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

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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 contribu-
tions at the earliest possible point in time, and
research projects may miss out on the latest de-
velopments 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 inter-
facing 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 methodol-
ogy 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 ad-
dressed 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 structur-
ally improving the research and standards
interfacing process

When looking at the first of these two objec-
tives, 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, neces-
sary 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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