

Community Talk with: Ronald Begeer

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In this Community Talk column Ronald Begeer considers his ITEA experience in the light of the significant role that digital video has played in the projects in which he has been involved and his particular role as ITEA steering group member. Ronald is currently Programme Manager at Philips Research and responsible for the Philips activities in ITEA and ECSEL. From the start Philips has been one of the founding fathers in ITEA.

“I recall the fascination I had with my very first Sinclair ZX80 some thirty-five years ago. I quickly caught the bug and went to study Electronics and Technical Computer Science. After I graduated in 1983, I joined Philips where I became involved in developing new innovative products, like car navigation systems, CD-I and DVD, digital set-top boxes along with digital television and natural motion. It was an exciting time, especially with the transition from analogue to digital taking place and with Philips at the forefront of the technology. My first contact with ITEA

came through an ITEA 1 project, Candela, which focused on video content analysis in combination with networked delivery and storage technologies. In fact, I worked on a series of projects where digital video played a key role – from set-top boxes to HD4U. It was in the transition from ITEA 1 to ITEA 2 that I became a steering group member as a vacancy was left open by the departure of my Philips colleague Jan Bomhof and I was nominated to fill the gap. Then, at the start of ITEA 3, I became involved in Healthcare projects like MEDUSA, SORTS and BENEFIT that saw the shift from Healthcare Diagnostic Systems to Image Guided Intervention. As a steering group member my responsibility is to manage the ITEA project portfolio in Philips as a mentor and to coach project leaders to become successful in their projects.”

Ronald has witnessed a number of changes during his time in the ITEA set-up, especially the growing level of professionalism and the explicit focus on business impact through



technological innovation, rather than purely the innovation itself, which has become much more of a feature in recent years. “The fact that ITEA has gone through a lot of changes is inevitable, really, especially in the light of the recent wave of economic crises over the past few years, the emergence of Smart Industry, a seemingly unstoppable trend towards globalisation and the addition of new countries in the EUREKA network like those from the former East Bloc, Turkey, South Korea, South Africa and Canada. This has resulted in a widening geographic scope and offers good potential for cooperation between the European industry and the rest of the world. In fact, European companies certainly stand to gain significantly from the opportunities not only to share knowledge but to access new sales markets.”

The advent of SME influence is another trend that has been in evidence in the past decade. Ronald: “I have witnessed a high percentage of manpower now coming from SMEs. Of course, easy access to national authorities and national funding schemes encourages innovative SMEs to participate in ITEA projects, but the real ‘miracle’, if you can call it that, is contained in the relatively easy, bottom-up project definition. It lowers the barrier to participation. What’s more, ITEA brokerage events are dynamic gatherings and they enable SMEs and larger corporate organisations to mingle and match on the basis of common and complementary knowledge and expertise. It’s a real catalyst for collaboration with winners all round.” It is in this aspect that Ronald believes ITEA projects can play a key role in helping Europe achieve

its goals during the coming decade. “I think the value of ITEA projects is threefold. Firstly, cooperation and collaboration in the value chain accelerates the speed from idea to market. Secondly, it is good for our community to get to know each other and share knowledge and learning. Thirdly, working in a EUREKA or ITEA framework enhances the way we cooperate and it creates trust among the partners. This provides both a platform and springboard for companies to seize the high ground, by which I mean that together results can be achieved that really do have a considerable impact on strengthening our businesses and competitiveness.”

“And yet,” Ronald points out, “industry is becoming more and more aware that by strengthening our businesses and being more competitive, we have a responsibility to help tackle societal challenges. At Philips we’re aiming to improve the lives of three billion people a year by 2025 by delivering healthcare and lighting solutions. We strive to make the world healthier and more sustainable through innovation.”

“In terms of my own personal life, I have gained a lot from my dealing and contacts with the ITEA community. I like to meet people and learn from other cultures. Doing so brings you face to face with your own culture and enriches your life. ITEA has been a wonderful vehicle for that and I have taken the ride in that vehicle to many destinations, meeting some fascinating people along the way. For the meantime I’m still on that ride, and I hope to continue contributing to enrich the community for a while to come.”