



Ontotext
Semantic Technology Lab



The Success Story of Ontotext Lab of Sirma in FP5 and FP6

Mar 31, 2006; Sofia

What is Sirma?

- Established in **1992** as a Bulgarian-Canadian AI Lab.
- Currently it is a **group of diverse software businesses**:
 - Main offices in Sofia and Montreal;
 - **8 subsidiaries**; the most important ones follow below.
- **Sirma Group Corp**, R&D backbone of Sirma with two divisions:
 - **Sirma Solutions**: e-Business, banking, C3, consultancy;
 - **Ontotext Lab**: Knowledge and Language Engineering.
- **EngView Systems**: CAD/CAM systems and applications.
- **Top-3 software house** in Bulgaria, more than 100 employees;
- **1999 EIST** prize winner; **ISO 9001:2000** Certified;

Ontotext Lab

An R&D lab of Sirma for
Semantic (Web (Service)) Technologies

To put it at some more length:

**Research and core technology development related to
ontology management, semantic annotation, semantic WS**

Specialized for applications in

Semantic Web, KM, Business Intelligence, EAI

Aside from the scientific matters, most of us are just

professional software developers

Leading Semantic Web Technology Provider

Ontotext is a leading Semantic Web **technology provider**, being:

- the developer of the **KIM** Semantic Annotation Platform and
- the lead developer of the **wsmo4j** semantic web services API and the **WSMO Studio** service development environment;
- the developer of **OWLIM** – the fastest OWL semantic repository;
- a major co-developer of **GATE** language engineering platform;
- a major co-developer of **Sesame** semantic repository;

Ontotext in short:

- Professional software engineering
- Cutting edge KR and NLP expertise
- For “intelligent” databases, search and WS engines

Ontotext Facts

- Founded **year 2000**, part of Sirma Group.
- **15 employees** (permanent, without the shared personnel and associates, internships, etc.)
- Daily statistics for <http://www.ontotext.com>: 150 visits; **2000** hits
- Number of scientific publications: above **30**
- Number of projects running: **15**
- More than **20 partners** we directly cooperate with on projects
- Average age: about **27**
- Number of servers per developer: **0.9**

FP5/FP6 Background

- Took part in about **30 proposals**:
 - We were active contributors to about half of them
 - Got invited to the others, often in the “last minute”
- **4 projects in FP5**:
 - Two RTDs; a Strategic Roadmap; a Thematic Network
 - Rather diverse size of the projects and our participation
- **11 projects in FP6**:
 - 4 IPs, 6 STREPs, 1 SSA;
 - Total budget of the projects we participate in: 84 MEURO
 - For all the partners in the projects
 - This is about ½ of the EC funding for semantic technologies
- **Typical role**:
 - A technology provider, focusing on core technology and infrastructure
 - Taking implementation and integration tasks within the projects

Proposal Experience

- The successful proposals **start at least 3 months before submission**:
 - Have the essential idea already on paper
 - The core participants and responsibilities fixed
- **There should be a strong leader**:
 - Usually it is a university with a leading position in the field
 - The coordinating person should be a respectable senior researcher
- Good proposals are run as mini-projects:
 - they require **proper management and effort allocation**
 - The preparation can consume **3-4 man-months!**
 - Much more for IPs ... 6-12 man-months over half year
- There should be a “**proposal preparation meeting**”
 - We don't have a single successful proposal without a preparation meeting 1-2 months before submission
- **Above 50% of the well-written well-targeted proposals succeed**
 - Some times it is just not the right time or not the right consortium

Sample life cycle from FP5

- TOK was **our first FP5 project** – a very high-profile RTD project in FP5
- We **joined a running project**
 - IST-2001-VIII.1.6 “Enabling RTD cooperation with NAS”
- Met the coordinator at a scientific conference
 - Already had some research, publications and tools in the area
 - Went to the informal leader in the scientific community:
 - Hello Mr. X, my name is Y, I represent a software company Z from Bulgaria. We do this and that in areas A and B. Are you interested to discuss on a possible collaboration?
 - Yes, let’s meet for a coffee tomorrow 8:30 in hotel H

Sample life cycle from FP5 (II)

- TOK project start: **Dec 1999**
- Start thinking of proposal to join TOK: **Dec 2000**
- Proposal submission: **March 2001**
- Positive evaluation: **July 2001**
- Negotiations: **Aug 2001** (one vacation less)
- Contract signature: **22.Dec.2001**; Backdated to **1.Nov.2001**
- Project end: **Sept 2002**
- Final review: **Oct 2002**

Sample life cycle from FP5 (III)

- Number of business trips before the official start: **3-4**
- Financial schedule:
 - First cash in: **Feb 2003**
 - Getting the final contribution: **Jan 2004**
 - Time from conceive to first payment: **27 months**
 - Time from start of real work to first payment: **12 months**
 - Part of the delays were due to guarantee-related discussions
- **In FP6 it runs faster**, with less formal requirements

FP6 IP.1

- **Sent for:** IST-Call1
- **Type:** Integrated Project
- **Coordinator:** National University of Ireland, Galway
- **Partners:** 18
- **Start, Duration:** 1st of Jan 2004; 36 months
- **Total Budget:** 16.3 MEuro
- **Financing:** 10 MEuro

FP6 IP.2

- **Sent for:** IST-Call1
- **Type:** Integrated Project
- **Coordinator:** British Telecom, UK
- **Partners:** 12
- **Start, Duration:** 1st of Jan 2004; 36 months
- **Total Budget:** 12.5 MEuro
- **Financing:** 8.3 MEuro

FP6 IP.3

- **Sent for:** IST-Call1
- **Type:** Integrated Project
- **Coordinator:** INA, France
- **Partners:** 32
- **Start, Duration:** 1st of Feb 2004; 40 months
- **Total Budget:** 15.6 MEuro
- **Financing:** 9 MEuro

FP6 STREP.1

- **Sent for:** IST-Call2 (first sent to IST-Call1)
- **Type:** STREP
- **Coordinator:** University of App. Science Bochum, Germany
- **Partners:** 11
- **Start, Duration:** 1st of Jul 2004; 30 months
- **Total Budget:** 3.1 MEuro
- **Financing:** 1.9 MEuro

Consortium Agreements

- There are two important documents for a project:
 1. Contract between the consortium and EC
 2. Contract between the members of the consortium (**Consortium Agreement, CA**)
- CA can be different. Read them!!!
 - It is often that the coordinator takes one form somewhere and adapts it
 - They are often inconsistent ... the researchers tend to overrate their capability to understand a 30-page contract, discuss and aggregate changes from 10 partners within, say, 5-10 person days of effort

Consortium Agreement Contents

- **Distribution and management of IPR**, including
 - Access to pre-existing know-how, software, etc
 - Exploitation of the outcomes of the project
- **Financials**: the distribution of the EC contribution
 - Schema for pre-financing/advance payment
 - Retention funds
- **Project management**, conflict resolution:
 - “General assembly” (think of Parliament)
 - “Project management board” (PMB, think of government)
 - Other boards/committees (Technical, Exploitation, etc)

Consortium Agreement Variations

- Different schema for distribution of pre-financing:
 - IP.3 and STREP.1: getting directly our share of the advance payments (OSAP) – no retentions
 - IP.2: the coordinator keeps a retention fund of 15% of the first advance payment (you get 85% of OSAP)
 - IP.1: each six months we get 1/3 of OSAP ... if we had submitted on time and in good shape our deliverables
- Pre-financing is not important for most of the academic partners, but could be critical for SMEs:
 - Projects are usually coordinated by Academic partners
 - The SMEs should know and defend their interests, because the others usually do not care

Conclusion

- FPx program projects fund many of the leading research groups in Europe (in some fields)
- The most important benefits:
 - The funding, of course
 - Making good partners: leading research centers and industry players (e.g. HP, SAP, IBM, Software AG, Capgemini, British Telecom, IBM, BBC, RAI,...)
 - You are forced to cooperate and know each other's work
 - Maintain top-class expertise in the field
 - Get liquid IPR, e.g. tools, which are already recognized by a critical mass of big players in the field

Ontotext Lab

Robust Technology for
Knowledge and Language Engineering

... supported by FP5 and FP6!

<http://www.ontotext.com>