

The European Commission: Funding Innovative Research and the Growth of Information Technology

To foster innovation and promote the development of cutting-edge information technologies, the European Commission has established the **Information Society Technologies (IST) Programme** as part of the Fifth Framework Programme covering Research and Technological Development. The IST Programme, with a budget of **€3.6 billion** over five years, builds on the convergence of communications and media technologies and sponsors projects that will lead to an expansion of the Information Society. IST funds projects in areas such as mobile and personal communications, simulation and visualisation technologies, and multimedia content.

To ensure that IST is responsive to novel and progressive ideas, the Commission has created a programme under IST called the **Future and Emerging Technologies (FET) Programme** to promote the development of new technologies that will have a significant impact on the economy and society. The FET Programme funds

bold, high-risk ideas, as well as **long-term research projects** that might be difficult to fund under traditional grant programmes.

For more information on IST, go to <http://www.cordis.lu/ist/home.html>



The UK: Fostering Integration and Innovation

The UK recently announced a new **£70 million** technology investment programme, with most of the funds dedicated to promoting the **integration of next-generation technologies** into existing products and business practices. The investment is designed to foster the kind of innovation that gives citizens broader access to the benefits of technology in their everyday lives.

The programme encourages top researchers, manufacturers, and marketing strategists to invent ways of **adding the functionality of cutting-edge technologies to everyday appliances**. One result could be development of integrated household appliances that communicate with each other and the Internet, such as washing machines that read and follow instructions on special clothing labels, or 'Internet fridges' that order groceries directly from the supermarket. The programme will also fund collaboration among universities, business, and government to develop a **high-speed national computer grid** for UK scientists.

Examples of excellence

Germany: Multimedia Workplaces for the Future

The German government has become a leading promoter of innovative uses of information technologies with its **Multimedia am Arbeitsplatz (MAP)** project. The **€21 million** project takes the use of **multimedia in the workplace** to a new level. Launched in November 2000, MAP is an ambitious collaboration of public and private actors under the leadership of Alcatel SEL. Participants in the project include companies such as Siemens and softTECH, and research institutions such as the Technical University of Dresden and the Fraunhofer Institute for Computer Graphics. These partners seek to realise a shared vision – seamless integration of different information technology applications in the workplace.

Drawing upon the expertise of each partner, the MAP project will develop an integrated system of security applications, mobility support, and communication technologies. By incorporating **voice and gesture control**, MAP will contribute to a fundamental shift in the use of information and communication technologies in the workplace. The goal is to synthesise **technologies** to make the office of the future as mobile and flexible as people themselves. For more information, go to www.map21.de

The Cycle of Innovation – Integrated Software Suites

The software industry must continually innovate in order to keep up with new technologies and the changing needs of users. This cycle of innovation has led to the development of **integrated software suites** that give users access to many different functions in a **single, easy-to-use**

product. Responding to the demands of knowledge workers and business consumers, Microsoft launched its first Office suite a little more than a decade ago. Since then, other major IT companies have also responded to the market demand for integrated software packages.

Oracle Corporation's recently-launched **11i E-Business software suite**, for example, is a fully-integrated collection of software tools that enables a company to move its entire operation – from procurement to customer relationship management – to the Internet. Different program modules can be accessed by employees, partners, and customers using only their Web browsers. Oracle Vice President Ron Wahl observed that "when given the choice, any business would prefer e-Business applications that are **already integrated** rather than undertake the custom integration effort themselves."



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