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CONSUL CON

DAY 2 - 10:30 - Main Stage

Where We Are Now: Updates on the CONSUL DEMOCRACY project

KEYNOTE

Simon Strohmenger - CONSUL DEMOCRACY Foundation

Session recap

At a glance

Simon Strohmenger, Director of the CONSUL DEMOCRACY Foundation, gave an update on the project in its eleventh year. He described the ecosystem that makes CONSUL unique (municipalities, certified tech partners, regional partners, the Foundation team, financial partners and the board), what has changed since the 2025 conference, the features under development, and the strategic questions the Foundation wants to work on with the community, notably a new governance structure and roadmap.

Key messages

- CONSUL now counts more than 350 users worldwide, from Madrid to Munich, Montevideo, São Paulo, Edinburgh and, most recently, Nairobi.
- The ecosystem is interdependent: municipalities know the needs, certified tech partners implement, regional partners bring participation expertise and the Foundation maintains the core code.
- Funding for maintenance is the hardest to secure. It is easier to get money for new AI features than for core work, which so far has depended largely on the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the City of Munich.
- The Foundation is launching a process on a new governance structure and roadmap and wants input from the community during and after the conference.
- The core challenge: a fast-moving demand for innovation (especially AI) has to be met with a very small core team of two developers.

Lessons learned and challenges

The project has a broad ecosystem but a very small core team, so the question is how to use everyone's capacity effectively. There is strong demand for innovation, and AI moves very fast. Decentralisation saved CONSUL after 2019, because so many independent installations kept it alive, but it makes it hard to pool improvements into one better product.
Simon also echoed the previous speaker: the question is not only which AI features are possible but which are really needed, and where participation should stay human.

Call to action

Better participation (more inclusive access, stronger links between online and offline) requires sharing knowledge, contributions and developments across the community. The Foundation asked for knowledge from municipalities, technical knowledge from certified companies, local networks from regional partners, and funding from new sponsors.