Workshop on 'Standardisation Management'

Kai Jakobs

RWTH Aachen University
ComSys
Ahornstr. 55; 52074 Aachen
Germany
kai.jakobs@cs.rwth-aachen.de

The workshop programme comprised only three presentations; the fourth had to be cancelled. However, this turned out to be almost a good thing since the participants easily managed to fill the time with the presentation and discussion of the remaining papers.

The papers covered very different aspects of the fairly broad field of standardisation management. The topics addressed included the management of the standardisation process, corporate standardisation strategies, the desired qualifications of individuals to be hired for standards-related activities, and a case of bi-lateral co-operation for the standardisation of an evolving technology.

The discussion of the first paper focussed on the value of the individual characteristics of the presented new model of a standardisation process, and its practical applicability. The proposed model has a much broader scope than just 'pure' standards setting. It also captures pre- and post-standardisation activities like e.g. the implementation of standards. As in this model the stakeholders are likely to change between the different process phases the transfer of knowledge is particularly important, In this context, the nature and practical implementability of the proposed 'key knowledge sharing points' was discussed.

The discussion also highlighted the allegedly inadequate feedback loops provided in today's standardisation processes, and the perceived slowness of the process. A 'benevolent dictator' was suggested by one participant to replace the consensus-based process typically deployed by SDOs in order to speed-up the process.

The second paper discussed the behaviour in standards setting to be expected from different types of organisations (based on the typology introduced by Miles & Snow). Here, the term standardisation is used in a slightly different sense, resembling more a 'dominant design' or 'market leadership' than standardisation by committee. During the discussion it turned out that a very similar classification of participants in committee standardisation exists, originally introduced by A. Updegrove. How the different types of organisations would act in standards committees and whether or not the two typologies can be mapped onto each other was identified an interesting topic for further research.

The final paper looked at firms' requirements on 'standards engineers'. The discussion highlighted the lack of adequate education for such jobs; an issue that is increasingly recognised. However, remedies in the form of dedicated university courses are not really visible (with some notable exceptions). Most courses addressing standardisation focus on the application of individual standards; the soft skills necessary for successful active participation in standards working groups (like e.g. diplomacy, rhetoric, negotiation skills) are rarely conveyed in tertiary education.