Chapter XV
COPRAS:
Encouraging ICT Research Projects to Produce More Tangible Standardization Results

Bart Brusse
ConTeSt Consultancy, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

Between early 2004 and 2007, the cooperation platform for research and standards (COPRAS) deployed a series of activities to improve the interfacing process between ICT research and standardization. This included the conclusion of standardization action plans with a series of projects in the EU-funded Sixth Framework Programme and the development of a set of generic standardization guidelines supporting future ICT research projects in their interfacing with standardization. COPRAS's results show that cooperation and cross-fertilization between research and standardization is perceived as increasingly important by projects, and also demonstrate how direct and indirect support mechanisms are able to increase the amount of tangible results ICT research will be able to contribute to ongoing standards work. However, results also show that structurally improving the research and standards interfacing process will not be possible unless all parties to the process, including the research and standards communities and the administrators of the research programmes, take additional, and continuous, action.

INTRODUCTION

ICT research that is carried out under European framework programmes is often closely connected to standardization. Projects addressing technical or scientific issues generally produce results that can be used to develop a new standard, to improve an existing one, or to anticipate a future standard. Moreover, experience teaches that even projects that do not primarily set out to develop standards may contain elements supporting ongoing or new standardization processes.

The ICT standards world, however, is a dynamic environment with several hundred standards bodies, industry consortia, trade organizations, and others operating in the same arena on a national, regional, or global level. Consequently, this can turn the process of finding the right

standards organization(s) into a complicated and time-consuming activity for ICT research projects and thus can block cross-fertilization between ICT research and standardization. This is because the standards community will not receive contributions at the earliest possible point in time, and research projects may miss out on the latest developments and state of the art in standardization. As a consequence, windows for standardization opportunities will be missed.

These are the issues that were addressed by the cooperation platform for research and standards (COPRAS), a project initiated by the European Committee for Standardization (CEN), the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC), and the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), together with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and The Open Group. Between early 2004 and early 2007, COPRAS supported a large variety of ICT research projects in the Sixth European Framework Programme in their interfacing with standards organizations, and, in doing so, also managed to generate a set of guidelines and tools that will assist future projects in their efforts in passing output though standards processes. However, as experience in COPRAS also shows, its achievements can only be seen as a first step toward improving research and standards interfacing in general that can only be effective in a framework of measures.

This chapter will provide an overview of the objectives COPRAS set out with and the methodology it deployed to achieve its targets. Subsequently, the work that was carried out during the 3 years in which the project was active will be described and the conclusions emerging from it will be discussed and translated into recommendations for future work in this area.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGIES

The two core objectives that COPRAS set out with at the start of its activities can be described as follows.

- To provide the ICT projects it directly addressed with individual support, allowing them to establish cooperation with standards organizations relevant to their work
- To develop a set of tools and guidelines that could provide future ICT research projects with similar levels of support, thus structurally improving the research and standards interfacing process

When looking at the first of these two objectives, it was COPRAS's aim to develop so-called standardization action plans (SAPs) for those ICT research projects in the first calls of the Sixth Framework Programme, which, after a close analysis of their planned activities and results, could be expected to benefit considerably from receiving direct support in their standards-related activities. The aim of these plans was to specify and structure the steps a project should take to arrange interfacing with standards organizations, establishing their prime target in the quickest and most effective way so that the process of building a constituency among the relevant participants to these targeted standardization processes, necessary for the adoption of their contributions, could start as early as possible. As there were several hundred ICT research projects in the first calls of the Sixth Framework Programme, the target was to develop these plans for at least 8% of them.

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