



Editorial Comment

Date: Thursday 1 of July 2004

With business improving at most levels of the microelectronics industry, many companies are preparing themselves for the future by acquisition or preparing research activities to capitalise on new technologies and emerging markets.

A recent buzz high on the news wires was nanotechnology. The SIA surprisingly suggested that the USA lagged behind the rest of the world in research investment. This may be true on a dollar for dollar basis when compared to Europe but there is a big difference in the two regions that is not discussed.

Europe may be pouring in more research money to nanotechnology than the rest of the world but it is debatable if it is as co-ordinated as other regions. Europe lacks a guiding body to ensure that research is not doubled up. Despite excellent groups like IMEC, LETI, MEDEA and other EU initiatives there remains doubts as to whether national interests are interfering with a more rational and feasible approach.

Many European countries are implementing nanotechnology programmes connected to research and educational institutions. While this is great news for Europe and many great achievements will come from these centres, there is a great need for a rationalisation across Europe of all activities or else everyone will be spending loads of money duplicating each other and slowing European potential.

There are a number of efforts being done across Europe to address these problems. If all these groups touch base before reporting any ideas then Europe will progress so much quicker.

Europe has demonstrated to the world their ability to lead in areas of research and manufacturing. Nearly all the successes of recent years has come about due to multi country or company collaboration. The emerging nanotechnology industry is shaping up to be very lucrative. There is a wonderful opportunity for Europe to take the lead in this arena.

As all engineers know, integration is the key.