

Author	Gian Piero Zarri	Organisation	CNRS		
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EUFORBIA FIRST SIX MONTHS MEETING

(Pira International, Leatherhead, United Kingdom)

MINUTES

July 19th – 20th, 2001

Delegates:

Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, France: Gian Piero ZARRI;

AXON, Portugal: Fátima PIRES, Pedro ABREU;

PIRA International, United Kingdom: Don ALLEN, Andrew BRASHER, Emma BROOMBY (July 20th);

Department of Computer Science of the University of Milan, Italy: Elena FERRARI.
Andrea PEREGO.

Thursday, July 19th, 2001

The meeting opens at 2 pm at Pira International, Leatherhead. Don Allen and Andrew Brasher welcome the delegates.

After having emphasised the importance of the meeting, which represents the conclusive event of the first, preliminary phase of the project, Gian Piero Zarrì illustrates the main points of the administrative 'Six Months Reports' that is to be sent to the Commission. Work on Workpackage 1 (mainly, the creation of the user group) has been finished in time, and Deliverable D1 sent in time to the Commission. Similarly, the set up of the technical framework of the project (Workpackage 2, and Task 3.1 and 4.1) has progressed correctly. Only the definition of the architecture of the EUFORBIA prototype is partially late: this definition constitutes, in fact, the main technical topic to be discussed at the present meeting. Deliverables D2 (WP2) and D8 (T4.1) have been sent in time to the Commission. A first, quite definitive version of Deliverable D4 (T3.1) has circulated among the partners before the meeting; the 'official' version will be sent to the Commission end of July. Deliverable D3 (WP2, architecture) is late given that the definition of the architecture is late: an (at least) preliminary version could be delivered to the Commission beginning of August, or delayed until beginning of September. A first version of the official EUFORBIA site is in place at <http://semioweb.msh-paris.fr/euforbia>. From a financial point of view, it must be noted that, in the first six months of the project, partners have expended between 21 and 23% of their EC contribution (to be precise, CNRS has spent less than 20%) — this seems to be a healthy path. Partners have reported some problems in making use of the Excel tool supplied by the Commission for the preparation of the Cost Statements.

Each team presents then in turn the technical results they have obtained during the first six months of the project.

Mr Zarri (CNRS) recalls the main principles that will inspire the use of NKRL in EUFORBIA:

- An NKRL/EUFORBIA label will be associated with a whole Internet site;
- Only the information elements retrieved in the sites that correspond to a finite list of NKRL templates will be taken into account for the set up of the label; the list will be definitively 'closed' at the end of the project.
- A 'protocol of description' individuates three standard 'sections' within an EUFORBIA label: the 'aims' section, the 'important characteristics' section, the list of 'sub-sections' section.

To create the EUFORBIA/NKRL labels, it is necessary to introduce some modifications/additions with respect to the NKRL knowledge base used, e.g., in the CONCERTO project. Few modifications are foreseen with respect to the template hierarchy (H_TEMP); on the contrary, several new concepts proper to the 'controversial' sites environment must be introduced in the hierarchy of concepts (H_CLASS). In this domain, no 'ontology' having a sufficient degree of completeness seems to exist; according to Mr. Zarri, the use of the WordNet knowledge base can be very useful to set up the EUFORBIA hierarchy of concepts. The construction of an exhaustive ontology for the 'controversial sites' domain should constitute one of the main results of the project.

Fátima Pires and Pedro Abreu expose then the work executed at AXON during the first six months of the EUFORBIA project. Their main task has been mainly that of analysing the possibility of making use in EUFORBIA of the NKRL tools inherited from the CONCERTO project. Their suggestions in this respect can be summarised as follows:

- In the CONCERTO modules for constructing templates and occurrences, the routines for the construction of the NKRL hierarchy of concepts (H_CLASS) are actually embedded in the global code. These routines should be made independent, as it actually happens in the FUM (Filtering and Unification Module) and Inference Engine modules.
- Leave the module for the construction of templates practically 'as it is' at the moment, given that this module is used (at least in principle) only once (off-line) for each new application.
- Restructure completely the module for the construction of occurrences and annotations (EUFORBIA labels), introducing all sort of 'friendly' interfaces.
- Improve the FUM module adding the possibility to show to the user also the occurrences linked by a binding structure with the occurrence(s) retrieved as a reply to a user's query.

- Improve the generality of the Inference Engine module by executing several modifications like allowing an automatic selection of the rules, adding an interface for the creation of the rules, separating the graphical user interface from the inference engine's kernel, etc.

According to the Workplan, the new version of the occurrence/annotation module should be ready for the Official Review at the end of the present year. Fátima and Pedro emphasise that the new versions of the CONCERTO modules, even if neatly more 'friendly' than the previous one, should always address an 'expert' user, i.e., a user who knows something about the NKRL's theory.

Elena Ferrari and Andrea Perego present the work accomplished at the University of Milan. The UNIMI team has firstly carried out an assessment of the Milan model in the framework of its expected EUFORBIA usage, i.e., for formulating access control policies about sites and Web pages. In particular, the model allows one to express policies based on the use of both concepts and PICS labels. The UNIMI team has then worked on the extensions that must be introduced in this module to allow integration with the NKRL annotations. In particular, Elena and Andrea present an architecture for the Milan module component of the EUFORBIA prototype where the main filtering functions of their software reside on the Proxy server.

Don Allen recalls that PIRA International has contributed strongly to the creation of the EUFORBIA user group and to the selection of an experimental corpus. This work has enabled PIRA to initiate suggestions (as outlined in Deliverable D1, Section 4) into how the technology being developed could be used in a business context. In particular, PIRA has contacted over the 6-month period numerous publishers, government and international organisations like ICRA, and voluntary organisations. In addition, PIRA issued a press release to generate interest in the project. Some of the organisations, while extremely interested in the project, have requested the consortium contact them again further into the project when the consortium has tools to show them. Others have agreed to let the consortium use their content for tool development. One adult website UK publisher, WBP data, is particularly interested in the project and at a meeting with Pira in Essex on 5th April agreed to let the consortium use any of the content from their site and in addition have agreed to trial software once available. PIRA developed a specific website to aid the dissemination of the results and to give content owners and users a place to give their views. This site will be updated and promoted as the project progresses. PIRA also surveyed the opinions of workers who had used NKRL tools within the Concerto project. This survey resulted in the recommendations and designs presented in Section 2 of deliverable D2. Don expresses also the interest of PIRA in collaborating with the construction of the EUFORBIA ontology and in finding PIRA's personnel to execute materially this work.

After the presentations of the different teams, a discussion begins about the characteristics of the global architecture of the prototype. A 'tight' and a 'loose' solution are evoked. According to the first, only a filtering module must be set up, with the Milan model and NKRL filtering routines collaborating strictly, the first being, e.g. activated to

solve problems in an ICRA style, the second being used in the context of more complex situations. According to the 'loose' solution, on the contrary, two totally disjoint filtering modules have to be realised, the first working according to the Milan model approach, the second according to the NKRL approach.

The meeting is adjourned at 6h20 pm.

Friday, July 20th, 2001

The meeting resumes at 9h30 am. All the teams are represented, with Emma Broomby joining the PIRA team. The final discussion about the architecture is undertaken. Delegates agree about a solution that can be considered as a 'partially integrated' one, and which presents the following general characteristics:

- The module for constructing the EUFORBIA labels is common to the two approaches: the Milan model will make use of these labels to extract from them the concepts that are needed for its functioning.
- Two filtering modules will be set up, at least as a first solution. The two filtering modules will, however, collaborate making use of the same hierarchy of concepts, which correspond to the H_CLASS ontology of NKRL enriched with the concepts proper to the EUFORBIA domain.

This solution will be discussed again at the occasion of the work on task 5.1 ("Detailed Specification of the Final Architecture") and Deliverable D10; this last Deliverable is scheduled for the end of 2001.

Delegates debate then about some practical questions concerning the management of the project, like, e.g., the dates of delivering of D4 (NKRL, end of July) and D3 (architecture, possibly August, may be beginning of September). Delegates agree on the AXON proposal of having the 'Official Review' in Porto: the dates proposed, to be submitted to the project officer's agreement, are Thursday, December 6th, and Friday, December 7th, 2001.

The meeting ends at 1 p.m. of Friday.