

ECOOP'99 Final Report

May 23, 2000

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This is the final report on the 13th European Conference on Object-Oriented Programming (ECOOP'99) that took place in Lisbon, from the 14th to the 18th June 1999.

The conference followed the general structure of past ECOOP events. Monday and Tuesday were dedicated to the tutorials and workshops. These happened at the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon. The main conference took place from Wednesday to Friday at the Gulbenkian Foundation.

The total number of participants was 480, well below the 700 that attended ECOOP'98, and slightly above the 440 persons that showed up for ECOOP'97.

The total profit of the conference was over Euro 45.000. A few factors contributed for this figure.

1. The sponsoring hunt went pretty well (in particular IBM donated approximately Euro 19,000), yielding a total of Euro 29.000.
2. A couple of events, the Book Party and the Welcome reception, turn out to be supported by the Bookstore Livraria Escolar Editora and the City Hall, respectively.
3. The total inexperience of the Organizing Committee chairman, allied to the fear of ending in the red, artificially inflated the conference fees.

The next chapter includes a series of comments on how the conference run (from the point of view of the organizers), the following chapter deals with the questionnaires. The appendix includes the registration fees and the registration revenue details, the expenses with the invited and tutorial speakers, the Eastern support, the financial support, and finally the statistics on the questionnaires

ECOOP'99 would not have been possible without the resolute cooperation of the Programme Chair, Rachid Guerraoui, the Workshop Chair, Ana Moreira, the Tutorial Chair, Rui Oliveira, the Panel Chair, Luís Caires, the Demonstration Chair, António Rito e Silva, the Poster Chair, Carlos Baquero, and the Exhibit Chair, Mário J. Silva. The ECOOP'99 Programme Committee would also like to thank the Lisbon Convention Bureau, the Department of Informatics of the Faculty of Sciences, University of Lisbon, Dave Thomas for raising the IBM donation, organizers from past ECOOP events Markku Sakkinen, Theo D'Hondt, and Carine Lucas, and the student volunteers from various countries.

Lisbon, 30th May 2000

Vasco T. Vasconcelos
Organizing Chairman

Chapter 2

ECOOP'99 as seen by the Organizing Committee

2.1 Participants

The ECOOP'99 grand total was 480, of which 298 registered for the conference, 100 registered for workshops only, and 78 attended free. The table below summarizes the numbers by categories. See appendix A for details

Member	1
Regular	178
Student	115
Eastern European	8
Workshop only	100
Invited Speakers	3
Org.&Prog. Committee	9
Press	1
Sponsors	4
Exhibitors	7
Student volunteers	30
Total	480
Accompanying persons	17
Tutorials (296 units)	120

Table 2.1: Participants

2.2 Registration fee

ECOOP'99 programme committee has decided to slightly simplify the fee structure. As such, only early and late fees were proposed. Also, since we did not manage to reach a satisfactory agreement with ACM, we decided to drop the members fee. This decision affected not only ACM members, but also AITO members.¹ Appendix B presents the details.

2.3 Eastern Europe

We offered financial aid to those participants who couldn't pay for their travel expenses. Four participants from three different countries requested financial help; we granted them all.

As usual we prepared a separate fee for participants of Eastern Europeans countries. Four participants took advantage of these fees: three early, one late registration. Appendix E presents the details.

2.4 Lunches and refreshments

Lunches were provided at the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon on Monday and Tuesday, but not at the Gulbenkian Foundation on Wednesday to Friday.

On the one hand we wanted people to be able to choose where and when to have lunch; around Gulbenkian there can be found a lot of different kinds of restaurants. On the other hand there is not much offer of restaurants around the Faculty and so we decided to use the services of the company that run the refectory. A special menu was prepared for the effect, but the company was not able to deal with the lunch rush hour. As a result, participants had to queue for sometime.

2.5 Congress office

The congress office Traducta handled all the registrations and hotel reservations. They also took care of everything concerning payment with credit cards and bank transfers, and were present at the reception desk for the whole duration of the conference.

¹One participant took advantage of the few days that the “members” category was announced on the web site.

Most of the complaints about the organization come from the congress organizer. When preparing Lisbon's bidding for organizing ECOOP'99, the Programme Committee contacted Lisbon Convention Bureau, a non-profit organization belonging to the City Hall. The Bureau turned out to be quite helpful in a number of things, including setting up a meeting with two congress organizers. The Organizing Committee interviewed representatives from both companies, analyzed the proposed budgets, and choose the organizer that seemed to best suit ECOOP'99 needs (which, by the way was the most expensive).

Problems started in March 1999, when Traducta tried to charge the first visa card, and the debit was refused. The company that handles Visa in Portugal had canceled Traducta's mail orders. A long period of negotiations started; the situation being reestablished less than one month before the conference. Not until the conference day, was Traducta able to process the number of pending requests for registrations and hotel reservation.

It is difficult to access to which extent we were facing Traducta incompetence, or Visa's lack of cooperation, but it was certainly a very weak point on the overall organization.

There was a last minute change on the venue of the Welcome Reception, since the City Hall decided not to lend Estufa Fria, as originally scheduled. The new place, São Jorge Castle, was far more interesting, but then again we had complaints about the sudden change.

2.6 Social programme

With respect to ECOOP'98, we decided to slightly lighten up the social programme by providing events for the first four evenings only.

- On Monday we had a get-together evening with drinks, snacks, and books at the Escolar Editora bookstore, located just in front of the Faculty of Sciences.
- On Tuesday we prepared a small, not widely announced, Exhibitors Welcome Reception at the Gulbenkian Foundation.
- At the end of the first day of the conference, the mayor of Lisbon invited all participants for a the welcome reception at the Castle of São Jorge. Shuttle buses were provided to get there; a short walk down the hill was suggested for returning.
- The conference banquet was held at Tapada da Ajuda, overlooking the city if Lisbon and river Tagus. Participants were transported by

specially provided shuttle buses. A group of *fado* singers provided some animation, and were only sorry that we had to leave so early in the night.

2.7 Rooms for workshops and tutorials

The size and number of rooms needed for workshops and tutorials were decided upon the information we have obtained from the workshop organizers and Traducta, respectively. We have asked all the workshop organizers to give us the maximum number of participants that they would allow in their rooms. The requirements were sometimes hard to satisfy, as many organizers would like to have two rooms, so that group discussions could take place as comfortable as possible. (A couple of workshop organizers asked for three rooms!) Unfortunately, as we had a restricted number of rooms at the Faculdade de Ciências of Universidade de Lisboa, we could not satisfy all the demands for two rooms. However, all the organizers had access to, at least, one room with enough space to accommodate all the attendees.

2.8 Workshop Reader

The publication of the workshop reader was not a pacific task. Springer Verlag was not interested in publishing a collection of position papers, as it had been happening during the previous years. After some negotiations, they finally agreed on publishing reports, one for each workshop. This was very difficult to accept by the organizers. Many participants threatened to only attend the workshop if their position paper was published. This took some effort from the workshop chair to first convince the workshop organizers to accept this change, and then from the workshop organizers to convince the position papers' authors. At the end, only one workshop organizer refused to write the report. Therefore, there is no information about this workshop in the Workshop Reader.

Apart from the workshop reports, the Workshop Reader also included the results from panels and posters.

Summarizing, the 4th ECOOP Workshop Reader differs from previous editions in two significant ways. Firstly, instead of simply reproducing the position papers, it presents an overview of the main points made by the authors as well as a summary of the discussions that took place. Secondly, to make the text more uniform and readable, all chapters have been written in a common format (using Latex LNCS style files).

The innovations introduced in this book implied additional work for the workshop organizers in terms of recording and summarizing the discussions as well as adapting their written presentations to a common format. We believe that this extra effort was certainly appreciated by the readers.

2.9 Workshops

The importance of the workshops within the context of ECOOP is becoming increasingly recognised; for the first time in the history of the conference, the number of workshop proposals for ECOOP99 actually exceeded the slots available and some had to be refused. We accepted 21 workshops, but we received over 30 workshop proposals.

This brought to the workshop chair some problems with a couple of workshop proposals' authors that did not want to accept the refusal, based on the fact that that never happened before in ECOOP.

The workshop proposals initially submitted covered a wide range of topics, too diverse and specialised for any single person to evaluate adequately. The proposals were distributed for evaluation to colleagues in the Departamento de Informática of Universidade Nova de Lisboa. However, we have not asked them formal comments to sent to proposers, what made our task with the authors of the refused workshop proposals more difficult. This problem was transmitted to the ECOOP'2000 workshop chairs, suggesting them to invite a formal selection committee that would help them to send more formal comments to workshop organizers.

2.10 Tutorials

ECOOP'99 received 52 proposals for tutorials. Except for a couple of them, they were high quality proposals and covered a broad range of topics.

The proposals evaluation was done by a committee previously set up by the tutorial chair. The tutorial committee was composed by active participants of ECOOP which were asked to classify the proposals not only by their scientific/pedagogic merit but also by the interest of the proposal as a whole near the ECOOP community.

All proposals have been reviewed by at least three referees, and about 30 have been championed by at least one referee. The need to accommodate this high number of "recommended" tutorials was the first problem to solve. The final programme resulted from a judicious review of the recommended set and the application of few economic criteria. At the end, there were 24

tutorials biased towards an intermediate to advanced audience.

The rooms for tutorials were decided based on the available registrations. Although a large body of tutorial registrations was on-site it was early clear that the participation was unbalanced. Indeed, the number of attendees ranged from 3 to 23 per tutorial, with an average of 10. All tutorials had a room large enough to hold the participants comfortably, and except for the most participated tutorial, lectures notes were available on registration.

Detailed issues regarding the organization process have been transmitted to the ECOOP'2000 tutorials co-chair during the conference. From these, some relevant suggestions follow. Communication with tutorial proponent needs to be rigorous and timely with respect to the details of the proposal, presentation and the speakers' trip. The reviewing and selection process needs to take into account the refused proposals. Tutorial proponents do not seem to accept well the fact that proposal considered of high quality are refused and expect a justification based on the reviews. Finally, the early coordination with the workshop chair was invaluable for the sessions and people scheduling and resource allocation.

2.11 Panels

The conference technical program included, as has been the usual practice in previous ECOOP's, two panel sessions. The first panel, entitled "Object Technology and Systematic Reuse" joined some specialists on object technology and software engineering and addressed obstacles to reuse induced by common object-oriented methodologies. A second panel, "The Mobile Objects Debate", was presented on the last session of the technical track, and followed with great interest by the audience. Credits must be given to Jan Vitek, the moderator, and the other panelists, who successfully set up a colorful discussion. Contributing to the organization of successful panels is not an easy task, since, traditionally, interesting voluntary submissions tend to zero; we suggest that a close cooperation between the program chair/committee and the organizing committee should be maintained on this subject, as was the case in ECOOP'99.

2.12 Exhibits

ECOOP's Exhibitors Forum was set up close to the main conference area to let participants have the opportunity to visit the stands even during short breaks. We had stands from the following organizations:

1. Oblog Software, SA (www.oblog.pt)
2. Nokia Research Center (www-nrc.nokia.com)
3. Mjolner Informatics (www.mjolner.dk)
4. Rational Software (www.rational.com)
5. Cambridge University Press (www.cup.cam.ac.uk)
6. Springer-Verlag (www.springer.de)
7. Livraria Escolar Editora (lee@esoterica.pt), representing Morgan Kaufmann and Addison-Wesley

The rental cost of stands was Euro 1,500.00 per unit of 6 sqm. and 2,000.00 per unit of 6 sqm. for stands with wall elements. The price included:

- catering services for the exhibitor's reception on the first day of the conference;
- a 1/2 hour presentation in one of the auditoriums at the conference site;
- a reference to their stand in the conference booklet;
- a full-page ad to be handed out to all the participants with the conference proceedings.

2.13 Demonstrations

Five demonstrations were submitted and all the submissions were accepted for presentation. Actually, only four demonstrations run since one of the presenters was unable to attend the conference.

Due to the short number of submissions and the small audience to the demonstration session it should be necessary to think about the role played by demonstrations in a conference like ECOOP. ECOOP mainstream is academic and academics do not appear to be very motivated to show running prototypes.

2.14 Posters

The poster session complemented the specialized work-groups of ECOOP workshops and presented an exhibition of abstracts covering a broad range of object oriented topics.

There was a selection of 11 posters, plus an invited poster from the Cyber Chair. The actual exhibition had 10 posters, and the post-conference reader included a poster chapter with contributions from 7 of the exhibited posters.

The experience gathered with the organization of the Poster Session, suggests that a new model that gives posters a 5 minute presentation, in two 25 minute sessions at the main conference, would improve the quality and number of submissions.

Chapter 3

Results on the questionnaire

We had a quite small number of questionnaires returned — impressive figures of 13 general questionnaires and 1 Tutorial evaluation form. A number of factors may account for the poor result.

- Not enough pressure was put on the participants to return the questionnaire, including, for example, written and oral announcements and a easily distinguishable box to collect the questionnaires;
- The questionnaires were printed in conventional 80gr/m² Xerox paper. A slightly heavier paper, albeit more expensive, would let people know we care about the questionnaire (do we?)
- People are sick of filling questionnaires.
- Participants enjoyed the overall organization, and though there was nothing to be said ;-)

The percentage of returned questionnaires was so small (only 3%) that both the comments included in the following subsections, and the raw statistics that can be found in appendix G are void of relevance. However, we know that there was a major deficiency in our organization: conference registration and hotel reservations. Traducta was not up to our expectations.

3.1 What did you like the most about ECOOP'99?

- Location; technical programme.
- The contact with other people.

- Workshops; Lisbon, catching up on work of people I know from previous conferences.
- Workshops.
- Vinho Dão; beautiful women.
- The location (Gulbenkian); the weather.
- Excellent programme; friendly people; Lisbon is wonderful.
- Perhaps the last panel.
- Its ability to give hints on areas to look further (“inspiration”).
- Good papers; social programme.

3.2 What did you dislike the most about ECOOP’99?

- Organization.
- The fact that we were in two different places.
- Confirmation of registration two days before leaving for conference; not enough papers relevant to software developers.
- Technical sessions.
- Lack of Internet connections.
- The workshop venue; the confusing programme (late and unclear changes to the final brochure).
- Very late confirmation of registration, combined with problem in hotel reservation.
- This was the most badly organized conference I have been in my 15 years.
- The organization was managing from slow to chaos; events were moved around and canceled without notice; no confirmation on participation and hotel (not acceptable); the technical equipment was not good for the tutorials (but fine for the main conference).
- Traducta; not accepting email/web registration; ignoring email requests; not confirming receipt of registration; incompetence with credit cards.
- Email facilities.

3.3 What additional topics would you like to see?

Papers

- Problem and solution of building (frameworks) OO applications, re-engineering; evolution of applications, a bit more software engineering. More industrial experiments.
- More software engineering themes: design methodologies, reverse engineering, software architecture.
- Better quality and contents; too simple and not really novel research.
- More about OOP and less about OO language construction.
- Comparison of different languages and tools used in teaching introduction to OO (survey).

Panels

- What should we teach.
- One on software reuse: the speakers talked too long at the beginning and there was no real moderation of discussion.

Additional comments and suggestions

- I find there is a big gap between the workshop themes which attracted people to ECOOP and the themes which are reflected in the technical sessions.
- The programme committee should do a better job with selecting the papers; during lunch at workshop had to wait long; the first panel was not that good.
- Panel I was mediocre, but most panels are; panel II was tremendous, by far the best panel I have attended, congratulations to Jan, Eric, Doug, Ben and Jim; the technical program was displayed/announced 3 weeks after the meetings of the PC; most conferences give the list of accepted papers much earlier than that; I also would like to see the abstracts with program.

- I spent several hours on the phone, email and fax trying to contact organizers. As recently as the Thursday before the conference, I didn't even know what hotel I was staying in.
- Maybe more than one track, its nice to have options.
- ETAPS'98 had menu phrases Portuguese→English; should have add a tour Monday.

Appendix A

Participants per category

Appendix B

Registration fees

Appendix C

Registration revenues

Appendix D

Expenses with the invited and tutorial speakers

Appendix E

Expenses with the Eastern Europeans support

Appendix F

Financial Statement

Appendix G

Statistics on the questionnaires