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ITEA & ARTEMIS matchmakers in European innovation

They're exciting times at the headquarters of European research/innovation programmes ITEA and ARTEMIS. ITEA is on the threshold of a third eight-year term



while the ARTEMIS programme expires this year. The organisation is busy making plans for a sequel. That there is great need for the programmes is indisputable. ITEA Office Director Fopke Klok: "The last thing we should do is think that everyone will keep buying a Mercedes, Audi or BMW; this may well be changing rapidly". ARTEMIS Office Director Ad ten Berg adds: "In order to maintain our leading position in the world, it's imperative that Europe should continue collaborating".

It's not simple to explain in a few words what ITEA and ARTEMIS stand for. Matchmakers, that might well be the best and most adequate description of the two organisations. ITEA and ARTEMIS aim at connecting European parties and acquiring knowledge and funding to accelerate innovation and to strengthen Europe's leading position. Within this framework, the ARTEMIS programme is focused on Embedded Systems while ITEA focuses more broadly on the so-called Software Intensive Systems & Services. The two programmes have a clear overlap, which is why the two head offices share a floor on High Tech Campus Eindhoven. Ad: "We learn a lot from each other in terms of approach and the effective organisation of events".

Creating standards

With a scale of 100-200 man-years' work and a budget of 10-20 million Euros, the projects implemented by ARTEMIS and ITEA are quite extensive. Ad: "On average, there are seven countries collaborating in a project and the consortiums of companies, knowledge institutes and research groups may amount to 100 participants. These numbers show that we generally work on creating new standards in industry in terms of technology, production technology and processes. Fopke: "A good example of our work, for example, is the new standard in Electronic Payment. Within ITEA, banks, credit card companies, retailers and gas stations have started to collaborate in the EPAS project. This international payment standard, for example, makes it possible for us to pay with a cash card in a French supermarket. The EPAS technology is now the prelude to SEPA. This is a unique collaboration that internationally has brought a lot". Ad: "What also becomes clear is that projects initially set up for a specific industry tend to spread to other industries. We have, for example, a strong cluster in Northern Scandinavia, the timber industry. Years ago, this branch already concluded that the only way to remain competitive on a global scale was by computerising drastically. Through ARTEMIS, various players there have started to collaborate intensively. The knowledge and experience they have gained there is now spreading to Poland and Germany, reaching far beyond the timber industry".

Collaboration

Besides obtaining subsidies and increasing knowledge, cooperation in itself is a reason to join an ITEA or ARTEMIS project. Here, SMEs meet large parties, R&D departments of large companies exchange knowledge and experience, and even customers often get involved in the development of new technology. Fopke: "For many businesses, one of the main reasons to get involved in a project is learning how to collaborate. Of course, it is nice to get funding, but in fact subsidies are the lubricants that get collaboration on its way. ITEA proves itself a trusted framework for starting up a form of collaboration. It provides a framework within which you can feel safe to share your ideas and

inventions. That is perhaps our greatest asset. Sopheon, one of our participants, told me the following: "If we hadn't joined an ITEA project, we would never have been able to work on such a scale". Ad: "Collaboration is certainly a driver. It also involves pre-competitive development without there being a direct commercial accountability".

Europe

The question arises as to how badly Europe needs pan-European collaboration. What position do we occupy on a global scale and how can we make sure to remain competitive in the long term? Fopke: "I think that in Europe we have a number of well-performing high-tech industries. Airbus, the German automotive industry and the healthcare activities of companies such as Philips and Siemens do give us a certain position. Although I don't feel very relaxed talking about the subject. Countries like China and Korea are experiencing a mushroom growth. The last thing we should do is think that everyone will keep buying a Mercedes, Audi or BMW; this may well be changing rapidly." Ad adds: "Europe must continue collaborating. China has a very central goal-oriented focus and the U.S. share a very similar culture. Due to our various countries, languages and cultures, Europe is traditionally characterised by much greater diversity. To keep the European industry on a par with the world, in terms of collaboration we definitely need to seize the opportunities. In this respect, airline industry is a good example. Each country used to have its own aircraft manufacturers, all competing with each other. They ultimately merged into Airbus, and that's when our airline industry acquired its strong position in the world. ITEA and ARTEMIS contribute to promoting collaboration between European parties in their development stages in order to enable them to be better competitors on the market."

New phase

Both programmes are entering a new phase and with the crisis in mind, the organisation may be under a lot of pressure. Ad: "Last year, ARTEMIS did very well. That is also because we have introduced a new type of project: the ARTEMIS Innovation Pilot Project. What we are trying to do in this project is bringing together the results from previous projects in order to take them a step further, the step from R&D to innovation. However, in 2013 we're starting our last call - the final round of projects. Now the debate is about the follow-up of the programme. Before the end of the year, we need to have clarity about this, and on January 1, 2014, the new Joint Undertaking should start."

Fopke: "It's slightly different for ITEA. In the course of last year, ITEA 3 was approved so we're preparing for another eight years. Both programmes had to deal with the economic crisis. For some time, the countries made fewer budgets available for ITEA, but now we see some growth. And in the Netherlands, the top sector policy became a much-debated item. There too, we had to defend our interests. Meanwhile, the discussions have resulted in a long-term commitment of the Dutch government to both ITEA and ARTEMIS."

Headquarters on the Campus

Europe is big, why an office on the Campus? Fopke: "The reason we're here is quite simple. ITEA was founded by fifteen major companies including Airbus, Daimler, Siemens, Nokia and Philips. As Philips plays an important role in the organisation, it was obvious that the office should be in Eindhoven. Another major reason is that everyone likes working here. You meet a lot of people from the work field. Besides, the infrastructure on the grounds here is excellent and we benefit from the Campus' network".

Ad: "There's a lot of interaction with large companies like Philips and NXP, and we also come across Campus companies such as Intel in our projects. It's great to be here, although I'm not sure if the rest of Europe really likes to travel to Eindhoven". Fopke: "It might have been an altogether different story if we had a good TGV connection, or an airport with good connections to the various business centres. Now, we'd sooner plan a large ITEA meeting at Schiphol or in Brussels than in Eindhoven. That's a situation we still have to come across."

More information:

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