rooms with network cabling

OSDEM: Provided computers, as no laptops...

One time, lost in Brussels, we hacked the WiFi of the government
to access online maps

The water

Often, we have to replan rooms at the last minute

H.301 flooded during FOSDEM 2020

Water came out of the wall

Technical services informed us that “this is not normal”

We moved the room

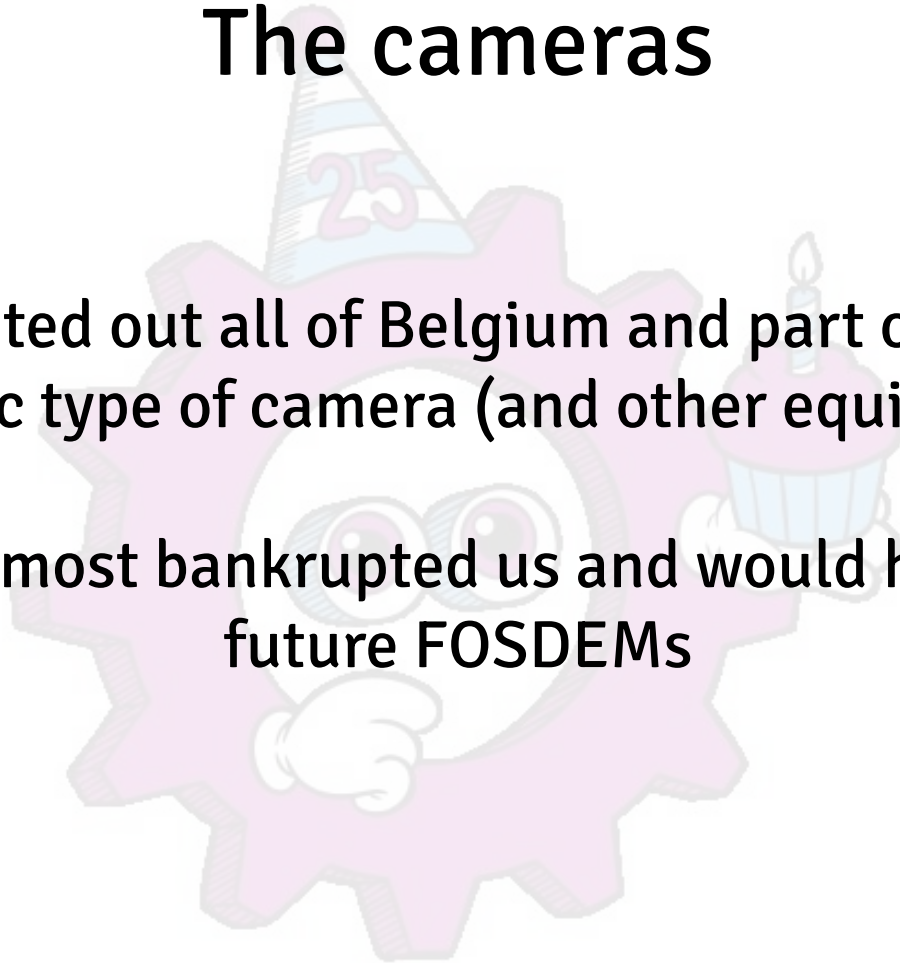
Next year we had new carpet in the room



The cameras

In 2014, we rented out all of Belgium and part of Germany for a specific type of camera (and other equipment)

And the bill almost bankrupted us and would have prevented future FOSDEM's



The Banner

In 2013, we received a complaint from ULB on cleanliness, as we had forgotten one thing



The Banner



The Banner

A year or two later, we made the exact same mistake again...



The Theme

Many, many people told us that FOSDEM is good conversations
and closed rooms for them



The Friends

And that they see good friends once a year: here.



The Safety

Several people first experimented with / came out as trans during
FOSDEM



Photo time!

Smile :)

And also, free photos up front



The Dance

