

Euformatics is constructing a bridge between bio and software experts

Euformatics Oy of Espoo, Finland, is an ICT company based on strong IT and biological competence. It offers consulting services and develops software tools for the management of research data and for computational biology. Its long-term objective is promoting data transfer between researchers and companies.

University lecturer **Christophe Roos**, the Managing Director of Euformatics Oy, starts a presentation about Euformatics Oy – a company established a little less than a year ago – by talking about its predecessor, or what was learned from the predecessor company.

“We developed a multi element software entity sold as a package for data management and data analysis purposes. However, there were no potential users for the package. Even though our development work was extensive, the product only responded to some needs,” Roos says.

“There was a far-sighted external financier, and thus we were able to focus on development without constantly worrying about sales – which was good in itself but caused us to become estranged from our markets. We should have listened more carefully to the messages from the field.”

Most of the competence offered by this experience is now available to Euformatics: four of the company’s five partners were also involved in the previous company.

Work on two fronts

According to Roos, Euformatics is founded on the same basic idea as the previous company: measuring systems used in biological and medical studies are quickly developing and the quantity of data to be processed keeps on growing, which means that the data is more and more difficult to process without any IT knowledge and good competence in mathematics and statistics. The data also offers whole new

opportunities for further processing the data and for knowledge building.



“Companies like us absolutely need to cooperate with academic researchers,” says Christophe Roos.

Software to meet these needs is being developed, but the competencies do not quite meet, according to Roos. “In our opinion, people building bridges between software and bio experts are needed, at least until experts in computational biology start to graduate from new training programmes.”

At present, Euformatics is proceeding on two different fronts: it offers consulting services and also does software development.

The consulting services have been offered to EU research projects and companies. The services consist of customising solutions for the management of patient data or data concerning laboratory animals as well as solutions for transferring data from measuring devices to data management systems.

“The consulting offers us cash flow financing, which we will primarily use in our business. It also offers us concrete contact with the field and its needs – and an opportunity to show what we can do,” Roos says.

At present, the company is developing three software products. One of them is about processing different types of molecular biology measuring data. The second is about management of gene expression data representing the way genes work and statistical analysis, and the third is about constructing logical models for simulating gene and signalling networks.

“The products are currently about 60% complete. We are currently searching for test customers with whom we will develop the final products responding to the actual needs.”

Challenging data transfer

In software development, the ideal situation for Christophe Roos would be one where the interaction between academic research and ICT companies was even better than now.

“Companies like us absolutely need to cooperate with academic researchers, because they can provide excellent ideas that allow companies to test their products. There is also major public sector demand for cooperation and data transfer because software developed by researchers is rarely a finalised product. Researchers do not focus on commercialisation; it’s a more natural task for companies in the field,” Roos explains.

His longer-term objectives include developing a platform for purchasing and selling or a marketplace where researchers developing software, software users and companies could meet to establish joint development projects.

“However, the market cannot be functional if the ideas of researchers are simply transferred to companies that can make business with them. There must be a forum for discussing the division of potential profits even if the path from an idea to a ready-made product is long. Mutual respect can be created only if the researchers feel that they benefit from the cooperation as much as the companies. Examples of successful cooperation are also needed: they will assist others in making their ideas concrete and applying them to benefit society in general.”

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Photo: Euformatics Oy*