ITEA 4 - And we're off!

First ITEA 4 Call launched in conjuction with the Online ITEA PO Days 2021

2021 marks the start of ITEA 4, the new programme on software innovation under the umbrella of the Eureka Clusters Programme (ECP). The first Call of ITEA 4, ITEA Call 2021 for project proposals, was launched on 13 September in conjunction with the Online ITEA Project Outline (PO) Preparation Days, which were held from 13-16 September.

Unfortunately, like last year, it was not yet possible to get together with the ITEA Community physically, so ITEA took up the challenge again to translate the ambiance of the annual PO Days event to the virtual realm. The second consecutive virtual PO Days combined 4 days of informative sessions on ITEA, its upcoming Call, and the submission process with the most important element of all: discussions on new innovative project ideas. Although most ITEA Community members prefer to meet in person for this purpose, they have proven again to be very agile and active in the virtual format.
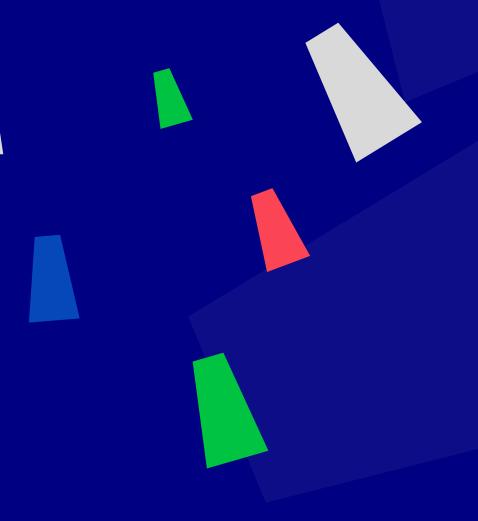
Continued engagement in a refined online format
This year around 300 participants from 17 different countries benefited from the refined online features to facilitate the online event and project creation. Besides the online posters, pitch sessions, online workgroup sessions, country information sessions and informative webinars, a new chat and messaging system was introduced to improve the interaction.

As in previous years, Turkey, the Netherlands and Germany represented the top three countries in terms of participation. Thanks to renewed funding opportunities, France saw a substantial increase in registrations again compared to previous years. With 60% returning participants and 40% newcomers, the Online ITEA PO Days 2021 confirm that the ITEA Community keeps growing and attracting new members while retaining the experienced project partners that can guide them.

This year, a record number of Public Authorities was involved in the ITEA PO Days and 9 Country information session were scheduled. The high commitment level of the Public Authorities provided an important early dialogue between them and the project teams supporting alignment with

national priorities and the best possible opportunities for funding that lead to high success rates.

Smart energy and AI strongly represented

As Smart energy has been recently added, ITEA now covers 8 key challenges also including Smart cities, Smart communities, Smart industry, Smart health, Smart mobility, Smart engineering and Safety and Security. With 8 project ideas out of 45 covering Smart energy, this new challenge immediately showed its relevance and the impact of this year's ITEA Customer workshop on this topic. Safety and Security was also addressed in 8 project ideas, while the other ideas were equally divided over the other key challenges.

As for the Technology landscape, AI remains a big topic in ITEA Call 2021, covered by 35 of the 45 ideas, even though a joint Eureka Clusters AI Call was organised earlier this year. Other technologies strongly represented

in this Call are Digital Twin, Natural Language, IoT - Sensors, UI, Robotics and Blockchain.

The final pitches presented at the end of the PO Days were of high quality and currently 32 Project Outlines for ITEA Call 2021 are already being prepared. We are excited to see the submission results at the deadline of 16 November 17:00 CET. On 20 December the consortia will be informed whether they will be invited to submit a Full Project Proposal.

Four major achievements awarded with the ITEA award of Excellence

Apart from initiating new innovative ideas, the Online PO Days 2021 also provided the opportunity to have a look at the great achievements of ITEA projects that were recently completed. On Wednesday 15 September, during the ITEA Awards of Excellence ceremony, ITEA's four most outstanding software innovation projects were celebrated. This year's award winners are:

> **BIMy - An innovation engine for integrated BIM and GIS**
BIMy learned how Building Information Modelling (BIM) can be used and exploited beyond its normal use, and how the integration of BIM and geographic information systems (GIS) can be improved. It created a shared space for digital representations of construction projects in their environments, enabling collaboration between multiple stakeholders within the Smart City domain and paving the road for new applications.

> **EMPHYSIS – The missing link between digital simulation and embedded software**
EMPHYSIS delivered the new, global standard for smart industry, "eFMI standard" (embedded Functional Mock-up Interface), for digital model exchange among manufacturers. It accelerates the development of embedded software, with a focus on the automotive industry, thanks to which up to 90% gains can be made in productivity. Another successful outcome is the official approval of a new Modelica Association project to further develop, standardise and promote eFMI.

> **PARTNER - 'One patient, one team' approach for hospitals**
PARTNER developed an architecture allowing different systems to communicate with each other, to enable the creation of a unified overview of a patient's status (including at home). This assists collaboration within hospitals and reduces costs while offering greater freedom and comfort to patients.

> **VMAP - Enhancing interoperability in virtual engineering workflows**
VMAP created a vendor-neutral standard for Computer-Aided Engineering data storage and transfer to enhance interoperability in virtual engineering workflows, increasing innovation speed by 50% and reducing setup time for virtual process chains by 40%. The VMAP Standard Community will be established to further disseminate the VMAP Standard and its development.

ITEA congratulates the ITEA Award of Excellence winners for contributing to a better society in their own way!

Online ITEA PO Days in review

Via our event survey several PO Days participants shared their evaluation and suggestions for improvements. With an average score of 3.4 on a 5-point scale (where 3 is good and 4 is very good) the score was bit lower than we were used to, but the event was still well appreciated.

What we have learned from last year's online event is, that it's more difficult to provide networking opportunities when hosting a virtual event. What is missing is the (spontaneous) networking experience and social interaction. Although this year the focus on networking was prioritised by introducing a new chat and messaging system, and although an online event has several advantages too, a high number of participants indicated they really miss the opportunity to interact and meet people face-to-face and would prefer a physical event next year.

ITEA will look to blend the best of both worlds to ensure that next year's event will be optimally valuable for all participants and improve the creation of connections between the large international Community of industry, SMEs, start-ups, academia and customer organisations to build strong consortia.

The ITEA PO Days are made by and for the ITEA Community, and therefore we have invited different Community members to share their experience:

"In June – September 2021, a Canadian SME consortium led by Green Power Labs and MR Control Systems International participated in a well-organised set of events dedicated to ITEA Call 2021 and the Smart energy topic. Required changes in fast-growing IoT environment were defined where the Smart energy approach was seen as a key component. Preparing to and participating in the Online ITEA PO Days 2021, our consortium effectively used advanced online networking tools to address this data management challenge for project idea positioning."

Alexandre Pavlovski
President & CEO Green Power Labs

"The ITEA PO Days were again interesting to see consortia being born. As Public Authority we can inform them about relevant companies to join them. Also the speeches of the other Public Authorities are sometimes inspiring for addressing issues we all face. Let's hope we can see a lot of companies participating in the next Call. Next to that, the PO days are a good opportunity to learn new people with specific expertise all around Europe."

Fredrik De Vusser
VLAIO (Belgian NCP for ITEA)

"The ITEA PO Days confirm the potential of collaborative research to address important challenges such as the extension of AI methods, the software cyber security improvements or solutions for energy systems. The outcomes of this event pave the way to ambitious ITEA 4 projects."

Jean-François Lavignon
ITEA Vice-chairman

We are hopeful to be able to come together in person next year. We know the Community is eager to meet again, face-to-face, benefiting from the rich and efficient networking opportunities that the ITEA PO Days bring and we really look forward to come together with the ITEA Community again too!

More information
https://itea4.org/onlinepodays2021/index.html