



Meet the
Debian
Technical
Committee

What is
tech-ctte

Recent
activity
(FSVO)

Fresh blood
wanted

Problems
with the TC

Q&A

Meet the Debian Technical Committee



Current tech-ctte members

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- **David Bremner** (bremner)
- **Tollef Fog Heen** (tfheen)
- Philip Hands (philh)
- **Margarita Manterola** (marga, chair)
- Simon McVittie (smcv)
- Didier Raboud (odyx)
- Niko Tyni (ntyni)
- **Gunnar Wolf** (gwolf)

(Red ⇒ present at DC19)



Past tech-ctte members — Thanks!

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- Sam Hartman
(2015-03-08–2017-11-09)
- Keith Packard
(2013-11-29–2017-12-31)
- Don Armstrong
(2009-01-11–2016-12-31)
- Andreas Barth
(2006-01-05–2016-12-31)
- Steve Langasek
(2006-01-05–2015-12-31)
- Bdale Garbee (–2015-12-31)
- Colin Watson
(2011-08-24–2015-03-05)
- Ian Jackson (–2014-11-19)
- Russ Allbery
(2009-01-11–2014-11-16)
- Manoj Srivasta
(–2012-08-12)
- Anthony Towns
(2006-01-04–2009-01-05)
- Raul Miller (–2007-04-30)
- Wichert Akkerman
(–2006-01-05)
- Jason Gunthorpe
(–2006-01-05)
- Guy Maor (–2006-01-05)
- Dale Scheetz (–2002-09-02)
- Klee Dienes (–2001-05-21)



What is the Debian Technical Committee?

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Debian Constitution §6.1 The Technical Committee may:

- §6.1.1 Decide on any matter of technical policy
- §6.1.2 & 6.1.3 Decide any technical matter where Developers' jurisdictions overlap
- Make a decision when asked to do so
 - Tie-breaking
- §6.1.4 Overrule a Developer
 - Requires a 3:1 majority
 - Last-resort
- §6.1.5 Offer advice



Constraints

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- §6.3.3 Public discussion and decision-making
- §6.3.5 No detailed design work
- §6.3.6 TC makes decisions only as last resort



Picking options

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Constitutionally, we are asked to *break ties* amongst available options

After all efforts to solve it via consensus have been *tried and failed*



Offer advice and make our views known

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The TC can offer **you** advice.



The Debian Technical Committee is a . . .

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- Self-nominated
- DPL-appointed
- Last resort
- Conflict resolution and advice-providing body



Issues in front of the TC since DebConf18 (<https://bugs.debian.org/tech-ctte>)

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Decided

- #904302 Whether vendor-specific patch series should be permitted in the archive
 - Use of dpkg's vendor-specific patch series feature is a bug
- #914897 Should debootstrap disable merged /usr by default?
 - We declined to override the debootstrap maintainers.
 - We were tied for the other part of our decision, so a casting vote was necessary.
 - We decided the desired state for bullseye should be that both directory schemes are allowed, and packages (including official packages) can be built on hosts with either classical or "merged /usr schemes.



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Closed without a formal resolution

- #904558 What should happen when maintscripts fail to restart a service
 - We declined to rule. Recommended that a new notification method gets developed
- #911225 Advice on stale libraries in a higher-precedence path entry
 - Advice was given.
- #919951 ocaml builder must not be called 'dune' or provide /usr/bin/dune
 - The issue was resolved without our intervention.
- #923450 requirements for being pre-dependency of bin:init
 - We declined to rule. Agreed that the maintainers of the init-system-helpers package have a gatekeeper role for this.

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Current

- #932795 How to handle FTBFS bugs in release architectures



Term expiry §6.2.7

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On January 1st of each year the term of any Committee member who has served more than 42 months (3.5 years) *and* who is one of the two most senior members is set to expire on December 31st of that year.

§6.2.1: The Technical Committee consists of up to 8 Developers, and should usually have at least 4 members.

We are roughly looking for 1-2 new members per year.



Term expiry (maybe)

Last year we got this wrong. Maybe this time we get it right...

- Dec 2019
 - Didier Raboud (2015-03-08)
 - Tollef Fog Heen (2015-03-08)
- Dec 2020
 - Phil Hands (2016-04-15)
- Dec 2021
 - Margarita Manterola (2016-07-07)
 - David Bremner (2017-04-13)
- Dec 2022
 - Niko Tyni (2017-06-21)
 - Gunnar Wolf (2018-01-02)
- Dec 2023
 - Simon McVittie (2018-03-16)

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Reality Check

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Things aren't going too well



Problems with the current process

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- Escalations need to be done as last resort, which means that discussions have turned into a flamewar by the time they reach us.
- A lot of people resent the TC and will straight away refuse to talk to us.
- Our main power is to overrule and as such people resent us.
- It can take months until we make a decision, sometimes this means it's already too late.



We keep declining to rule

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We may decline to rule because:

- The escalation was done too quickly, not all avenues were exhausted.
- We're being asked to overrule a delegate (release team, ftp master team, etc) which we can't do.
- We can't do design work and the only answer is to design something.



How could we make this better?

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- Changing how the TC works will probably require a constitutional change.
- Is there a way we could keep the purpose (solving disagreement) but avoid the flamewars and broken relationships?
- What can we do to ensure we can discuss matters without people shutting down?

Time for Q & A!

Thanks!

debian-ctte@lists.debian.org