



Europe helps set global standards

As Grid Technology achieves more and more popular use, the benefit to consumers at all levels will be great, but the implementation of universal standards is key. The EC-funded OGF-Europe (Open Grid Forum) project will ensure Europe has a major role in the new IT landscape

A **tipping point** is approaching in our knowledge-based economy. Computer Grid Technology, which allows the construction of virtual supercomputers by linking up under-used desktop machines, has expanded beyond its traditional realm of scientific research.

Now used in many other areas from business to industry to government organisations, the potential is huge, but uptake will depend on the implementation of global standards.

The Open Grid Forum, a global Standards Development Organisation (SDO), has launched a

scientific applications with investments from FP6 and 7. The EC-funded project, OGF-Europe, comes at a crucial time, aiming to capitalise on these investments in Grid by focusing on issues that are important in Europe and ensuring that Europe plays a leadership role in the new IT landscape and standardisation.

Silvana Muscella, Director of Trust-IT Services Ltd, technical co-ordinator of OGF-Europe, says: "Learning from key lessons of OGF, the project strategy aims to ensure that EU business and scientific research communities become more familiar with the benefits of Grid and the need for open standards within the framework of a more open, competitive market and Europe's vision of a knowledge society".

The project will focus on market and research requirements and real challenges, building a consensus between different players and matching the needs of end-users with the development of standards and best practices.

Interoperability

OGF-Europe will support the OGF mission, placing strong emphasis on the concepts of Open Forum and Open Standards, bringing together IT players from across diverse verticals and domains.

The aim is to pinpoint and align requirements, supporting broadly adopted industry standards alongside the development of new specifications to enable Grid software interoperability.

These goals are paramount for the pervasive adoption of Grid and ensures that organizations can connect with each other because their middleware speaks the same language.

The project is designed to accelerate standards development and adoption through clearly defined mechanisms, such as surveys on trends and practices, reports on adoption challenges and best practices and a Technical Strategy and Roadmap.

The new IT landscape is challenging organisations to develop processes and services facilitating the flow of information, and challenging individuals

new EC-funded European arm, OGF-Europe, which will put EU issues and priorities in the spotlight and align EU issues with the overall strategy of the OGF, which is dedicated to developing open standards for Grid interoperability.

The new IT landscape is challenging organisations to develop processes and services facilitating the flow of information, and challenging individuals to collaborate across departments, organisations and disciplines.

Grid technology enables organisations to offer new and more flexible ways of procuring, deploying and using IT services bringing market edge and new business opportunities through dynamic short-term collaborations or integration into a new supply chain, as well as significantly speeding up scientific research on top-priority issues.

The EC has given considerable support to the development of Grid technologies for business and

Roadmap

The roadmap will focus on EU perspectives and outcomes, feature use studies, business models and benefits for a range of stakeholders, helping to steer global strategies in the right direction. The surveys will bring to the fore the main standardisation pain points with the aim of driving forward future Grid development and deployment.

These surveys will convey the impact of implementing open standards in EU business and research communities and gauge the level of interest in engaging with specific standards.

Open standards

The emergence of a competitive, commodity ICT marketplace has its roots in open systems, component specifications that are in the public domain and therefore available for all manufacturers to exploit.

Rather than diminishing the ability of leading companies to differentiate based on performance, this has led to the ratcheting up of performance

and research along with partnerships established by EC-funded Grid projects focusing on diverse domains and vertical markets, data-centric scientific research and interdisciplinary approaches.

Large-scale events in Europe will showcase real-world applications, present advances in Grid infrastructure technologies and promote best practices. OGF23 is the project's first international event and takes place June 2-6, 2008 in Barcelona.

This and similar events will be led by experts at the forefront of Grid technology offering insight into key issues. One of the many priority issues will be 'data-centric science' and particular reference will be given to combining, managing and moving data.

Grid-enabled service-oriented architectures add a new dimension to the Internet, facilitating its transformation from an information utility to a knowledge utility.

Over the next decade such architectures will be a key enabler of the knowledge economy in Europe. Major investments in the knowledge society will help generate a vibrant Grid computing sector in Europe.

With much of the ground work in place, the key questions are how best to capitalise on these new opportunities by enabling technology transfer and fostering broad uptake of Grids and related distributed systems technologies like virtualisation, automation and service orientation across a broad spectrum of scientific domains and vertical markets.

Community outreach seminars

OGF-Europe Community Outreach Seminars aim to increase the momentum of early adoption and accelerate uptake by enterprises. These events will highlight the business value of Grids and meet business players on their own turf, an important early lesson learnt by OGF.

Webinars will further support these goals, which will be complemented by a series of in-depth tutorials led by a team of experts and designed to enable managers and technical staff to enhance know-how for more effective IT infrastructures.

The overall impact will be well-defined global standards, connecting a wide range of organisations across Europe, and illustrating the importance of standards for interoperability to generate innovation and complement products and services in keeping with the role of OGF, which serves as a global forum where the Grid community can come together to identify common requirements, develop best practices, and share use cases.

OGF specifications are adopted and productised by software providers, referenced by other SDOs working on complementary standards and implemented by end users deploying Grids through the software products they use. ★

Grid-enabled architectures add a new dimension to the Internet, facilitating its transformation from an information to a knowledge utility

levels as companies attempt to leapfrog each other to gain market leadership.

The customer has gained significantly through choice, price and performance. This process becomes paramount in a shared infrastructure and can be facilitated and accelerated by open standards. Thus the prevailing need for Grid adoption is intimately bound up with the implementation of open standards.

Pervasive adoption is simply not feasible unless Grids are based on globally accepted, interoperable software standards. The project will address key issues and barriers inhibiting the flow of information and the increasing need for interoperability as adoption increases.

"With standards in place, organisations would be well placed to quickly and inexpensively connect Grids both within and across organisations. Software standards also create a more level playing field for start-ups and regional solution providers while helping to generate a healthy ecosystem of products and services", says Muscella.

The ability of standards bodies to align with market requirements is key to accelerating the adoption of new capabilities like Grids.

OGF-Europe events

OGF-Europe events will gather actors from enterprise