TECHPARK SÜDTIROL / ALTO ADIGE

PRESS INVITATION
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SFSCON 2026: the future of European digital sovereignty in focus. Open source is at the heart of new technological challenges.

The 26th edition of the Free Software Conference will take place on 13 and 14 November at the NOI Techpark in Bolzano/Bozen. Speakers will include Davide Ricci, Harald Welte, benny Vasquez, Sebastiano Toffaletti, Lucas Lasota and Artemis Yagou. Digital Independence Day is also coming to Italy for the first time.

Bolzano/Bozen, 8 October 2026 – Who controls the data, software and infrastructure on which businesses and public administrations depend? And how can Europe transform technological autonomy from a political objective into a tangible capability? These are the questions at the heart of SFSCON 2026, the South Tyrol Free Software Conference, which is scheduled to take place on Friday 13 and Saturday 14 November at NOI Techpark in Bolzano/Bozen.

Now in its 26th edition, the event has chosen **digital sovereignty** as its central theme and is expanding its scope further. It has evolved from a specialist conference on open source to an international festival where developers, businesses, institutions and universities come together to discuss how Europe can build a more open, secure and competitive digital future. In fact, digital sovereignty means having the ability to choose, understand and control the technologies used, avoid irreversible dependence on a single supplier, protect data and critical infrastructure, and ensure interoperability, reusability and long-term continuity. From this perspective, **free and open-source software** becomes strategic infrastructure for innovation: the code can be examined, adapted and improved whilst skills and value grow within European ecosystems.

‘Digital sovereignty is about businesses, public administrations and citizens retaining control over their digital choices. SFSCON brings together the people who write the code, set the rules, conduct research and implement these solutions in real-world processes. This is where open source translates into innovation, competitiveness and resilience,’ says **Patrick Ohnewein, Chief Digital Officer at NOI Techpark and chairman of SFSCON**.

From artificial intelligence to digital rights.
The programme addresses digital sovereignty throughout the technological and decision-making process, including **engineering, artificial intelligence, large language models, open hardware, legal and policy compliance, open access, training, and leadership**. It features contributions from internationally renowned speakers.

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Key speakers include: **Davide Ricci**, **Linaro'**s Vice-President and Managing Director, will address one of the most pressing challenges facing companies that use artificial intelligence: how to build an AI infrastructure based on open-source technologies and distributed across corporate systems and regional clouds that can combine data protection, scalability, and digital sovereignty. **Sebastiano Toffaletti**, Secretary-General of the European DIGITAL SME Alliance, will present the **Tech Sovereignty Catalogue**, which was created to showcase and connect Europe's range of sovereign digital solutions. The discussion will then extend to explore the relationship between open source, European regulations, technical standards, and the competitiveness of SMEs. **Harald Welte**, a free software pioneer in telecommunications and founder of Osmocom and sysmocom, will share his expertise in developing open mobile infrastructures and defending open-source licences at the event in Bolzano/Bozen. **benny Vasquez**, president of the AlmaLinux OS Foundation, will open the discussion on community governance and the conditions necessary to ensure codes of conduct are inclusive, effective and transparent.

Open Hardware, law and accessible knowledge

One of the new features of the 2026 edition is SFSCON's **international academic collaboration** with the Just Transition Centre at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Bucerius Law School, and the Weizenbaum Institute in Berlin. Presentations will focus on **open-source hardware** and key legal issues, including licences, intellectual property, the right to repair, product liability and the Cyber Resilience Act. Particular attention will be paid to the new challenges arising from the integration of hardware, embedded software, and robotics, and the findings will be compiled into an open-access digital publication. Among the key speakers is **Lucas Lasota**, a legal scholar and researcher who has worked for years on issues relating to software freedom and device neutrality. **Artemis Yagou**, a historian of design and technology and a research associate at the **Deutsches Museum in Munich**, will speak on the history and culture of source code. Her contribution is part of a programme dedicated to open access, which includes an exhibition curated in collaboration with **Software Heritage** and a discussion on the digitisation of cultural heritage.

Italy's first Digital Independence Day

On **Saturday 14 November**, SFSCON will host the first **Digital Independence Day** to be organised in Italy. This international event originated in Germany and has now been brought to Bolzano/Bozen by Fedimedia Italia. It will bring together activists, experts, and communities for a series of talks and workshops focusing on open and decentralised alternatives to major platforms, open standards, the Fediverse, accessibility, and the digital choices made by citizens and public authorities. The aim is to translate the often abstract concept of digital independence into practical applications, including migrating to free software, building local infrastructure and evaluating ethical European artificial intelligence solutions.

From a conference to an international festival

The growth of SFSCON is underpinned by a well-established community. In 2025, the event attracted 1,120 participants, over 150 speakers and 17 supporters, and featured 12 tracks. In 2026, the programme will extend beyond the two main days with a series of events focusing on research, business, professional development and training. On Thursday 12 November, **Open Source Week 2026** — an initiative promoted by RIOS (Italian Open Source Network) — will host the **General Assembly**

on Digital Sovereignty at NOI Techpark, organised in collaboration with SFSCON. This will be a forum for dialogue between institutions, businesses, public administrations, the technology sector, research bodies and civil society. The aim is to strengthen Italy's role in Europe's journey towards greater autonomy. The aim is to translate the debate into concrete proposals compiled in an initial policy manifesto. Participation is by invitation only and subject to application (https://opensourceweek.it/stati-generali-dellopen-source/).

Also taking place within this framework is **World Usability Day**, organised in collaboration with the **Free University of Bolzano/Bozen**. The theme will be 'Hallucination Interpretation', which involves viewing AI through its errors to transform them into tools for raising awareness and generating new ideas. The regular Speck&Tech event will also return, featuring **Florian Effenberger**, executive director of The Document Foundation. Alongside the talks, there will be **B2B matchmaking** and self-organised **BOF** sessions, where communities, professionals and participants can propose topics, share experiences and forge new collaborations. There will also be activities for children, including readings aimed at primary school pupils in Bolzano/Bozen on Friday and initiatives open to the public, organised by age group and in partnership with FUSS on Saturday. There will also be the opportunity to take **Linux Professional Institute** certification exams on site in Italian and German. Saturday's programme will also emphasise the importance of **communities**, featuring the participation of the Italian community of the **Free Software Foundation Europe**. The **Hacking Village** will also return – SFSCON's interactive space dedicated to demonstrations, research projects, robotics and open technologies – featuring retrocomputing enthusiasts and their vintage computers.

The educational aspect is further expanded with the NOI Hackathon SFSCON Edition: a 24-hour marathon bringing together students, developers, designers, and data experts. Thanks to the Erasmus+ SUNRISE Alliance project, groups will be taking part from the following institutions: the Polytechnic University of Viana do Castelo (Portugal); the University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów (Poland); the European University of Cyprus (Cyprus); the Technische Universität Ilmenau (Germany); the Université de Technologie de Compiègne (France); the Free University of Bolzano/Bozen; and other selected participants. Technical skills, project management and presentation skills will thus form part of a single learning pathway.

Founded in 2001 on the initiative of the Linux User Group Bozen/Bozen/Bulsan, SFSCON has been organised and promoted by NOI Techpark since 2005 and is made possible thanks to the support of the following **supporters**: RTC Gruppo FOS, Linaro, Telmekom, Bosch, Checkmk, Made in Cima, Pandigital, RISE, Zirkonzahn, 1006.org, Alineas, Catch Solve, ithel, Limitis, lynq.ing, Peer, RMBtec, Suggesto. And our **partners**: Bucerius Law School, DI.DAY, EDIH NOI, Fedimedia Italia, FSFE (Free Software Foundation Europe), FUSS, Just Transition Centre (JTC), Linux Magazine, Linux Inlaws, Loacker, Linux Professional Institute (LPI), LUG BZ, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Open Source JobHub, Open Source Week, OW2, RIOS, Speck&Tech, Sticker Mule, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen (unibz), Weizenbaum Institute. **SFSCON is co-funded by the EU as part of the ERDF 1114 IMPACT 2 project.**

Full details of the conference are available at: www.sfscon.it. Journalists and media representatives are invited to attend.