Heart of Clojure 2024 Diversity Report

Heart of Clojure provides a space for the European Clojure community to convene and connect. In 2024, the conference took place in Leuven, Belgium, and online on September 18 and 19.

As the organizers of Heart of Clojure, it is important to us that a wide range of opinions can be shared at Heart of Clojure, so we try to ensure that people from underrepresented groups can attend. This includes but is not limited to: Women, people of color, LGBTQIA people, disabled people, and people facing economic or social hardships.

This report is one part of our efforts to make Heart of Clojure a conference that is open, encouraging, and engaging for all people.

It aims to:
- Keep Heart of Clojure transparent and accountable to our commitments to diversity
- Share the lessons we have learned from Heart of Clojure 2024
- Encourage feedback from the community

Diversity Tickets program

In order to promote diversity at Heart of Clojure, we had a Diversity Tickets program. This was also known as an "Opportunity Grant."

Diversity Tickets are fully sponsored (i.e. free) tickets that are available to people from underrepresented groups within the Clojure community.

Attendees could donate to our Diversity Tickets fund when they bought their tickets. In total, 32 attendees donated a total of 640 euros. Since our normal-priced tickets were 299 euros, that means the attendees funded a little over 2 conference tickets. I'm proud that our community was so generous!

We at Gaiwan intended to match every euro donated, so we were going to donate 640 euros to our Diversity Tickets fund. In the end, we gave much more.

10 people applied for Diversity Tickets, and we offered tickets, travel, and accommodation support for 3 of these applicants. We mostly chose applicants based on location, as most of the applicants were located outside of Europe, and we wanted to foster the Clojure community within Europe and limit our carbon footprint as much as possible. Of the 3 applicants who were granted full support, 1 of them accepted only the free ticket as she was a local, and 2 accepted tickets, accommodation and travel support.

Unfortunately, I'm not sure if we got back to the 7 people who applied for but did not get Diversity Tickets to offer them free Diversity Tickets, so at least they could watch the conference online.

Eventually, we opened up Diversity Tickets to anyone who needed one, and 4 more attendees booked Diversity Tickets.

So, in total, 7 attendees attended HoC 2024 using Diversity Tickets at a value of 2093 euros, and we supported travel and accommodation for 2 attendees at 1600 euros. Together with our community, we contributed 3693 euros to our diversity efforts.

Though we did not collect demographic data on our attendees, based on my subjective observations as an organizer and attendee, the conference did feel a little bit more diverse than usual, although our attendees were predominantly male.

Speaker Demographics

Heart of Clojure 2024 had 2 emcee hosts and 26 official speakers on the program, so we had 28 official speakers on stage or leading a workshop. Of these, 6 identified as female (21.4%), 1 as non-binary (4.6%), and 21 as male (75.0%). Based on this data, we see that the official speakers were predominantly male. We tried to invite many first-time speakers to include new voices and perspectives in our community and conversation, but we did not track this data, unfortunately.

As for the lightning talks at the end of the conference, any attendee could sign up to give a short talk on a topic of their choice on the principle of first-come, first-served. Although we had only 10 spots, 11 people signed up. Of the 10 lightning speakers, 3 identified as female (30.0%) and 7 as male (70.0%). I interpret this as demonstrating that we created a welcoming atmosphere at our conference, where attendees and women in particular felt encouraged to take the stage.

Lessons Learned for next time

For our next conference, we will consider
- Starting our Call for Proposals earlier to spread the word to various communities to increase the diversity of our speakers
- Asking speakers to volunteer the information if they are first-time speakers
- Spreading the word about our Diversity Tickets earlier to various communities to increase the number of applicants
- Asking participants to voluntarily choose their preferred pronouns to be printed on their conference badges
- Collecting voluntary feedback about accessibility, diversity, and inclusivity and suggestions on how to improve diversity and inclusion in the survey after the conference
- Implementing a voluntary and anonymous demographic survey to really know the demographic makeup of our attendees and consider criteria other than gender for diversity, such as age, ability and ethnic background

If you have any questions, feedback or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me at bettina@gaiwan.co I look forward to hearing from you and continuing to make Heart of Clojure a welcoming experience for everyone.