

Making Things Happen in Debian

Reflections from two DPL terms

Andreas Tille

Hamburg, 2026-05-10



Agenda

- 1 DPL Changelog
- 2 Methods
- 3 Lessons learned



Fun fact: Local media coverage

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- It took more than two years until I made it into German media.

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- Work on packages on Salsa, Debian's collaboration platform
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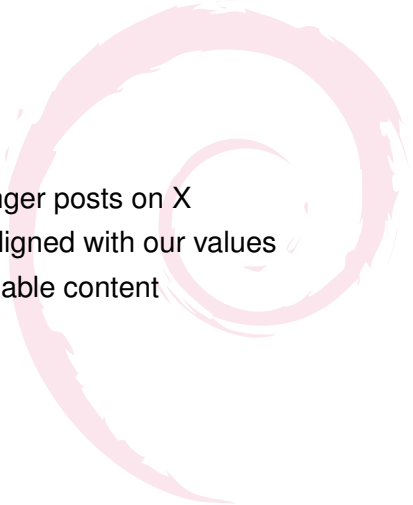
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- **Publicity team no longer posts on X**
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2025-10: Creating Archive and DFSG team

- Historically grown situation changed thanks to a hint born inside the team
- Splitting responsibilities of distinct tasks
- Timed to follow the Trixie release
- Make new processing more transparent
- Faster processing
- Fresh blood with new ideas turned into code
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- Announced in Bits (2026-02)
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Collaborative maintenance

- Salsa: our main collaboration platform — fewer than 2000 packages missing
- Professionalism in process is what makes volunteer projects scale
- Strict maintainership: historically sensible, increasingly a source of friction
- Hard to know whether package orphaned or just needs no work
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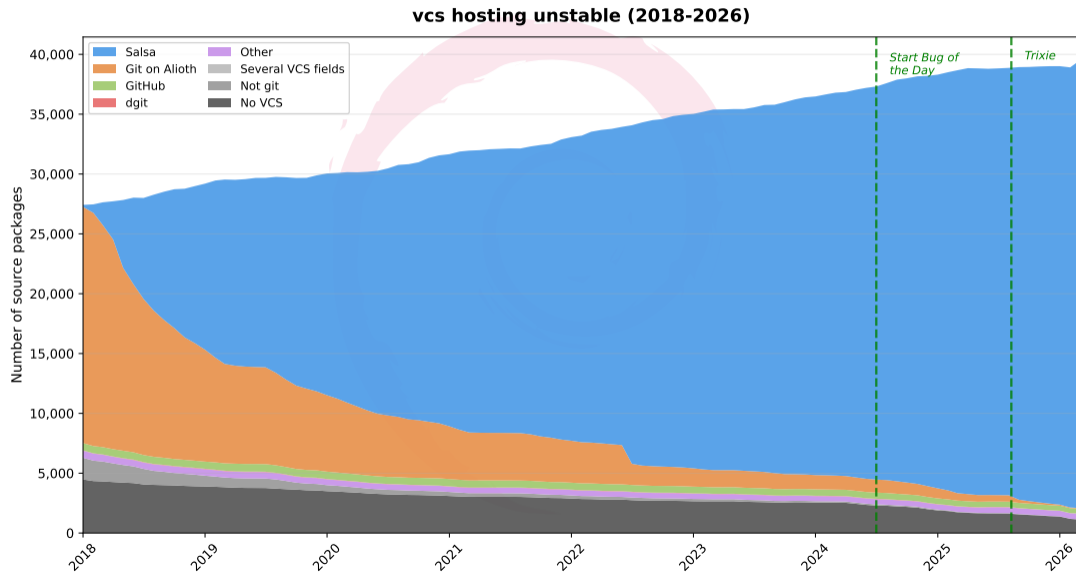
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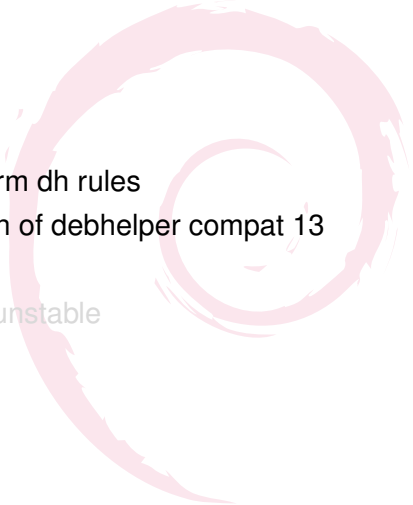
Vcs hosting in unstable



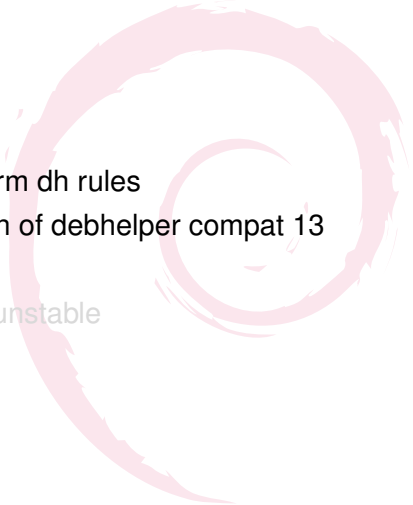
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- Migration to short-form dh rules
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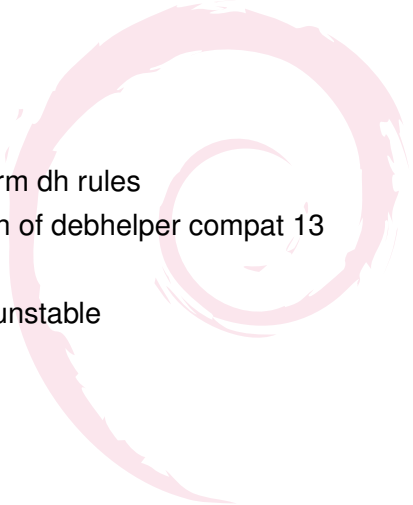
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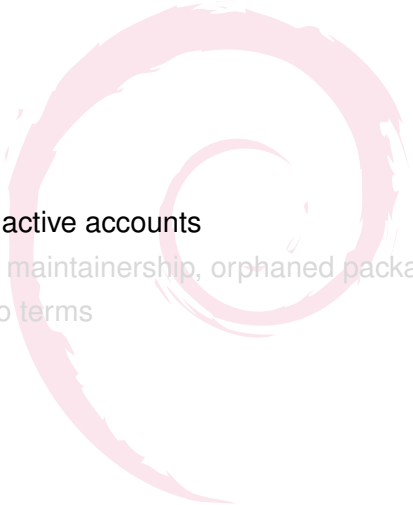
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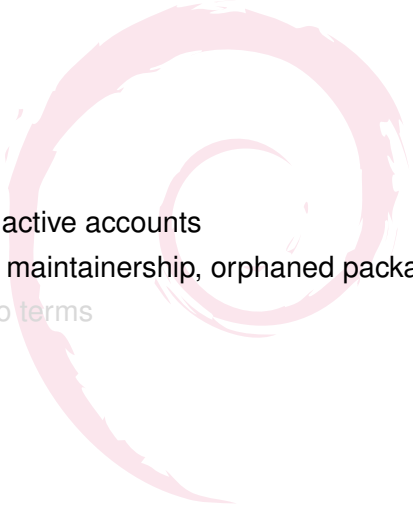
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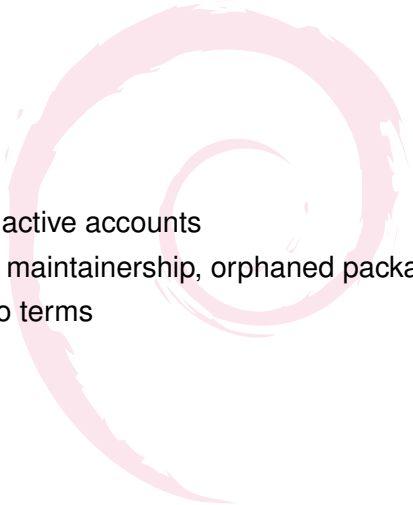
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- Talk to other DDs
- Ask for review




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My usage of LLMs

- **Communication in foreign language**
 - Communication in different cultures
 - Controlling emotions
 - Focusing on topic
 - Neutral interpretation of ambiguous responses
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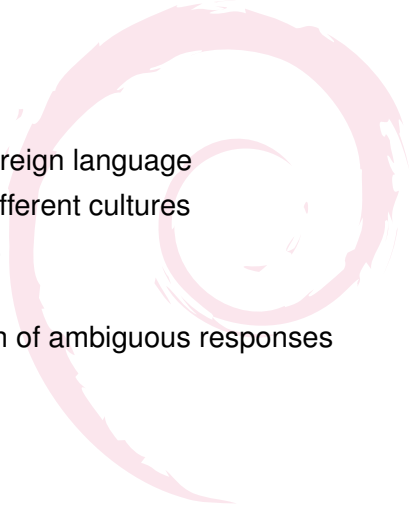
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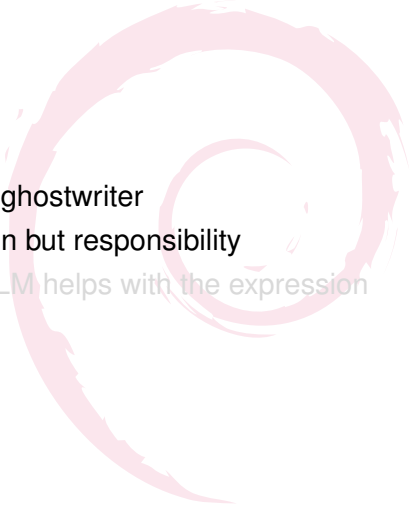
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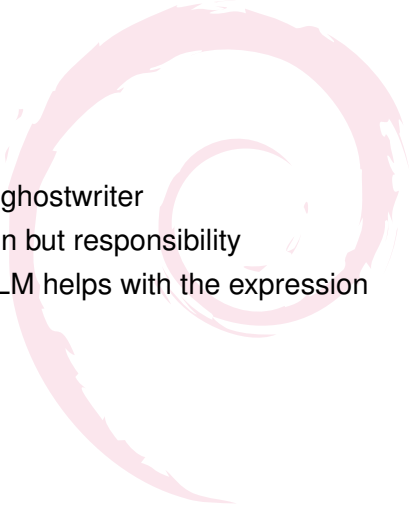
LLMs — a legitimate tool

- Tool for clarity, not a ghostwriter
 - Not depersonalisation but responsibility
 - I own the intent — LLM helps with the expression
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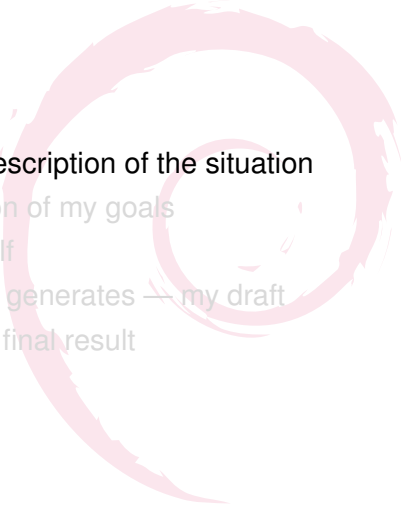
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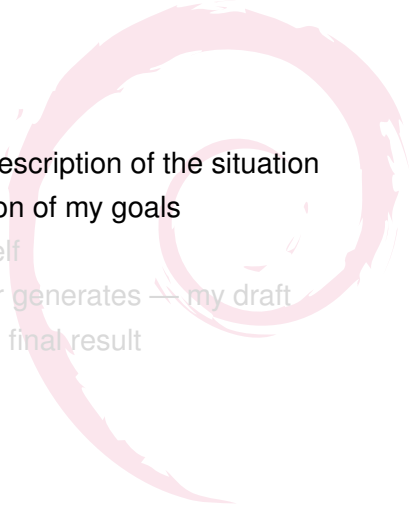
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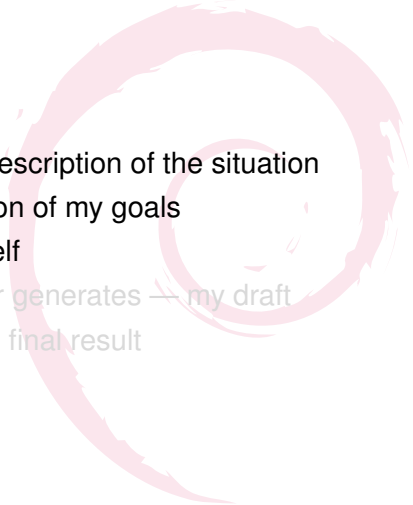
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 - I give a clear definition of my goals
 - I write the draft myself
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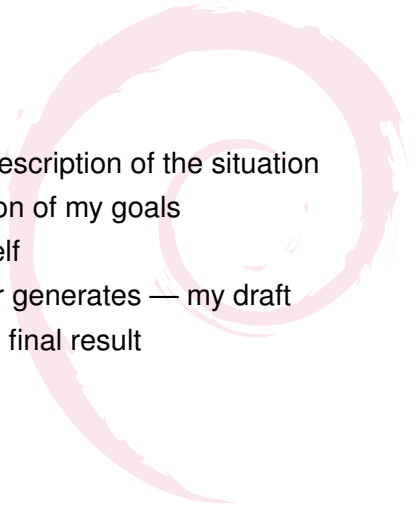
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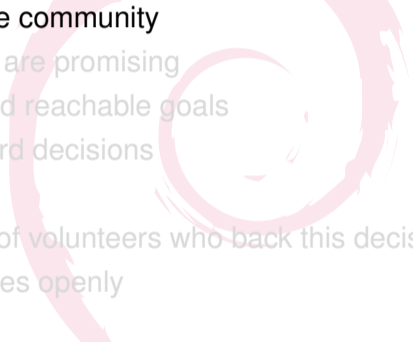
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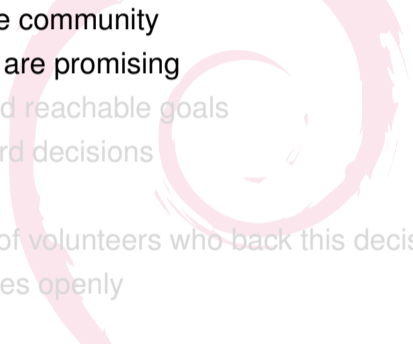
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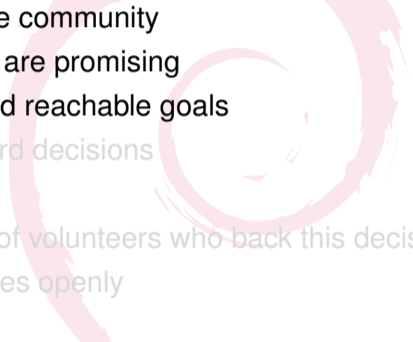
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 - Select the parts that are promising
 - Focus on specific and reachable goals
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 - Don't fear pushback
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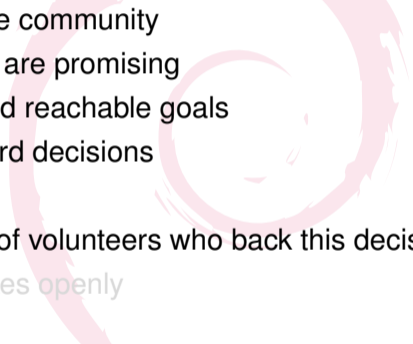
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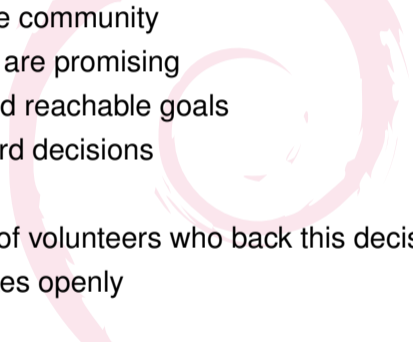
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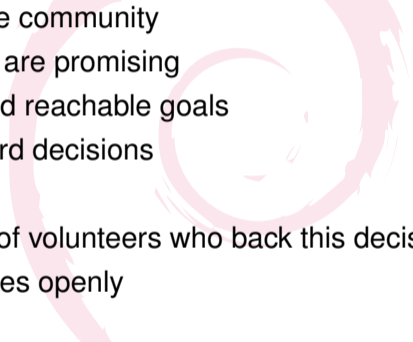
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Lessons learned about Debian culture

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- Everyone benefits, nobody feels responsible
- Stepping back gracefully is harder than stepping up
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- Whatever I said, the interpretation was “DPL has said”
- It took one year to understand things and another year to change things.

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