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SMEs, the real winners in the MEDEA+ programme

Klaus Gerle

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The MEDEA+ programme has proven to be an ideal frame for the integration of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) into the industrial landscape.

Drawing on the major successes of the MEDEA+ programme, Enrico Villa, Chairman of MEDEA+ and CATRENE, highlighted: "Partner groups in MEDEA+ are quite balanced: one third are large companies, one third universities and institutes and one third are SMEs. The majority of the corresponding 200 SMEs are involved in two or more projects. On average, around 100 SMEs per year have dedicated engineering resources to MEDEA+ projects, with each SME providing between 3 and 5 person-years per year and this throughout the whole 8 years of the MEDEA+ programme. With 51% participation and 45% contribution of involved SME resources, the French SMEs are the champions in this partner group".

The Chairman went on to highlight that SMEs are attracted to three work areas in particular: lithography with 16% of all SME person-years spent, electronic design automation with 21% and next generation CMOS process technology with 29%. He concluded: "During the past two decades, structural changes in the economy have created essential opportunities for SMEs. They are dynamic, flexible and quickly adapt to new situations, employing the advantages of niche markets and frequently aiming at being involved in or even producing specialised products. Most of their innovation power is based on IPs and patents that can be securely exploited within the frame of MEDEA+ projects. We welcome and encourage SMEs to further enhance their engagement in the new CATRENE programme".

SMEs, defined as having fewer than 250 employees and an annual turnover not exceeding 50 M€, are forming a major part of Europe's economy. Around 23 million SMEs in the European Union are providing some 75 million jobs and represent 99% of all enterprises. SMEs, being the key part of Europe's industry, are an efficient source for job creation and innovation, and as such are largely contributing to economical welfare and social cohesion.

MEDEA+, the biggest cluster programme in EUREKA, has successfully focused European advanced co-operative Research and Development in micro and nanoelectronics to ensure Europe's technological and industrial competitiveness on a world wide basis. The programme has concentrated on enabling technologies for the information society and has significantly contributed in making Europe a leader in system innovation on silicon. The programme will conclude at the end of 2008 and will be succeeded by CATRENE, the Cluster for Application and Technology Research in Europe on NanoElectronics