

2 / Positioning and strategic activities

2.1 Positioning of Eureka, the ECP and ITEA

Eureka is the world's biggest public network for international cooperation on RD&I and innovation, present in over 45 countries. Eureka aims to boost the competitiveness and innovation capacity of Eureka countries and industries via international collaboration in funded projects.

Eureka has different instruments to foster innovation, including the Eureka Clusters Programme (ECP). These instruments are funded by national Public Authorities. Eureka therefore means more dialogue between industry and Public Authorities, and this dialogue enables new projects to be funded and new instruments to be developed based on the national priorities defined by Public Authorities and the urgent needs of industry.

The ECP consists of industry-driven and bottom-up RD&I programmes with thematic communities of experts. The ECP enables Eureka to be proactive, faster and more flexible and to also address new and emerging areas and cross-cutting themes for RD&I collaboration which complements the themes addressed by the Eureka Clusters.

ITEA is the Eureka RD&I Cluster on software innovation, enabling a strong international community of large industry, SMEs, start-ups, academia and customer organisations to collaborate in funded projects that turn innovative ideas into new businesses, jobs, economic growth and benefits for society. This is industry-driven and covers a wide range of business opportunities facilitated by digitisation, such as smart mobility, healthcare, smart cities, energy, manufacturing, engineering and safety & security. ITEA pushes important technology fields like artificial intelligence, big data, simulation and high-performance computing into concrete business applications.

2.1.1 Complementarity in the European RD&I funding landscape

In many countries, there are national programmes that help to establish critical mass and differentiation for developing organisations and support national champions that meet the RD&I strategies and plans of the country. In national programmes, the project consortia (mainly consisting of organisations from only one country) are restricted to the available national RD&I resources and capabilities. But many projects need an international scope and market to realise the full potential of their ambitions. Eureka and the Eureka Clusters Programme, including ITEA, offer such an international scope and market.

At the European level, there are strategic programmes based on agreed priorities that provide support for early collaborative activities (as in H2020 and its follow-up programme, Horizon Europe) and large technology initiatives (as in the ECSEL JU and its successor, Key Digital Technologies Joint Undertaking (KDT JU)). These programmes have a top-down approach in which work programmes define specific topics to address major technological, economic and societal challenges. The topic of each Call for proposals is often quite prescriptive, allowing a relatively limited scope for applicants to explore undefined topics that cross over different thematic areas. Whereas the European Union (as a supranational entity) tends to focus on the harmonisation of rules and the centralisation of implementing programmes, Eureka (being an intergovernmental organisation) emphasises the need for diversity, flexibility and variable geometry in the cooperation between countries. These approaches are fully complementary and mutually reinforcing.

In addition, the industry-driven, bottom-up focus of the Eureka Clusters Programme, including ITEA, and the close connection with national RD&I priorities perfectly complement the multinational and research excellence focus of Horizon Europe. In some cases, an ECP project might be the logical next step for a Horizon Europe project consortium to successfully exploit their project results and bring them to the market.

2.2 The launch of the ECP and ITEA 4

In June 2021, the Eureka High Level Group approved the new Eureka Clusters Programme (ECP) and the participation of ITEA 4, CELTIC-NEXT, Eurogia, SMART and Xecs. Xecs, the Eureka Cluster in the field of Electronics Components & Systems, is the result of the merging of the former Eureka Clusters Penta and Euripides. The ECP, which was launched on 1 July 2021, has been established to give the Eureka Clusters a new boost, to strengthen collaboration and dialogue between the Eureka Clusters and with all stakeholders and to strengthen the Clusters' impact.

Within the ECP, ITEA will continue to stimulate international collaboration on software innovation, the Digital Transition and sustainable growth. ITEA's mission is to spawn innovative publicly and privately funded projects of a high quality. Catalysed by their label and coaching, these deliver game-changing solutions through software innovation and ensure both the fast and long-term exploitation of results.

The ambition for ITEA projects is to:

- › Provide concrete global solutions with tangible results to tackle the urgent challenges and trends of society, as defined by international consortia, in order to benefit all stakeholders.
- › Accelerate the sustainable growth of industry through innovative products, services, platforms and standards.
- › Push for new and upcoming trends in software innovation, including AI, big data, machine learning and so on.
- › Create crossover innovations through ITEA's open innovation Community and by cooperating with other Eureka Clusters.

2.3 ECP bodies and activities

To optimise collaboration and the operation of the ECP, several ECP working groups and activities have been set up in which ITEA representatives take part:

> ECP-related working groups

- The Clusters Committee (CC) is composed of industry representatives from the Eureka Clusters. The CC is the decisionmaker and strategical deciding body for the ECP on the industrial side. The CC and Public Authorities Committee (PAC) define the themes for the Joint Eureka Clusters Calls and steer the future of the ECP.
- The Clusters' Committee Support Group consists of three representatives from members of the CC companies in order to support CC meetings and discuss CC-related topics at the execution level. This group is chaired by the CCF for industry.
- The InterCluster Operations Group (ICOG) has been established to take care of the daily operations of the Clusters regarding the ECP, including the definition of joint Eureka Clusters activities like Joint Calls and the preparation of the Multi-Annual Plan (MAP) that will be issued every two years.
- The ECP Branding & Communications Group consists of a few representatives from the Clusters Offices, the Eureka Secretariat and the Public Authorities and has the goal to expand the strong, knowledgeable and diverse network and create industrial and societal recognition.

> ECP Calls and events

- Eureka Clusters AI Call 2021, including the online AI Call 2021 Brokerage event

In order to support project idea leaders in the creation of a project proposal and the building of their consortium, an online Brokerage event was organised on 22 April 2021 for the Eureka Clusters AI Call 2021. The event consisted of four different sessions: an introduction, two project idea pitch sessions and a session on the next steps. During the event, 24 pitches were presented. 667 registered participants from 34 countries were registered for this free online event.

- Global Innovation Summit Austria (18-20 May 2021)

Together with all the Eureka Clusters, ITEA was part of the Global Innovation Summit (GIS) 2021. This event was organised by the Austrian Eureka Chair on 18-20 May and focused on the Green Transition, Digital Transformation and Post-COVID. During this event, ITEA participated in the virtual booth and ITEA project PARTNER was also showcased at the virtual exhibition.

On the second day of GIS, the Eureka Clusters organised the session 'Accelerating Trusted Digital Transformation for a Sustainable Future'. Participants could discover the Eureka Clusters funding instrument and interact with the Clusters, project partners and PAs on the topics of Sustainability and Trusted Digital Transformation.

