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Nanotechnologies and nanosciences, knowledge-based multifunctional materials & new production processes and devices

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Manufuture: from inspiration to implementation



The presentation of a draft Strategic Research Agenda at the Manufuture 2005 conference marked an important milestone in the progress of this manufacturing industry initiative. European Commission coordinator Andrea Gentili looks to the future.

After the [Manufuture 2005 conference](#), held between 6-7 December 2005 in Derby, UK, the [Strategic Research Agenda](#) (SRA) was posted on the Commission's dedicated website and opened for stakeholder consultation and comment until mid-February 2006.

A summary of the revised recommendations, based on the results of the consultation, is due to be published in March 2006. Within 4-5 months of this date, the responsible Support Group will aim to issue a first draft of its detailed proposals for implementation of the SRA. A further conference in Tampere, Finland, on October 9-10, 2006 will provide a forum for discussion and formal approval of the proposals.

"Conversations with delegates at the Derby conference indicated that there remains some lack of understanding of the precise role of *Manufuture*," observes Andrea Gentili, coordinator of the initiative at DG Research.

"The aim is that, by addressing 'horizontal' approaches applicable across a broad spectrum of industries, it will complement existing and planned sector- and technology-specific platforms at European, national and regional levels. *Manufuture* itself will not propose a specific work programme, nor will it directly provide funding for collaborative research projects. Its impact will nevertheless be highly significant – and it has been described as one of the most useful tools available to help the manufacturing sector fulfil the objectives of the Lisbon partnership for growth and jobs."

"It will work in two main ways: first, in shaping the calls for proposals under the forthcoming Seventh RTD Framework Programme; and second by fostering a networked approach to manufacturing, with closer cooperation between industry, academia, government and the finance providers."

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New approach for FP7

"The current Framework Programme focuses on a series of prioritised technologies, so budget limitations have inevitably meant that some worthwhile fields are excluded. In FP7, the more generic approach proposed by *Manufuture* would allow industry greater freedom to determine its own priorities. It will give rise to more projects addressing sector-independent bottlenecks, in which businesses and research institutes can explore common mechanisms capable of achieving their individual goals. In this way, it will create a bridge between what have hitherto been non-communicating communities – thus avoiding duplication of effort and achieving more efficient utilisation of resources."

"Furthermore, it will encourage trans-thematic joint calls for proposals. DG

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Key data

Background

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

Priority 3 programme

Objectives

Calls

Work programme (PDF)

Earlier programmes

Themes

Nanotechnologies

Materials

Production processes

Issues

Sustainability

International co-operation

Support for SMEs

Research impacts

MANUFUTURE

Nanotechnology in the ERA

Coal and Steel research

European research

Events

Research could, for example, join forces with DG Information Society on ITC applications; with DG Environment on clean technologies; or with DG Enterprise to study new business models.”

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Spirit of co-operation

“With respect to networking,” Gentili continues, “much has already been accomplished. The Commission, with sterling support from the *Manufuture* High Level Group (HLG), has been busy promoting the concepts throughout Europe.”

“Active dissemination of the messages to political and industrial leaders has already led to the formation of [national initiatives](#) in 16 Member States, and more are close to start-up. For the first time their governments and regional authorities are presented with a consensus view from manufacturing industry as a whole – including contributions from the crucially important SME community. A *Manufuture* Industrial Advisory Group bringing together Member State-appointed representatives fulfils a similar function at EU level. HLG members have also participated in early meetings of the sectoral [Technology Platforms](#), and again have been able to underline the synergy arising from a shared approach. Over the coming months, the collation of industry’s research priorities in the updated SRA will form a valuable reference guide to areas of mutual interest that can be taken into consideration when defining the sectoral roadmaps.”

“Adopting networked enterprise structures for manufacturing, as recommended in the document, will result in closer linkages between large companies and the SMEs that form essential elements in their supply chains. In such arrangements, the experience of OEM partners can help the smaller businesses to frame proposals and negotiate access to research funding. In the new industries emerging from advanced science and technology, start-up SMEs will be key sources of innovation in their own right. *Manufuture* is raising awareness of their importance, which should in turn stimulate appropriate responses from governments and funding bodies.”

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What next?

“One issue highlighted at *Manufuture* 2005 was the need to monitor results and ensure that investment in research does produce the desired outcomes in terms of products, processes and organisations that genuinely enhance Europe’s competitiveness and create new jobs. It can be envisaged that the Support Group responsible for drawing up the SRA will evolve into a Monitoring Committee charged with assessing and updating the findings in a dynamic and interactive manner.”

“What is clear,” Gentili concludes, “is that we have taken the first steps towards creating a community of like-minded people drawn from diverse sectors of industry and research, all sharing at least some aspects of a vision of the way ahead. Building on this foundation is crucial to the future of manufacturing in Europe: it is only by working together that we can capitalise on our many, but fragmented, advantages and grasp the huge opportunities on offer in the globalised marketplace.”

