26

CONSUL CON

DAY 2 - 10:00 - Main Stage

City of Munich: A Word of Welcome by an Open Source Advocate

KEYNOTE

Laura Dornheim - CDO, State Capital München

Session recap

At a glance

Laura Dornheim, Chief Digital Officer of the City of Munich, welcomed participants to the city's IT department, the 'tech town hall' responsible for the technology of roughly 4,000 city employees and its own data centre. She used the story of Agnes Pockels, the self-taught physicist after whom the venue's street is named, to make the point that good ideas often come from outside institutions, and that the real test is whether institutions can listen and adapt. She then presented Munich's experience with CONSUL, explained why open source matters for democratic infrastructure, reflected on Munich's open source history (LiMux), and closed with a clear position on the role of AI in participation.

Key messages

- Good ideas do not only come from inside institutions. Democratic institutions must build channels that let ideas from kitchen tables and neighbourhoods reach scale.
- A platform for democracy should be democratic itself: open, verifiable and not owned by a single company that can change the rules or prioritise profit.
- Digital sovereignty cannot be bought, it has to be built through in-house capacity and through technology not built purely for profit.
- Dependence of public infrastructure on a handful of corporations is not only a technical risk but a democratic risk. Participation platforms are part of that public infrastructure and should be treated as digital commons.
- AI can help with reading, translating and clustering contributions, but it must never decide whose voice counts. Participation means people are heard, not that an algorithm summarises what is statistically most relevant.

Facts, figures and references

- City of Munich IT: about 4,000 employees served and an in-house data centre.
- Munich's CONSUL platform launched in February 2022. First process: the city's digital strategy.
- Munich Budget (first round): EUR 1 million, about 1,000 ideas, 10 projects funded at EUR 100,000 each. Winning idea: more trees.
- LiMux: Munich's former Linux-based municipal desktop project, halted for political reasons.

Takeaways for the community

- Munich positions itself as a reference city for open source and digital sovereignty in the public sector.
- The framing of participation platforms as digital commons and public infrastructure set the tone for many later sessions.