Exception-Based Management of Timing Constraints Violations for Soft Real-Time Applications ¹

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30, June 2009

¹This work has been supported in part by the EU Commission within the context of the IRMOS FP7/2008/ICT/214777 European Project. **E FOR EVALUATION**

T. Cucinotta, D. Faggioli ReTiS Lab, Scuola Superiore Sant'Ani Exception-Based Management of Timing Constraints Violations f

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- hardware is optimized for average performance,
- execution times may heavily vary between jobs.
- knowledge of detailed timing of applications is limited,

Some timing constraints violations should be expected, thus something is needed:

- to specify timing constraints inside the application,
- to help developers in design and timing overrun handling.

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- *deadline constraints*, whenever a software component needs to complete within a certain (wall-clock) time,
- *WCET constraints*, whenever a software component needs to not exceed an predetermined execution time.

Exception-based management approach:

- mechanism similar to exception management in C++, Java or Ada,
- available for the C language (widely used in embedded systems):
 - implemented by macros, i.e., no compiler modification needed,
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Existing –programming language level– solutions:

- *RTSJ*: specialized exceptions to deal with timing specification and enforcement,
- ADA 2005: Asynchronous Transfer of Control, usable in case of deadline and/or WCET violations,
- *RTC*: introduces new syntactic "real-time constructs" into C, but requires non-standard/non-existent compiler.

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Component based multimedia application.

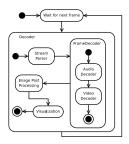
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(Sub)Components may came from libraries and/or third party software packages.

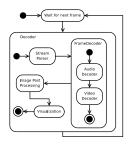
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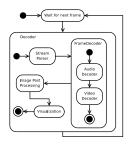
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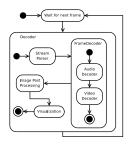


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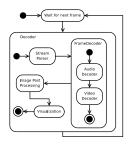


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- deadline indication and enforcement for each (sub)component.
- WCET enforcement for each (sub)component:

 $WCET_{Prsr} + WCET_{FrmDec} + WCET_{PostProc} + WCET_{Vis} = WCET_{Decoder}$

- support relative and absolute deadline constraint;
- support WCET constraint;
- support generic (timing) or specific recovery logic triggering on violation of those two;
- support both processes and threads;
- support nesting of timing constraints;
- support benchmarking timing behavior of components;
- support being "switched off" for some code segments.

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Open Macro Library (author's former project, http://oml.sourceforge.net):

- try: code segment subject to exception management; when: code segment executed in reaction to an -the first matching- exception;
- handle...end: code segments for one or more when clauses;
 - finally: code segment executed after the try, either any
 exception fired or not;

Implemented by means of:

- macros only, i.e., works with standard compilers (gcc);
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```
define_exception (ENotReady) extends (EException);
void foo()
  if (cond)
    throw (ENotReady);
void bar()
  try { /* Potentially faulty code segment */
    f();
  } finally { /* Clean-up code */
  handle
    when (ENotReady) { /* Handle the ENotReady exception */
    when (EException) { /* Handle any other exception */
  end:
```

- try_within: code segment with relative deadline constraint;
- try_within_abs: code segment with absolute deadline constraint; try_wcet: code segment with maximum allowed execution time (WCET);
- ETimingConstraintViolation: basic type for timing constraint exceptions;
- EDeadlineViolation: occurring if try_within or try_within_abs segment do not make their deadlines;
- EWCETViolation: occurring if try_wcet executes more than how it specified.

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#include <oml_exceptions.h>
void Decoder {
  next_dl = now;
  for (;;) {
    next_dl = next_dl + period;
    try_within_abs(next_dl) {
      StreamParser();
      if (FrameDecoder() == 0)
        ImagePostProcessing ();
      Visualization ();
    handle
      when (EDeadlineViolation) {
        /* e.g., re-use last decoded frame */
    end ;
```

```
int FrameDecoder()
  int rv = 0; /* Normal return code */
  try_wcet(12000) {
    DecodeAudioFrame();
    DecodeVideoFrame ();
  handle
    when (EWCETViolation) {
      /* Notify caller of incomplete decoding */
     rv = -1:
    }
  end;
  return rv;
```

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Something About Implementation

Implementation for POSIX standard systems:

- sigsetjmp() and siglongjmp() for the base mechanism of exceptions;
- interval timers (itimers) with:
 - CLOCK_MONOTONIC non decreasing time reference- for deadline enforcement;
 - CLOCK_THREAD_CPUTIME_ID -thread execution time reference— for wcet enforcement.
- real-time signal delivery to "faulting threads" on timer firing:
 - signals can be temporary blocked, but no delivery is lost;
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Implementation is portable to any really OS providing support for POSIX real-time extensions.

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- interval timers (itimers) with:
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 - CLOCK_THREAD_CPUTIME_ID –thread execution time reference— for wcet enforcement.
- real-time signal delivery to "faulting threads" on timer firing:
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Violation-Notification Precision and Latency

Maximum achievable precision is subject to time-keeping precision of the underlying OS. On Linux (at least since 2.6.21 kernels) we

have:

- hrtimers for CLOCK_MONOTONIC based itimers
- accounting based for CLOCK_THREAD_CPUTIME_ID based itimers.

Which means:

hrtimer based timers resolution is:

- not related to periodic tick frequency;
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• each periodic tick (every 10, 4 or 1 *msec*);

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Direct signal delivery to a *specific* thread is not covered by POSIX:

- signals reach a whole process,
- they may be delivered to anyone of the threads that does not block it,
- *impossible* to know in advance which thread will receive and handle it.

Two solutions are possible:

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POSIX recommended mechanism:

creating a special handling thread at each signal delivery.

Advantages:

• standard compliance, i.e. portability.

Drawbacks:

- constraint violations are delayed by thread creation latency;
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Advantages:

• time between violation and notification is as tight as possible. Drawbacks:

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Results gathered from preliminary implementation on Linux:

- common desktop PC: 3.0 GHz Intel CPU, 2 GB RAM, hand-tailored 2.6.28 Linux kernel;
- one task implemented by a Linux thread running 1000 instances;
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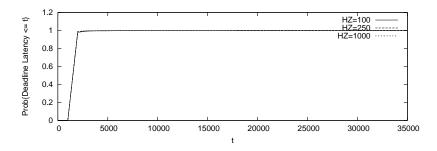
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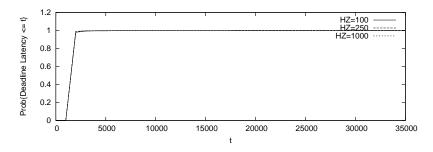
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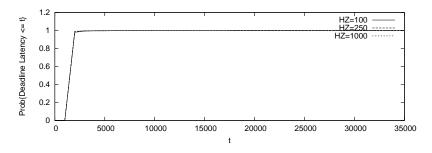
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T. Cucinotta, D. Faggioli ReTiS Lab, Scuola Superiore Sant'Ant Exception-Based Management of Timing Constraints Violations f

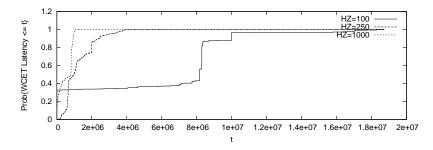
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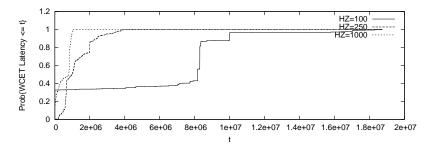
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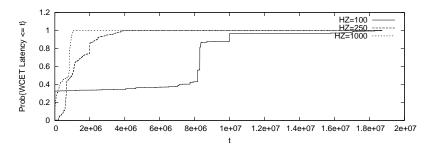
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HZ=250	4423164	1233955.255	844593.486
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- WCET latency is much more bigger (0.5 ms over 50 ms);
- WCET latency is very dependent on tick frequency.

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Developers can thus focus on the main application flow: timing violation are catched dynamically by the framework.

Preliminary implementation of the framework on Linux.

Conclusions:

- dealing with timing violation as exceptions is viable an effective approach;
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- investigate on combined user-kernel mechanism to further lower the introduced latency, especially for the WCET case (on Linux);
- thoroughly compare the POSIX variant of the framework implementation with the Linux-specific one (on Linux!);
- test the performance of the POSIX variant of the framework on OSes different than Linux;
- realize thorough performance comparison between our framework and the existing ones in RTSJ and Ada 2005.

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Thank You for Your Time...

Questions?

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