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REVIEW REPORT

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Location: Porto, Portugal

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Review Report
ESPRIT Project no.

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1. Approval of Deliverables

The following deliverables were presented at the final review,

- ◆ D10 – Strategy for the Exploitation of Results
- ◆ D034 – Developed Software Prototype and DIMS Subsystem
- ◆ D044 (Part 1) – EDI Subsystem, Visual Commerce Editor – User’s Guide
- ◆ D044 (Part 2) – EDI Subsystem, PCL EDI Administrator – User’s Guide
- ◆ D063 - LCM and LCF User Manual
- ◆ D073 – Impact of Mobile Systems
- ◆ D074 – Software Implementing Security Procedures and User Manual
- ◆ D075 – Implementation of Interfaces to Communications and Security Infrastructures and User Manual.
- ◆ D083 (A) – Distributed Business Process Management System and User Manual

The reviewers agree that the deliverables were well structured, presented on time, and satisfied the objectives set, for the reporting period. The deliverables are therefore approved.

The PRODNET II project consortium set out to design and develop an open infrastructure to support virtual enterprises and with the final review, the consortium has demonstrated that all project objectives have been met. The reviewers would like to congratulate the consortium for their achievements throughout the project and for their efforts in organising a well run and extremely successful end of project conference, during which a full demonstration of the PRODNET II pre-industrial prototype was presented.

2. Conformity of work done with that described in the Technical Annex

The reviewers commend the consortium for their achievements and acknowledge the fact that the partners went beyond that detailed in the Technical Annex.

3. Project Management and Co-ordination

The reviewers are unanimous in their opinion that the management and coordination of the project was an example of best practice in this area, and congratulate Professor Camarinha-Matos for his professionalism throughout. There is little doubt that the high quality of project management was a key success factor in reaching all project objectives.

4. Relationship with relevant other projects

The reviewers acknowledge all the partners efforts throughout the project to identify and forge links with projects with similar areas of interest. All previous recommendations made by the reviewers were acted upon and the reviewers are confident that this factor contributed positively to eventual success of the project.

5. Relationship to standards activities

The project focused on standards in two strategic areas: one was the EDI subsystem and the other involved contributing to the use of ISO 10303, (STEP).

The review panel's comments made in the beginning of the project (1997) raised concerns about the life time of EDI as is, given its inflexible structure and the pressure of more agile, open, internet based technologies. Those comments are still relevant, given that the evolution of Internet use, and of electronic commerce (i.e. business to consumer and business to business) on the Internet has exceeded all forecasts made in the past 3 years. The reviewers acknowledge that the consortium took some steps to encompass the use of the Web, and foresaw the openness of the architecture to other solutions. However, it remains to be seen whether the lack of availability of a fully-fledged

solution based on Internet technologies such as Java, XML, SSL, SET and CAs, will influence the decision of prospective buyers of the technology. This should be evaluated under the scope of the exploitation plan.

With regard to contribution to use of the STEP standard, the consortium is to be praised for its efforts in dealing with the premature withdrawal of project partner CIMIO. The replacement of CIMIO by ProSTEP ensured that project objectives with regard to the STEP component were met.

6. Industrial exploitation of results

The issue of industrial exploitation of results was one of concern for the reviewers since the beginning. All recommendations made by the review team were taken up and as a result, the reviewers are agreed that the consortium has shown an unquestionable commitment to exploiting their achievements.

The decision to involve external expertise has proved positive and the reviewers concur that the resulting exploitation strategy is sound. Moreover, the professional approach to the exploitation plan, and the detailed attention given to the social aspects of implementing VEs are very positive signs of the consortium's will in making the results of this project a viable technology on the market.

7. Update of Synopsis

The reviewers have no recommendations to make at this time.

8. Plans for Dissemination of Results/Web Site

The reviewers are agreed that consortium achievements in disseminating the work carried out in the project are impressive. The partners are praised for their prolific publication record and are to be commended for their conscientiousness in ensuring that all recommendations made by the review team during the course of the project were acted upon.

The reviewers advise that the project web site should continue to be maintained as a marketing tool to support the exploitation initiative.

9. Synthesis of reviewers' technical comments

The reviewers are unanimous in their opinion that the PRODNET II project can be considered to have been highly successful, both in technical terms, and in the generation of long-lasting co-operation links, both across Europe and beyond. In terms of financial efficiency, the results achieved can be considered of extremely good value, for the money spent in supporting it, by the ESPRIT Programme. In terms of definition of a technical, research and business area (VE), the project broke new ground and is "a", if not "the", reference project in Europe.

An architecture reformulation that allows generic access to several networking infrastructures by the higher layers, alleviated the concerns about security and the dependency on EDI that had been raised by the reviewers, early on in the project. It would have been interesting to have extended the security measures, which now address the transport layer of the architecture, to the higher layers, allowing authentication of individual users, and encryption, signature and integrity protection of information introduced at an individual's terminal, instead of on a PCI-to-PCI agent basis.

The question now is how can the project achievements be best leveraged for the future. It is clear that to market the PRODNET solution successfully, a sufficient level of credibility in the system must be secured among prospective customers in the market. This will require adequate testing of the PRODNET solution in the day to day business environment. The reviewers feel that such a step could be the subject of a "trial" under the IST accompanying measures framework. The feasibility of such an effort should be investigated with the PRODNET user partners/consultants taking the lead.

10. Recommendations of Reviewers

- ◆ Continue to maintain the project web site.
- ◆ Evaluate, as part of the exploitation plan, whether or not the lack of availability of a comprehensive solution based in Internet technologies will influence the decision of prospective customers.
- ◆ Investigate the feasibility of running the PRODNET solution as a “Trial project”, under the IST accompanying measures framework

11. Follow-Up actions

None are foreseen.

12. Date of next review

Not applicable