



## Online EF ECS 2020 focused on 'Technology that works for people'

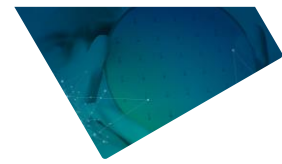
Like so many other events, EF ECS 2020 went online. With Europe in the grip of the COVID pandemic, the annual forum of the European Electronic Components and Systems (ECS) community lived up to its theme of 'Technology that works people'. On 25th and 26th November 2020 over 800 participants got together in a virtual space with an exhibition hall featuring over 95 booths, networking areas and tools to find people, discover projects and gather documentation. Aiming to allow participants to 'Discover, Network, Shape and Learn', EF ECS 2020 offered a rich mix of speeches, panel discussions, interactive workshops, exhibition and project pitch sessions.

As Sabine Herlitschka, CEO Infineon Technologies Austria, and Jean-Luc di Paola-Galloni, Artemis President, said in opening the conference: digital technologies have become part of everyday life in ways we could never have believed 12 months ago – from staying in touch with loved ones to disease prevention via smartphone apps.

However, in accelerating the digital transformation, the COVID crisis has not only revealed Europe's strengths but also underscored the importance of reducing Europe's dependency on others. In a world in transition, competitors like the USA and China are investing heavily in microelectronics. Europe needs to build its digital autonomy to protect its competitiveness and those things that European citizens value in their way of life, from data privacy to protecting the planet through carbon neutrality.

Wolf Dieter Lukas, speaking for the German Presidency of the EU Council, and Roberto Viola, Director-General of Communications Networks, Content and Technology, European Commission (EC), stressed the crucial role of European collaboration and particularly in microelectronics in the digital future – especially AI and Edge computing. They highlighted the EC's proposed 150 billion investment in the digital recovery, and the importance of the IPCEI (Important Project of Common European Interest) and tripartite funding models like ECSEL as the means to create cooperation, growth, and jobs. Speaking for the Austrian EUREKA Chairmanship 2020-2021, Ulrich Schuh added that EUREKA stands ready to support EU and global collaboration with a fast, flexible funding approach to tackle pressing social and environmental challenges.

Indeed, there are both challenges and opportunities for Europe agreed an expert panel discussing the impact of COVID and global trade wars. Olivier Coulon from Cabinet DECISION, noted that the global market for electronics systems will grow at an average of 4.5% CAGR or more up to 2024, with embedded and professional applications mostly above this average. With speed as well as investment, Europe can play to its ECS strengths and its distinctive values such as data privacy, security and trustworthiness to seize opportunities in emerging applications from regenerative medicine to 'greening' ECS technologies themselves to improve the lives of citizens and protect the planet.



## *Focus on the practicalities of funding programmes*

Next came the specifics: a session on key funding instruments for the collaborative effort that will deliver on Europe's digital potential. Francisco Ibanez, Deputy Head of Unit, Competitive Electronics Industry, DG Connect, stressed that Horizon Europe (the successor to Horizon 2020) will focus on innovation that supports Europe's social and economic values. And specifically, the Key Digital Technologies Joint Undertaking (currently being finalized) and the Digital Europe programme will promote access to and deployment of digital technologies, as well as innovation in areas such as AI, Edge and neuromorphic computing.

Yves Gigase, Head of Programmes, ECSEL JU, explained how the new KDT JU will build on ECSEL's success, and improve the model further by being simpler (especially for SMEs) and incorporating greater measurement of impact and results. There will also be closer cooperation with other initiatives such as the Lighthouses, EUREKA and bilateral research programmes.

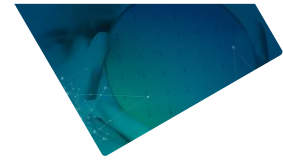
In announcing a new EUREKA PENTA and EURIPIDES<sup>2</sup> joint call, Peter Connock, PENTA Director, said the programme was designed to be flexible and easy to access. It would also require projects to demonstrate genuine societal and economic impact. He also flagged that the deadline for project outline submissions is 26 February 2021.

Finally, on day one, a project pitch session gave individual project ideas a chance to present themselves and invite additional partners to join. This 'pre-brokerage' session was an ideal warm-up ahead of the full ECS Brokerage event, which will take place on 12-13 January 2021.

## *Introducing the ECS-SRIA (Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda)*

On day two, the conference turned to the ECS-SRIA and its contribution to the EC Green Deal. Introducing the latest SRIA, published on 16th November, Elisabeth Steinmetz (EPoSS), explained that this joint document from AENEAS, Artemis-IA and EPoSS is based on contributions of some 300 researchers and industry colleagues. With a new structure, the agenda now includes 'innovation' in its title, as well as a new opening chapter on 'Major Challenges' and a strong focus on the need for cross-cutting / -sectional technologies. "The SRIA is our industry view with a ten-year horizon. It's funding programme agnostic, but nonetheless serves as input for the KDT JU and EUREKA programmes," said Ms Steinmetz.

Patrick Pype of NXP added that the SRIA also reflects the ambition to boost Europe's industrial competitiveness, while Patrick Cogez of AENEAS stressed the importance of milestones and the linking of roadmaps across sectors as diverse as bio/recyclable materials and AI and Edge computing. Thanking the ECS community for their efforts in creating such a rich reference document, Francisco Ibanez stated that the EC sees the ECS-SRIA as a strong basis for the KDT and for the Commission, Member States and industry to agree on ways to deliver strategic impact for Europe as a whole.



## *Awards for projects making an impact*

The day continued with the presentation of awards, demonstrating clearly how projects within the various funding programmes can generate ‘technology that works for people’. The PENTA award went to DISPERSE and its technology that allows patients with multiple medical implants to undergo MRI scans. MNEMOSENE, the Horizon 2020 award winner, combined an unconventional architecture and memristive technologies to dramatically increase computing efficiency, bringing applications such as personalized healthcare and AI-enabled wearable medical devices a step further. Taranto, the ECSEL award winner, delivered results that aim to position Europe as leader in BiCMOS technology and support European capacity to develop new products for 5G / 6G telecommunications.

## *Interactive workshops invite further input for the ECS-SRIA*

The conference then broke into dedicated panel sessions based on the three Lighthouse groups: Mobility, Industry and Health. This was a moment for attendees to discover more about how they can benefit from participation in the Lighthouses, as well as for interactive discussion of the challenges, goals and technologies each Lighthouse sees as priorities for input to the SRIA and the Green and Digital Transformations.

Even after the formal conference close, many participants stayed on to join the co-located workshops focused on specific technologies and applications spanning electronics; microelectronics; telecoms; electric, connected and autonomous mobility, and a sustainable digital transformation. These workshops provided a final chance to ‘Discover, Network, Shape and Learn’ – underscoring the value of the EF ECS as a place to engage and share even in the unprecedented circumstances of 2020.

About AENEAS: <https://aeneas-office.org>

AENEAS is an Industry Association, established in 2006. The purpose of the association is to promote Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) in order to strengthen the competitiveness of European industry across the complete Electronics Components and Systems (ECS) value chain. AENEAS provides unparalleled networking opportunities, policy influence & supported access to funding to all types of RD&I participants in the field of micro and nanoelectronics enabled components and systems, and its applications. Partner in ECSEL JU, AENEAS is also operating the EUREKA funded Clusters PENTA and EURIPIDES<sup>2</sup>.