

# Hacking EU Funding for a FOSS project

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# hacking?

- Hacking is the art of understanding and tweaking a formal system and its rules to self determined needs (in a legal way, mind you)
- Hacking is not limited to computer code: lawyers and lawmakers can be hackers as well as people modifying bikes
- Hacking is obviously not always good as it can be used for rather destructive goals



# Free and Open Source?

- Openly Developing and Collaborating in a chaotic international environment of communities and experts is great fun and a worthwhile challenge
- Free and Open Source projects shape the information infrastructure today and probably even more so in the future
- Governments and the main stream are already changing to adopt more FOSS-friendly policies



# EU Funding?

- The European Union has large research and development funds which it distributes to international collaborative R&D groups
- The EU as well as governments are getting ever more interested in FOSS projects
- Larger **FOSS projects and communities** are fundamentally internationally organized  
→ **a good starting position!**



# Meta Notes

You can especially use the *italic terms* as keywords in google queries to discover more details for each of the topics

I am not going to talk much about the technical aspects of PyPy here.



# EU Framework Program 6

- The EU spends 17.5 Billion Euros from 2002 till 2006 for the *FP6*
- Collaborating Groups (*Consortiums*) submit *Proposals* for specific *Calls* from EU *directorates*
- Each *Proposal* is peer-reviewed by undisclosed technical experts
- *Proposals* getting the most points from reviewers enter *negotiation* with the EU, after which they usually get accepted



# Dealing with the EU

- The EU is one of the largest existing bureaucracies ... which implies formal procedures for every move you make
- But is the API to the EU larger than the one to Win32 or J2EE?
- I don't think so!
- Let's go through the process that the PyPy project, rooted in various Python communities, went through



# Bootstrapping PyPy

- PyPy was triggered from a thread on the python-de mailing list January 2003
- Armin Rigo, Christian Tismer, Holger Krekel decided to invite to a first one-week coding “sprint”
- The sprint took place in the “Trillke-Gut” in February 2003 and attracted 12 people





# But what is a Sprint?

- a multi-day meeting among interested developers to hack together
- pair-programming and writing lots of tests (to allow easy changes in the future)
- *egoless programming* (google finds you the C2 wiki)
- a great way to get to know each other and reach out for larger goals



# What is PyPy?

- A novel *Python* implementation written in Python, translated to low level languages
- we seek configurability of memory & threading models
- we want to generate a Just-In-Time compiler
- orthogonal persistence, new interpreter-level distribution of objects ...



# June 2003, Belgium

- During our 3rd sprint Laura Creighton and Jacob Hallén began to push for the idea of the PyPy group responding to a Research *Call* from the EU, meeting their strategic objectives:
  - **Open development platforms for software and services**
  - Cognitive systems
  - Embedded systems
  - Applications and services for the mobile user and worker
  - Cross-media content for leisure and entertainment



# PyPy's approach to funding

- From September on we collaboratively worked on writing the proposal, trying to read the EU's and our minds
- as a collection of textfiles representing the formalized chapters of a *proposal*, freely accessible to the public, fully version controlled
- working on the textfiles followed the same mechanics as our coding development process (mailing lists, subversion, IRC, generating html from text files on the main site, issue tracker)



# “Coding a Proposal”

- We distributed different chapters to different people (preferably pairs who peer review)
- Diff-Notifications were a means to notice what was going on in the Chapters and who improved what and how
- In a 10-14 day intense IRC/writing session we came up with the final version of the proposal, generated through OpenOffice as a PDF
- just to meet the deadline at 15th October 2003!

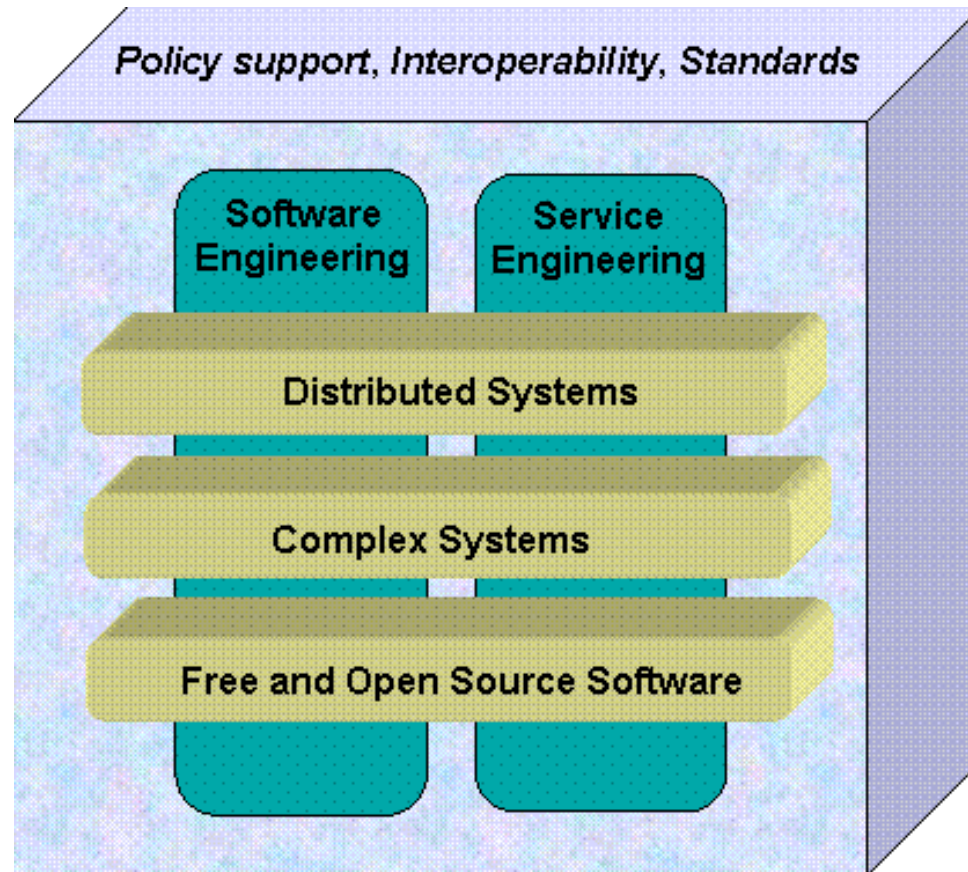


# Basic concepts of EU funding

- There are different *instruments* of EU funded projects
- PyPy's a *special targeted research proposal (STREP)*
- we mainly went for the “open development platforms” *strategic objective* of the *call*
- *Calls* are issued by *directorates*, for software usually from the *Information Society Technology* general directorate (which has various sub-directorates).



# Software Technology and distributed systems model (IST-Direct. D Unit 4)



Source: [http://www.cordis.lu/ist/directorate\\_d/st-ds/index.htm](http://www.cordis.lu/ist/directorate_d/st-ds/index.htm)



# The *Coordinator*

- The EU wants to speak to the project through a single point of contact, the *coordinator*
- It increases credibility if this person has some track record with EU projects
- the coordinator has to be a reliable and communicative person, and he or she should be comfortable dealing with formal procedures



# Good to know

- The EU's representatives will usually be very careful when answering (to say the least)
- Background: **they are liable with their two-year salary if they give wrong information which leads to financial damage.**
- Better to ask your *national EU office* which is usually very helpful and supportive! Or hire a consultant for very specific problems.



# PyPy got answer early 2004!

- The EU notified us that we got some 26.5 points out of 30 and were invited to negotiations in March 2004
- Apart from some technical clarifications they demanded large changes in our consortium
- No freelancers! No non-profit associations! (especially not ones without employees)



# Learning the hard way

- The EU only funds *actual costs*, and only 50% of such costs for companies (100% for universities)
- Individuals (such as freelancers) can take part but they only get their *indirect costs*, i.e. no work costs!
- So you need (to found) companies employing yourself or otherwise work through a university, (or possibly a foundation or association)
- Obviously the 50% rule can be a tough problem!



# A Company model

- you can found a company and employ yourself, ask your *chamber of commerce* to help!
- however, where to get the 40-50% co-financing?
- in our case some companies got a private loan with low interest that the companies have to pay back after the project ...
- maybe there are better solutions. But we also had time pressure so there was not enough time to further investigate or negotiate with the EU



# Compromising

- Changing the structure, founding companies and various other changes lead to a new *proposal* version and a modified *consortium* in August 2004
- on the 30th of November 2004 the European Commission finally signed the contract!
- Note btw, that before the signature there is no legal certainty whatsoever.
- “Hurry up to wait! Hurry up to wait!”
- no news is good news



# How does it go on now?

- PyPy's funding is for 2 years
- We will have to write reports and get *audit certificates* to prove that we spend the money correctly
- There is still formal work waiting for us ...
- especially getting sprint attendants (*individuals/physical persons*) a refund of their travel & accomodation costs



# PyPy Consortium

- AB Strakt  
Goetheborg
- HHU Düsseldorf
- Logilab Paris
- DFKI Saarbrücken
- Changemaker  
Goetheborg
- merlinux Hildesheim
- tismerysoft Berlin





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# Consortium Agreement

- It makes sense to sign a *consortium agreement* between the different organizations (partners are each liable with their full funding amount!)
- However, the EU *model consortium agreement* **does not fit** FOSS projects and their common culture
- Mainly the “IP Rights” and “Communication” Paragraphs are very unfitting (think of “closed and controlled”, patents and what not)
- By now there are *consortium models* from several GPL/BSD licensed projects, make use of them!



# Other lessons learned

- employ as much transparent communication as possible, it helps to prevent irritations that kind of naturally evolve when money is involved!
- Think about a lightweight and bottom-up management and decision model or do you really want top-down hierarchies?
- Reach out for help from national or regional institutions, and existing EU/FOSS projects!
- (Maybe we should try to setup a common FOSS/EU website?)

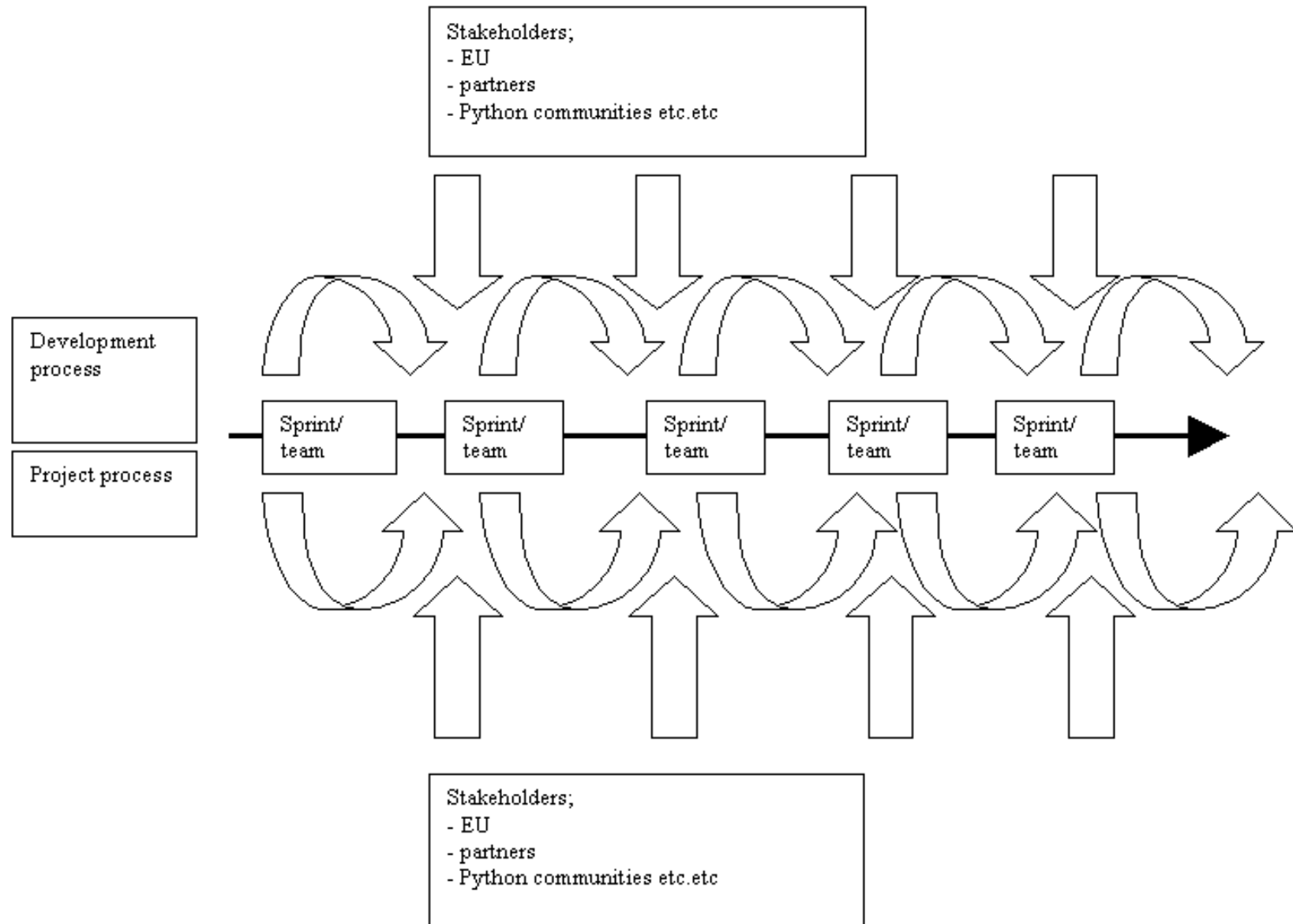


# PyPy's selling points

- These are guesses but the following cornerstones probably helped to get EU approval for PyPy
  - ambitious industry relevant technical and research goals
  - a true FOSS-project rooted in real communities (not just a license!)
  - Stressing relevance with respect to EU/US competition
  - technical experts seemingly able to do the job!
  - employing *agile development methods*



# Agile development method





# Closing notes

(Google) Search Keywords:

Framework Program 6 (**FP6**)

**Call**, Information Society Technology, **IST**,  
national EU office (in your language: e.g. **EU Büro**)  
**financial guidelines FP6**



# Questions please!

- Thanks for listening!

This talk is downloadable from

**<http://codespeak.net/~hpk/2004-pypy-eu.pdf>**

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