



Pascal Aubry, University of Rennes 1, France

Title: ESUP-Portail: uPortal-based software and community

Abstract:

History

The ESUP-Portail consortium was born in 2002 under the impulse of the French Ministry of Education. Four projects were launched with the goal of providing a complete portal solution for the French Universities. Among those four projects, ESUP-Portail was the only one with no industrial partner, based on open-source only. Five universities (Valenciennes, Nancy 1, Nancy 2, Rennes 1 and ENSEEIHT) developed and tested the first production base in 2003/2004. Next, a dozen of volunteer deployment sites put it under production in 2004/2005. The ESUP-Portail solution is now used by 80 establishments, and by 9 regional universities (out of 11), for about 600,000 users.

Organization issues

The organization of such a large community is very difficult, especially because non government funds are given any more, even to the leaders of the project, which still spend an important time to maintain the community and make it live. ESUP-Portail recently became a legal entity. This formal structure, with a new economical model based on memberships, will help in continuing the project and federate development efforts. A functional coordination, made up of members of the five original development sites, take decisions about the main directions of the project and organize the meetings of our community (2 meetings each year) and the trainings. A technical coordination, also made up of members of the five original development sites, regularly meet and take decisions about the technical aspects of the project. In particular, it manages the distribution of all the sub-projects of the consortium, of which the organization is copied from the Apache Software Foundation (with an incubator).

Technical directions

The ESUP-Portail software suite is based on uPortal - developed by the JASIG consortium - which received the Educause Catalyst Award in 2007. Domain applications used to be distributed as uPortal channels, they are now proposed as portlets to comply to JSR-168 standards. In order to homogenize all the developments of the consortium, the technical coordination recently evaluated the available development frameworks and technologies, and emitted recommendations concerning the development of new projects. Trainings are organized for developers on esup-commons, a new development framework based on Hibernate/Ibatis, Spring and JSF.

Biography: Pascal Aubry played with real-time systems at ECP until 1993. In the succeeding years, he worked at IRISA on the distribution of synchronous programs and received his Ph.D. in Computer Science in 1997. He has been part of the ESUP-Portail project since its beginning in late 2002, working on web security (SSO, authorizations), data storage and domain applications. Currently at the University of Rennes 1, he manages web-projects. The last one - esup-commons - allows the French universities to use a single framework to develop their applications.