ERA-NET 2005

Coordination Action
MATERA

material steps to greater co-operation

"I am enthusiastically looking forward to networking with colleagues in other European countries; this is the first time the policy-makers and RTD funders in the field of material science have the possibility for a close and real co-operation on a wider European level"

Please note that this fact sheet replaces the previous one, known as ENTMatSSA, and included in Series 1 of this publication

Materials science and engineering research relies on collaboration. As most research groups are highly specialised, 'self-sufficiency' is practically impossible, even at a national level. Only by working together can researchers solve industrial problems. The MATERA ERA-NET unites the materials science expertise of programme managers from 13 countries. The partners aim to develop procedures that will first allow national research to be opened up, then integrated into joint, transnational programmes. By coordinating a critical mass of research funders and programme managers, MATERA can exploit the synergies among its members and create a platform on which to build a durable and adaptable materials science approach at the European level.

Alongside biotechnology and information technology, materials science and engineering is one of the most important areas of R&D in industrialised countries. It has fuelled progress in every industrial sector from transport to nanotechnology. Intelligent, embedded sensors and highly durable light structures, for example, are both successful products of material research.

The scope of materials science is wide and involves the integration of many disciplines and experts, from fundamental to applied science in physics, chemistry and increasingly in biology, too. However, it is increasingly hard for each specialist RTD group to maintain its activities in the long term, as industry moves up the value chain and industry's needs evolve.

Consequently, arguments for greater co-operation in this field are compelling. Collaboration amongst many dissimilar research groups creates a strong and more durable platform for innovation. The pooling of expertise provides a strength that cannot be achieved when groups work on their own. Many networks and organisations already exist to encourage and create such collaborations between scientists, but until now there were no European or international bodies capable of bringing together another important group of people – the policy-makers. To help EU countries and regions strengthen their research base in MSE, the people and organisations responsible for planning and supporting research programmes in these areas must also be gathered together.

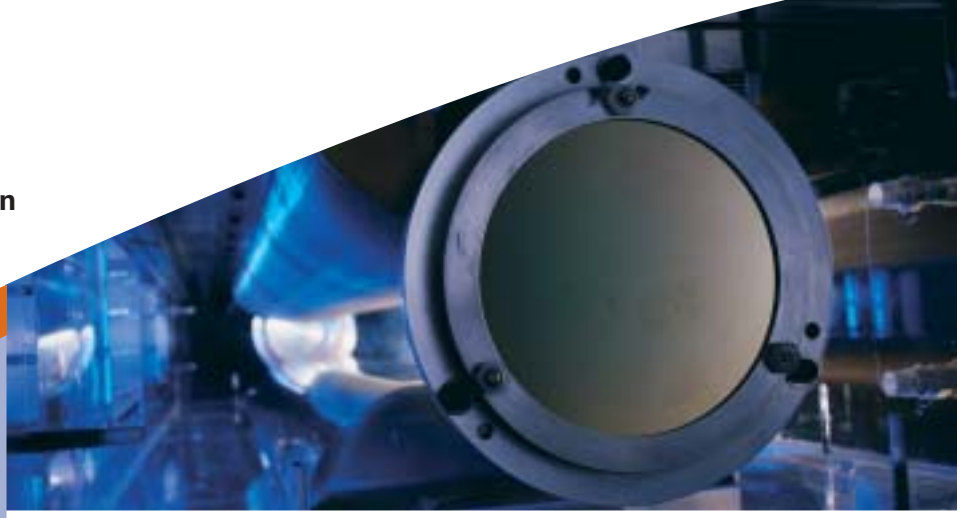
Building blocks

The MATERA ERA-NET aims to fill this void. The MATERA consortium unites 15 governmental funding authorities in 13 countries, including new Member States and Associated Countries, although it is expected that others will join during the course of the ERA-NET. All the participating countries have stated that MSE is one of their priority areas for public funding.

The long-term objective of MATERA is to increase the level of collaboration taking place between materials science programmes across Europe, thereby strengthening expertise in material innovation, and supporting Europe's industrial and economic growth.

Based on EnMatSSA's groundwork, the MATERA participants have acknowledged that further information exchange is essential before any future co-operation can be agreed. Therefore, the participants have begun to collate data on programme design, content, priorities, implementation and management approaches.

Coordination Action MATERA



Full title:
ERA-NET Materials

Research field:
Materials Science

Co-ordinator:
Finland: The National Technology Agency (Tekes)

Partners:
- Finland: The Academy of Finland (AKA)
- Belgium: The Institute for the Promotion of Innovation by Science and Technology in Flanders (IWT)
- Belgium: Ministry of the Walloon Region (DGTRE)
- Germany: Ministry of Economics Affairs and Labour, North Rhine Westphalia (MWA-NRW)
- Iceland: The Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNIS)
- Ireland: Enterprise Ireland (EI)
- Latvia: The Latvian Council of Science (LCS)
- Luxemburg: The National Research Fund (FNR)
- Italy: Ministry for University, Education and Science (MIUR)
- Norway: The Research Council of Norway (RCN)
- Poland: Ministry of Scientific Research and Information Technology (MSRIT)
- Slovenia: The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MHEST)
- Switzerland: Innovation Promotion Agency (KTI/CTI)
- United Kingdom: Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI)

Further information:
Ms Sisko Sipilä
Tekes
P.O. Box 69
FI-00101 Helsinki
Fax: +358 10 521 5904
e-mail: sisko.sipila@tekes.fi
website: www.tekes.fi

Duration:
4 years

EC funding:
€2 343 300

Project reference:
CA 016102

Directorate-General for Research:
Coordination of Research Activities
http://www.cordis.lu/coordination/home.html

© European Commission, 2005 - Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged

> *"I believe that through the MATERA project we will get new impulses to improve the national funding systems and make RTD activities more effective"*

This first task will highlight areas for potential joint activity between the partners. But it will also stimulate interaction between programme managers, decision-makers and policy-makers. Mutual respect, understanding and trust are all critical if national programmes are to be opened up and harmonised between Member States. MATERA provides a forum for managers to meet and agree on common operational procedures for joint activities and the criteria for opening programmes to each other and outside participants.

Hands on

Although such discussions are essential, MATERA is geared up for action – i.e. the launch of pilot joint activities. Once agreements are in place, this ERA-NET will coordinate several test cases that will involve synchronised joint and coordinated calls for proposals between partners, along with common planning, evaluation and dissemination processes.

The final step in MATERA's work plan will be the launch of fully transnational RTD programmes related to materials science and engineering. The consortium will agree on a framework for common calls and management systems, based on the experience of the pilot joint activities. The partners hope that the launch of two or three joint programmes will mark the beginning of long-lasting co-operation and collaboration for materials research in Europe, thereby providing a powerful tool for Europe's sustained and competitive industrial growth.