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## Research program hits \$2 billion, seeks more for second half

Peter Clarke

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LONDON -- Medea-plus, a major pan-European collaborative research program, intended to run from 2001 to 2008 has already earmarked about \$2 billion for spending on 36 projects over its first four years. With three further calls for proposals planned for the rest of the program's duration the program could easily double its cost figure, with a major proportion of the money coming from national governments across Europe.

But the chairman of the Medea-plus program claims that even higher levels of funding are necessary, because the organizers never took into account the fact that R&D costs would increase as semiconductor technology progressed.

Medea-plus covers research from lithography and process technology up to system-on-chip architectures and is one of a number of mechanisms by which European semiconductor equipment companies, chipmakers and systems companies receive support. The participants in Medea-plus include STMicroelectronics, Philips, Infineon Technologies, ASM International, ASM Lithography and Wacker.

"There is an urgent requirement to adjust funding, as cost escalation impacts in R&D were never taken into consideration," said Jean-Pierre Noblanc, chairman of Medea-plus, in a presentation given to the Medea-plus conference, held in Antwerp, Belgium, recently. "Compared to funding schemes in other regions of the world, the European funding scheme has to be enlarged significantly," he said.

Medea, or Microelectronics Developments for European Applications, was the name of the previous four-year collaborative research program. It ran up a cost of about \$1.8 billion, by way of 55 individual projects with an average cost of 33 million euros (about \$33 million), according to figures from Gerard Matheron, office director of Medea-plus, given out in Antwerp.

Several presentations from the Medea-plus forum held in Antwerp in November were available [here](#) when this story was first posted.

In its first two calls for proposals Medea-plus has approved 36 projects with an average cost of 55 million euro (about \$55 million) giving a total earmarked cost of about 1.98 billion euro (about \$1.98 billion).

This is thought to represent a level of government funding of about a \$1 billion although the exact level is hard to determine as supporting funds are supplied by national governments to local companies taking part in individual Medea-plus projects, under local rules.

[Medea-plus](#) measures projects not in terms of financial budgets but in terms of the number of person-years expended. So for example the average size of project in Medea was 171 person-years while the average size of project in Medea-plus so far is 282 person-years. However although the average cost associated with a person-year in Medea-plus is about 195,000 euros (about \$195,000) it is not possible to use this as a strict conversion.

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