

INTRODUCING PROsumer.NET

PROsumer.NET is a co-ordination, networking and roadmapping project to bring together industry, academic and policy experts with specific interest in the design-based consumer goods industries.

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EDITORIAL



PROsumer.NET explores technology and innovation trends in the European Design-based Consumer Goods sectors

During its first year the PROsumer.NET project undertook a **systematic study of technology and innovation trends and needs in the European design-based consumer goods industries**, involving a wide range of experts from across Europe. Starting from the 4 Strategic Research Themes (SRT's) and a number of broad innovation challenges identified at the outset of the project, 2 questionnaire-based surveys were launched to capture the main **socio-economic trends and drivers for innovation** in these markets and to **analyse the technological state-of-the-art** that enables or inhibits the realisation of these key innovations. Both surveys have been completed in the first half of 2012 and their results can be consulted on the project website and in more detail on our virtual expert knowledge platform.

In parallel 4 focussed **expert workshops**, one for each of the **4 Strategic Research Themes**, were organised in Germany, Italy and Spain (2 workshops) in October 2011. See page 2 for more information about their results.

Another activity, strongly related to the technological state-of-the-art analysis, was the compilation of an overview of on-going or recently completed EU research projects in the consumer goods field. The first results of this activity were presented at a workshop in February 2012 in Milan to which coordinators of all 26 identified projects were invited. At this workshop it was agreed that a closer collaboration including joint dissemination activities between these **PROsumer.NET partner projects** will be organised with the support of PROsumer.NET. The first activities are the development of a joint dissemination brochure presenting all individual projects in an attractive and accessible style and the organisation of a joint exhibition stand at the EU Industrial Technologies Conference in Aarhus, Denmark in June 2012. Information about all partner projects is available on the PROsumer.NET website at <http://prosumernet.eu/partner-projects>.

An innovation policy workshop bringing together 40 industry, research and policy experts took place in February 2012 in Brussels. Read details on page 3.

On 4th July a public mid-term seminar is organised in Brussels, focussing specifically on the impact of retail innovation on developments

in the consumer goods manufacturing sector.

All information available on www.prosumernet.eu



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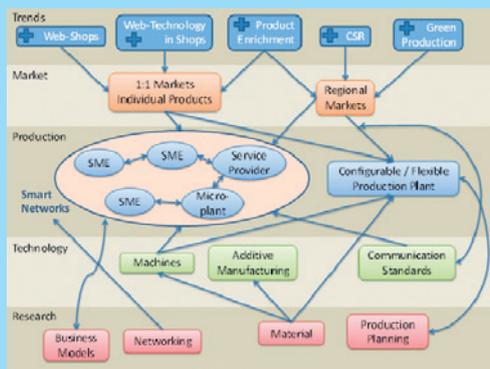
Expert Workshops dedicated to the 4 Strategic Research Themes (SRT)

Over 50 consumer goods experts involved in 4 focussed workshop sessions

Key issues identified:

SRT1 - (Multi)functional products for specific applications and uses

Innovative products & related services for changed lifestyles, living & working patterns, for prevention and management of health and ageing-related issues, to support diverse, specialised and sometimes extreme sports and leisure activities, to connect across cultures and to plug into the world ubiquitous information and virtual social networks.



SRT 2 - Intelligent manufacturing and smart value chains

Customisation, personalisation and product configuration enabled by efficient smart manufacturing platforms, collaborative tools for virtual industrial co-design and remote expert product development, new shop concepts combining the best of web and physical store functionalities including efficient small scale production.

SRT 3 – New design and product life cycle concepts

Rapid design and prototyping solutions to enable fast market launches, tools to develop user-driven design and easy customisation for special needs consumers, realistic simulation of product characteristics in use, cradle-to-cradle product life cycle concepts.

SRT 4 - Personalisation and consumer empowerment

Web-enabled co-creation and co-design tools in on-line communities and networks, anthropometric personalisation for best ergonomics and comfort of use, sensing and intelligence embedded in products to measure, inform, advise or support the user, products self-adapting to physiological or emotional states of the user or actively inducing moods or emotions.

The information and data collected from the workshops were matched with a questionnaire based **socio-economic trends survey** and a **scientific-technological state-of-the-art analysis** carried out in parallel. Together with results of extensive desk research for these tasks and the



two questionnaire based surveys among project partners and external scientific and industrial experts, they formed the basis of two reports published in the first half of 2012. To access these reports and find other information on the work of the PROsumer.NET project, please visit www.prosumernet.eu.

First Innovation Policies Workshop

40 experts from industry, academia, European and national authorities

The one-day workshop in February 2012 discussed key innovation policy issues in the design-based consumer goods sectors with the aim of finding new and better ways to enable the transfer of new knowledge and advanced technologies into industrial practice. In interactive parallel workshop sessions 4 broad innovation themes were discussed and the following conclusions were reached.

Cross-sectoral innovation:

Key drivers for cross-sectoral collaboration can be common challenges such as safety, health, resource efficiency, mobility etc. or arise from the desire of companies to expand into new end markets. Limited cross-sectoral collaboration experience and lack of company capacities represent barriers. A proactive involvement of experienced and resourceful intermediates can be a solution. Concrete policy measures proposed included (1) the set-up of cross-sectoral clusters and networks at regional and EU level; (2) more multidisciplinary and open education and training programmes; (3) more cross-sectoral collaborative research and (4) cross-sectoral dissemination of research results and technology transfer

Design-based innovation:

Design-based innovation often originates from individuals or micro-companies, which often require support to move from design concept to manufacturing and distribution. Support schemes such as FabLabs, CityLabs or the UK 'Catapult centres' should be replicated across Europe. Support is also often needed for professionally dealing with standards and IPR. More training schemes for start-up entrepreneurs or microcompanies in design-related fields should be provided. Also IP audits or bodies that can hold/manage IPR on behalf of SMEs could be helpful. Finally, better promotion of small-scale manufacturing and craftsmanship ("present the maker") could help such innovators.

User-driven innovation:

The general lack of interaction possibilities of end users with traditional manufacturing value chains constitutes the main barrier. Also the prevailing mass-production paradigm with its strong focus on cost reduction rather than end user value creation is a main problem. More contact points between creators with intangible inputs (ideas, data, creativity, enthusiasm) and "materialisers" with tangible capacities (product development; production, logistics, distribution) must be created. More intelligent investment according to local/regional strengths should be made to create clusters which can enable local/regional innovation and also facilitate international outreach.



Workshop participants before the afternoon wrap-up

Eco-Innovation:

Eco-innovation is clearly a mega-trend encompassing almost all products and markets today, but much controversy and confusion among industry, consumers and policy makers alike, about definitions and criteria for ecological or sustainable processes, products or services plague this field. The clear willingness of industry to engage in eco-innovation should be better supported with public financial support or smart incentives. Companies, especially SMEs, and consumers need better access to knowledge on eco-innovation and sustainability and related information should flow more easily between manufacturers, retailers and consumers.

A comprehensive report on innovation issues faced by the European design-based consumer goods sectors will be published by PROsumer.NET in mid-2012.

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-  For joining the PROsumer.NET expert community please complete the online registration form at <http://prosumernet.eu/expert-registration>



RECENT AND UPCOMING PROJECT EVENTS

-  28th February 2012: First Innovation Policy Workshop, Brussels (Belgium)
-  19-21st June 2012: PROsumer.NET session and exhibition stand at EC Industrial Technologies Conference, Aarhus (Denmark)
-  4th July 2012: Mid-term public seminar focused on the impact of retail innovation, Brussels (Belgium)
-  17th September 2012: FP7 project brokerage event and partner projects meeting, Brussels (Belgium)

INVOLVED EUROPEAN TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS & PROJECT PARTNERS

