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Germany builds national ManuFuture platform

ManuFuture Conference 2006



Peter Post is a member of the ManuFuture High Level Group and a prime mover in the setting up of a national platform in Germany. He explains how the recommendations of the initiative are being taken up at Member State level.

As Head of Research and Technology for industrial automation systems supplier Festo, Dr Ing Peter Post is deeply committed to the retention of a strong manufacturing sector in Europe. In addition to serving on the ManuFuture High Level Group, he is actively involved in the establishment of a national platform in his native Germany.

Doctor Post, how are the concepts of the ManuFuture Platform at EU level being taken up by industry in Germany?

PP: It is very much a two-way exchange. VDMA, our national mechanical engineering industries association, has worked closely with the ManuFuture High Level Group since 2001, with representatives joining the meetings and reporting back to the member companies as the ideas emerged. The members have, in turn, been able to contribute their own thoughts and wishes to the development of the Strategic Research Agenda (SRA).

This bottom-up input from industry has been very useful. We identified the potential partners and organised 14 sectoral workshops, at which companies could express their own particular views and needs. This enabled us to draw up a series of provisional roadmaps, which were then combined and prioritised into a trans-sectoral 'wish-list' for consideration during the formulation of the SRA.

How did the stated German objectives compare with what eventually emerged as the overall European view following consultation on the SRA?

PP: There was actually a very good match. Our contribution was merged with that from many other sources, in order to assemble the puzzle pieces that eventually reveal a complete picture. The eventual pan-European consensus bore a close resemblance to our own soundings, indicating that there is quite a high level of agreement on what needs to be done to tackle the problems of survival and growth in the globalised economy.

How do your national colleagues rate the importance of ManuFuture in tackling the challenges of the future?

PP There is evidently a strong belief in ManuFuture. The VDMA members are already convinced, and we now have nearly 400 organisations, mostly commercial businesses, participating in the national platform. Interest is also starting to build in the regions.

People recognise that manufacturing is essential to the whole future of Europe. This is not just about gaining access to Community research funds. Nor is it only for the benefit of the research institutes. Industry has to make its own effort.

Companies such as Festo are working today on components for the manufacturing of tomorrow. That means thinking long-term and looking beyond pure technology. Under the umbrella of the Platform we can build networks between the academic researchers, the manufacturers of engineering tools and the end-users. The horizontal nature of ManuFuture encourages us to explore solutions that will be applicable across different customer sectors. It can thus streamline the development of new production concepts that will deliver the industry-wide efficiency and adaptability identified in the SRA as crucial to our sustained competitiveness in the years ahead.

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Background

- [Manufuture](#)
- More information is available from the [Manufuture website](#)
- [The Manufuture Strategic Research Agenda](#)