

## Workshop 10: Realising and Supporting Collaboration in e-Research

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(I'm very sorry to be so late and deliver just a short note; July is the holiday month in Finland, and I have been several weeks away from my desk and e-mail – just found the CFP in the mailbox. Really would like to join the discussion, anyway...)

### **Position statement: EU projects as testbeds for and benefactors of e-research**

Although the really big money in EU does not go to research, there is enough of it to warrant some attention. There are thousands of EU projects running at any moment, and hundreds are launched every year. Per definition these are multisite and multinational, and because of the official funding policy they are not continuing any previous project, thus at least in principle always novel constellations. (The lack of continuity for successful projects is lamentable, but there it is.) During the last framework programs there has been a step towards larger projects in the form of IPs, the largest of which are really formidable beasts – temporary multi-site research centers of hundred full-time people and more. There is an enormous stream of preparation, coordination, production, reporting etc. work related to these projects at all time going on, and because of the schedules the only possibility is to do a large part of this work and related communication over the network.

With respect to technology support for that work, my guess is that there is very little of it in use beyond e-mail, web sites and simple file sharing. During my 15 years in EU research projects always in a technologically relatively advanced company, the most advanced support met has been the using of the version control of BSCW in writing an application, and once a centralized version control system for a piece of software. One would expect that with CSCW quite a lot more could be done, and that would directly at least contribute to the amount of work available for research proper – or, in a happy case, even improve the conditions and quality of the production of results.

Now there are real reasons why the use of CSCW tools in EU research projects is thin – the major of which is a large amount of initial extra work for installing and training, for a relatively temporary potential benefit. But even when during the current policy the constellation of partners may change from project to project, many research groups are maintaining a more or less permanent portfolio of projects and could distribute the initial investment of effort over a longer period and larger number of projects – if there were a common culture and common set of tools.

What we could and should do is to launch a multi-stage initiative: first figure out, with a series of pilot experiments with different EU projects, which are the most helpful and beneficial support CSCW functions in the EU project environment, then launch an effort to design and develop a robust open-source suite of corresponding, compatible applications, and finally get EU to support the use of these tools as a service.