A Proposal for a Cooperative Grassroots Alliance Initiative for Innovation

The meeting of Feb 16-17, 2009, taking place in Verona, in the presence of Mr. Ultan Mulligan (ETSI), Prof. Nello Scarabottolo (CEPIS), Prof. Christine Choppy (Informatics Europe), Dr. Gian Mario Maggio (COST Office), Prof. Imrich Chlamtac, Dr. Charles Zaiontz and Mr. Andrea De Luca (CREATE-NET), Dr. Adrian Boukalov (PSCE), Dr. Tibor Kovacs and Mr. Patrick Bond, (ICST), Dr. Ivan Pilati (Living Labs), Dr. Magyar and Dr. Boda (EIT) has addressed the current situation in the European innovation scene.

The meeting has identified and recognized a set of key principles and action items necessary for fostering innovation (as listed below). Participants in the meeting agreed to share these recommendations with key players in Europe including (1) policy makers such as the European Commission, (2) organizations and institutions expressing interest in the outcome of this meeting, among whom are EATCS, EICTA, Engineering/Nessi, Focus Fraunhofer, EVCA, EUREKA, EIFN, PBN, CREATECH, Gesellschaft für Informatik, plus (3) other key actors in Europe whose contributions are necessary for a successful drive for European innovation, research promotion and research exploitation.

During the first part of the meeting the partners identified the following main issues that limit innovation in Europe:

- Fragmentation of R&D efforts, resulting in a multitude of agendas and voices representing ICT innovation, but with no critical mass
- Lack of a unified European-centric professional, grassroots society, resulting in loss of prestige and the absence of effective dissemination and recognition mechanisms for building European research loyalty
- A lengthy publication processes hindering innovation
- Insufficient interest of students in ICT education;
- Lack of an entrepreneurial mindset
- Absence of effective mechanisms for benchmarking European ICT research quality
- Inadequate exploitation and investment in the Intellectual Property that is generated from European research;
- Limited exploitation of research results especially through standardization

Following the meeting's discussions the participants have identified the following scope of activities to address the above issues:

- Increase European research prestige
- Promote outreach and improve research dissemination
- Create rewards and incentives mechanisms for fostering innovation
- Assess professional competencies via standardized certification mechanisms
- Develop coordination instruments
- Establish a critical mass in strategic areas of ICT

- Close the gap between research and standards
- Better leverage testing facilities
- Facilitate access to funding opportunities
- Share best practices at the European level
- Foster career development
- Develop a research and innovation mapping
- Create partnership with the SMEs
- Provide necessary innovation training and education

The participants agreed to move forward with an Alliance in support of the Lyon initiative through the following actions that can be implemented in the near term by providing a concrete set of proposals and action items necessary to realize the grassroots vision that was formulated in Lyon:

In particular, the participants at the meeting in Verona proposed that a grassroots movement for research and innovation be fostered through the establishment of an Alliance founded on a highly collaborative Web 2.0 environment, and

1. Agreeing on the need for an "Alliance Governance and Business Operational Model" that will lead to a coherent and coordinated operation of a critical mass of members under a single umbrella providing the necessary regulations to successfully address the fragmentation issue identified above.

2. Ensuring that the Alliance Framework defines a set of collaborations and divisions of tasks and responsibilities among the members in a way that strengthens each of the Alliance members and empowers them to fulfill their organization's role more effectively.

3. Identifying a complete list of partners, including the 21 who participated in the Verona meeting directly or provided input to the meeting, to address issues emanating from the core Alliance research activities, expanded especially to those business, corporate and financial actors that are needed to jointly drive innovation.

4. With the goal of implementing the following proposed initiatives:

   a) Access and share the ICST Society, CREATE-NET, COST, ETSI, CEPIS and Living Labs networks for joint name building, broadening and promotion of activities, and dissemination.
   b) Expand involvement in ETSI industry specification groups, COST Actions networks and Living Labs initiatives as part of a Society research and dissemination activity.
   c) Initiate actions to have CEPIS, COST and ETSI act as a conduit between their members, the Society and the Alliance.
   d) Start to build a network of individual members around Sci-SPACE, Sci-C@ST, Conf-C@ST, EUDL and other web 2.0 tools offered by ICST.

e) Expand and remodel ICST's Science Rewards Program to accommodate the needs of all Alliance members to form the Alliance's own rewards/incentive mechanisms in order to strengthen Alliance loyalty and branding.
f) Start planning common Alliance portal(s), to be supported by CREATE-NET, which integrate potential members, and include interfaces and cross-references to existing websites/portals of the various Alliance members, such as for example Living Labs, including logos of Alliance members, by March 31, 2009.
g) Start work on the integration of vertical organisations into the Alliance initiative, using PSCE Group and ISCT as a model (to be driven by PSCE and ICST)
h) Define the European research criteria for excellence, and promote the engagement of new student chapters, as driven by Informatics of Europe.
i) Start investigating the support of outside players such as publishers and other international societies, following up on the concrete set of cooperations and strategy meetings already in existence between ICST, ACM, IEEE, and other leading societies and organizations worldwide.
j) Establish a direct dialogue with the relevant European authorities and Member States in order to provide advice and define programs and funding opportunities to support a European grassroots action.
k) Link to standards and promote pre-standardization activities by ETSI within the scope of the Alliance.
l) Define and promote Alliance recognition of research excellence, as driven by COST Office and ICST, for a new European Research Fellow and related professional recognition programs.
m) Define a common European framework for assessing ICT professional competencies based on standardized certification mechanisms, as driven by CEPIS.
n) Promote the federation and access to testing facilities and procedures in support of standardization and technology transfer, as driven by CREATE-NET and Living Labs with participation of ETSI.

It should be emphasized that these potential initiatives and collaboration opportunities will also be open to all additional organizations which join the Alliance.

5. Action Items

a) Submit a report to all Verona participants as well as to the other parties who were unable to attend but expressed interest, and to new parties identified by the participants as potentially benefiting the Alliance effort.
b) Present the Alliance initiative, a natural follow up to the meeting in Lyon and aligned with the objectives of that initiative, to the European Commission,
c) Complete and agree on this framework document and share it with outside participants as identified in this document by February 28, 2009.

d) Take the necessary steps within each organization to approve the framework document and post it on each member's website after receiving all input by Feb 28, 2009 but before March 31, 2009.
e) Set the schedule and deadlines for initiating and gauging the progress of the initiatives defined in the Verona meeting as listed above
f) Start working on the outline of the governance issues presented in Verona to be completed by the next working meeting.
g) Confirm the date for the next working meeting.
h) Participants of the Alliance meeting will identify potential participants who could add value to the Alliance.
i) Participants in the Alliance meeting will initiate one-on-one meetings to explore further collaboration opportunities.