

AgentLink Management Committee Meeting

Czech Technical University

Monday 9 July 2001 ~ 18:00 – 20:30

MINUTES

Present:

Michael Luck	[MML] Chair - general coordinator
Elizabeth Coulter-Smith	[ECS]
Paul Davidsson	[PD]
Yves Demazeau	[YD]
Frank Dignum	[FD]
Matthias Klusch	[MK]
Scott Moss	[SM]
Chris Preist	[CP]
Volker Roth	[VR]
Carles Sierra	[CS]
Eileen Simon	[ESS]
Franco Zambonelli	[FZ]

Apologies Received:

Magnus Boman	[MB]
Nick Jennings	[NJ]
Joerg Mueller	[JM]
John Perram	[JP]
Wiebe van der Hoek	[WvdH]
Michael Wooldridge	[MW]

1. Welcome [MML]

MML welcomed everyone to the third meeting of AgentLink II

2. Status of AgentLink II [MML]

- **Membership:** MML reported that AgentLink now has 128 members, exceeding the number in the original proposal. We have received quite a few enquiries from Industry recently, which looks promising for the future.
- **Finances:** MML distributed a summary of the current financial state of AL2, which showed a breakdown of the actual expenditure, projected expenditure, annual budget, and the anticipated balance at the end of the year. The projected expenditure for Years 2 and 3 were also attached, showing an anticipated deficit in the travel category.

3. Membership Applications [MML/ESS]

- **Criteria:** Following a query from SM, the meeting agreed that continued participation in AgentLink meetings could be used as evidence of activity in agent based computing for the purposes of membership.
- **Applications:** have been received from 15 institutions, (eight from industry), from 1 May 2001 to date.
- **Agreements** have been received from 18 institutions, (eight from industry), from 1 May 2001 to date.

4. Workshop Requests for support/sponsorship

- **CEEMAS 2001:** The meeting agreed that it was important to support developing activity in

the Newly Associated States, and that the request for 4K Euro support should be granted; this will be 2K towards organization costs and 2K for Researcher travel support.

- **AAMAS 2002:** The meeting agreed that at least 4K Euro support would be granted; this would be at least 3K for student sponsorship, and up to 1K possibly for student awards or for local organization subject to providing AgentLink special visibility. The meeting recognized that it was probable that more requests for affiliated workshops would be received in time, and was minded to provide more to fund these as funds permitted.
- **North American Agent School:** In response to the success of the AgentLink summer schools, the US community is seeking to do something similar. MML received a request for funding from Milind Tambe to support students to attend a proposed winter school in California in January 2002. Because of the low budget available for support (largely already committed), and because of the annual European event, it was not possible for the committee to provide support at this time. However, the committee agreed to closely coordinate such educational activities with the US organisers, and to provide mutual support whenever possible. If the financial situation changed (possibly in relation to the education budget) it might be possible to consider some support later.

5. Databases and Repositories [MML/ECS]

MML reminded the committee that the various databases were available on the website, but needed more data to be added.

- The committee was asked to provide information relating to available software, particularly educational software, for the web site. If the URL address was sent to ECS (ecs2@ecs.soton.ac.uk), she would add it to the web site.
- A request for more publications to be added to the publications clearinghouse was made.
- More feedback is also needed from members in relation to information to include on the site for the benefit of the members and the community.

6. Technological Roadmap [MML]

MML reported that Christine Guilfoyle, who wrote the influential Ovum report on agents in 1994, had been engaged to develop the Technological Roadmap for AgentLink. The first outline draft of the Roadmap was distributed as a basis for discussion, despite still needing much work. The committee was asked to update the content and to respond to MML within two weeks (**23 July**) to provide feedback to Christine to enable a first draft to be made available to members for comment in a short period of time. It was hoped that it might be possible to provide a draft for comment by members in the Autumn. A two-tiered approach was proposed:

- A professionally produced brochure would be developed for use by policy-makers, R&D strategists, IT Directors and professionals. This will largely be developed by consultants with material provided by SIGs, research conferences, and other input from AgentLink.
- A more substantial version with more research and technical content, directed at the research community, would be produced as a book, or as a special journal issue. This would provide more scope for concentration on detailed technical and research issues that might not be relevant to the more strategic version.

7. Summer School [MML/WvdH]

- **EASSS'01:** MML reported that the Summer School seemed to be progressing well, with around 180 participants.
- **EASSS'02:** The 4th European Agent Systems Summer School will be held in 2002 in Bologna, Italy for one week, immediately prior to the AAMAS Conference. MML reported on discussions earlier in the week with MJW and WvdH. The local organiser will be Paolo Ciancarini, at the University of Bologna, with some coordination assistance from Andrea Omicini and Franco Zambonelli. MML and WvdH to seek suggestions for courses and lecturers.

8. SIGs [MML/MK]

- **Review of current organisation of SIG meetings:** The current organisation of SIG meetings was discussed. Some concerns were raised about the timing of sessions and continuity, but generally it seemed to work well. MML and ESS would try to ensure that continuity of sessions would be sought for those who wanted it, provided that SIG coordinators communicated requirements, etc in good time to allow this.
- **SIGs update**
 - **Current SIGs:** Five of the six SIGs were active and were operating well. The meeting agreed to suspend the Coordination and Control SIG for the present, but recognized that there was genuine interest in it. MML to explore the possibilities for its reinvigoration.
 - **Learning SIG:** A proposal for an inter-network Learning and Agents SIG was received from Pete Edwards and Daniel Kudenko (among others). It was agreed that this would be a good activity to pursue as it cut across all existing SIGs, and would tie in with other networks. The committee agreed that Pete Edwards (and Daniel Kudenko), as coordinator, should pursue discussions with other networks such as EUNITE, ILPNet, and others, and work with MML on setting something up.

7. AgentLink Review Meeting [MML]

The Report from the Review Meeting in February had been received, and MML gave a précis of the report, outlining the responses to the key points and recommendations of the reviewers. AgentLink is currently meeting most of the recommendations given by the reviewers.

- **Management Committee representation:** The concern from the reviewers relating to the proportionate representation from the different constituents of AgentLink II was partly incorrect, probably due to the misrepresentation of MML. With the addition of CP, the committee now stood at 3 industrials (Jörg Müller, Siemens; Chris Preist, HP Labs; Nick Jennings, Lost Wax) 4 research institutes (Carles Sierra, IIIA-CSIC, Magnus Boman, SICS; Volker Roth, Fraunhofer IGD; Matthias Klusch, DFKI) and 8 academics.
- **Industrial events:** MML reported on his participation at the FIPA meeting in London in April, and on AgentLink representation at future FIPA meetings (see later). More generally, however, he described great difficulty in finding relevant and appropriate industrial events, having spent much time trying to identify them, and sought suggestions from the committee. It was recognized that this was not an easy task, and that it was important to find useful events rather than any industrial event that would provide a useful contribution. The committee felt that industrial events were important, but could not and should not be pursued regardless of the value they might bring. MML reported that he was to have a meeting with EVUS, the PR company that organized the Lost Wax conference in January to see what other events might be possible in the future.
- **Agent systems and technology database:** In order to find a means for dissemination of the database among software houses, two possibilities were considered. A glossy flier might be developed with key software products and pointers to the full online database. CP also suggested the possibility of involving one of the AgentLink industrial members on a consultancy basis to develop a review of products for wider dissemination. MML to explore both possibilities. (MML also reminded the committee that the content of such databases relied on all members providing input.)
- **Standardisation:** MML reported on his participation at FIPA's London meeting and discussions on how to establish stronger links. Regular reports from those involved in FIPA and AgentLink were already underway, and efforts were in hand to formalize the relationship. See later item.
- **Relationship between WP2 and WP4:** It was agreed that the key activity of the research workpackage in sponsoring events would involve more specific targeting of feedback for contribution to the roadmap. A questionnaire would be developed by YD and MML for event organizers to prompt for research inputs to the roadmap and relevant SIGs where appropriate.
- **Summer Schools:** The Summer Schools were on target for 4 events during AgentLink II

without funding difficulty. Nevertheless, MML had tried to explore possibilities for interaction with NAS states in order to secure more funding. MML to continue discussions, even though the summer schools did not depend on it.

- **Curricula database and software:** The curricula database now provides a link to an extensive list of educational software, thanks to the efforts of ECS.
- **Cancellation of inactive SIGs:** As discussed earlier, the MACC SIG would be suspended and either replaced or re-established. MML to explore possibilities.
- **Roadmapping:** Work is already underway on the roadmap, as discussed above. The AgentLink strategy is for inputs to be provided by SIGs and sponsored research activities to Christine Guilfoyle for inclusion in the roadmap. Some discussion took place regarding the targeting of the roadmap, and it was agreed that it should be developed for a professional audience. A draft is planned for the Autumn, to feed back to members for comment. A second version will be produced for the end of Year 2, to be designed and professionally printed for distribution among the IT community. SIG coordinators were reminded that they must provide inputs to the roadmap in a timely fashion. MML and CP to develop further plans.
- **Industry and academia in SIGs:** SIG meetings are already being used to identify requirements from industry and feed them back to the academic community, as demonstrated by the plenary industrial-academia day in Amsterdam and eg the industrial session of the AMEC SIG. It was suggested that this can be enhanced by polling industrial members to elicit problem topics, areas of interest and requirements. YD has some experience of this. Additionally, the web pages can be updated to make explicit the relationship between SIGs and industry requirements.
- **Newsletter dissemination:** More newsletters for the latest issue of AgentLink News have been printed and the distribution list is being continually expanded. AgentLink members are encouraged to provide further names for the list.
- **Yardsticks:** MML has already started collating information relating to the yardsticks that were identified in the Technical Annex for measuring performance of AgentLink. However, some of the yardsticks (as recognized in the Annex) are difficult to determine, such as number of proposals resulting. MML has begun polling members for information, and is maintaining these statistics as best possible. He requested that MC members complete the questionnaires distributed as soon as possible. Qualitative success factors are also difficult to identify. MML requested the committee consider this and respond with ideas and comments.
- **Industrial events report:** MML has already begun to prepare a report on the Lost Wax conference (and other industrial events), but noted that it was not possible to provide a list of participants due to the commercial and confidential nature of such a list. The report would be made available on the web site in due course.
- **Supported conferences report:** MML would complete a report on supported conferences to be made available on the web site.
- **EASSS'01 report:** MML would complete a report on EASSS'01.

The next review will be held in Bologna on 14 September 2001. It was recognized that some committee members would not be able to participate, but MML sought to ensure a broad representation from the SIGs and the workpackages.

9. FIPA Interaction [MML]

As part of the Industrial Action workpackage, MML attended a FIPA meeting earlier this year, where he began preliminary discussions on AgentLink-FIPA interaction. He has since proposed to FIPA that AgentLink sponsors a participant for their European workshops, and that FIPA provide regular articles for AgentLink News from their Image Committee. No reply has been received as yet.

10. Any Other business [MK]

MK announced that Sonia Bergamaschi would become co-coordinator of I2A (Intelligent Information Agents), and the committee welcomed her involvement.

11. Date and location of next meeting [MML]

The next meeting would be held during January/February 2002, venue to be sought; suggestions included co-locating with OnToWeb or AgentCities meetings, or possibly locating at HP in the UK, or Paris, Portugal or Spain.