

What is the Next Big Technology After the Internet?

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The Internet as we know it may soon be out of date but Europe will be playing a vital role in setting the standards for future communication, thanks to a \approx 1.45 million project funded by the Information Society Technology (IST) Programme of the European Union's Framework Programme.

The GRID is widely seen as a step beyond the Internet, incorporating pervasive high bandwidth, high-speed computing, intelligent sensors and large-scale databases into a seamless pool of managed and brokered resources that will be available to everyone.

With project partners in the UK, Germany, France and Poland, GRIDSTART was given the specific objective of consolidating technical advances in Europe, encouraging interaction amongst similar activities both in Europe and the rest of the world and stimulating the early take-up by industry and research of Grid-enabled applications.

“The GRID is much more than just a high-speed Internet” says Maureen Wilkinson, GRIDSTART project manager. “Major information technology vendors such as IBM, Sun and Microsoft are looking to build on high-speed networking to offer grid services - a complete new set of network services designed to take advantage of the higher bandwidths such infrastructures offer.

“Many key businesses are now moving towards ‘grid services’ and our clear goal is to develop sustainable, effective and universal solutions

addressing the needs of science, industry and the public.

“The potential benefits and social impact of the GRID are so great, that it is imperative to involve industry and the service-provision community at an early stage to ensure that the European economy and society can take full advantage of this revolution. “The initiative brings together technologists, scientists and industry in a multi-disciplinary approach to developing the GRID infrastructure.

“The objective of GRIDSTART is to maximise the impact of EU-funded Grid and related activities through the clustering of the currently funded projects and thereby enhance the potential of the new Grid technologies to benefit the people of the European Union.”

This objective will primarily be achieved by consolidating technical advances across a cluster of 18 Framework funded projects in order to exploit fully the synergies between their activities. It will also drive forward GRID developments by identifying and amplifying synergies between different application areas and encourage interaction amongst similar activities within Europe and worldwide.

Peter Walters, UK National Contact Point for IST within the EU’s 6th Framework Programme, believes the grant has been wisely used, saying: “It is vital we ensure that Europe plays a full role in the setting of international standards in communications technology and, as the EU’s main vehicle for support of leading edge, internationally collaborative R&D, the Framework Programmes are ideally placed to help with funding.

The GRIDSTART project will consolidate technical developments and interaction between projects, act as a focused voice in the development of international standards and disseminate European Grid developments to a wide European audience.” “The current Framework Programme

(FP6) runs until 2006 and organisations wanting free information on how to access some of the ^19bn available should log on to fp6uk.ost.gov.uk or call central telephone support on 0870 600 6080.” Further details of the 18 projects can be found at www.gridstart.org

Source: [The Glasgows Group](#)

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