

SUPPORT – Sustainable Innovation Tools

Project Update



Further to the introduction in the March issue of TRIZ Journal (Reference 1), the SUPPORT project team thought that it was time to update readers on progress made on the project. The project – funded by the EU Leonardo da Vinci initiative – is intended to generate education materials to encourage systematic innovation in the sustainability arena. Partners involved in the project come from six different parts of the European Community. They include:-

- Industrial Liaison Department, University of Leoben, Austria
- Fraunhofer Institute in Aachen, Germany
- Joanneum Research in Graz, Austria
- CREAM from Leper, Belgium
- AREA from Trieste, Italy
- University of Maribor in Slovenia

The main objectives of the project are to produce and validate education and training materials enabling companies to achieve more sustainable business practices. The project is taking a modular approach to the creation of course materials – enabling users to mix-and-match modules according to their own circumstances and education needs. The modules include:

- tools for problem definition
- tools for idea generation
- tools for idea evaluation
- tools for pollution prevention, cleaner production
- creation of awareness 'sustainability'
- fostering teamwork

We anticipate that the eventual output from the project will comprise a self-contained pack containing course materials, tutor manuals, hands-on tools for exercises and case-studies, CD-Rom and video. It is hoped that these packs will be made available to interested parties in all parts of the World.

Target users for the materials will primarily comprise managers, engineers and designers working in R&D and production environments within large companies, directors of SMEs and start-up companies, and universities and colleges responsible for teaching sustainability and innovation concepts to final year under-graduate and post-graduate students.

TRIZ is expected to play a significant role (Figure 1) in the achievement of the project objectives. The project team is currently involved in re-framing the TRIZ toolkit to better suit sustainability-centred problem solving. Included in this work is the creation of a wide variety of case-studies based around each of the main TRIZ tools, and the creation and compilation of as many examples of the 40 Principles, Trends of Evolution and Standard Solutions as can be found in the sustainable innovation environment.

Early examples of how an extended focus on sustainability can be observed on the TRIZ toolkit may be seen in the just-published Matrix 2003 book (Reference 2). This completely revised version of the Matrix features new Parameters 'Function Efficiency', 'Compatibility'

(for example thinking about dis-assembly and recyclability issues) and 'Harmful Emissions', as well as a strongly increased focus on sustainability best-practice in existing parameters like Loss of Substance, Loss of Energy, Harmful Side-Effects and others.



Figure 1: SUPPORT Project Strategy

The project has a duration of two years, ending in November 2004. Key milestones for this year include the creation of course materials for the first pilot workshops, and the presentation of the first of the workshops (in Austria and the UK) in November.

People interested in finding out more about the project should check out the dedicated website at www.leonardo-support.com.

The current phase of the project is trying to gather preliminary information on the state of the art in sustainable innovation capabilities within industry. This information will be used to ensure the course materials developed best serve the needs of industry. In order to do the best possible job, the project team is looking for as many inputs from industry as possible. If you want to take part in the survey (which should only take 5-10 minutes of your time), then please click on the 'Sustainable Innovation Survey' link on the project web-site home-page.

Anyone else interested in helping in the project may like to contribute examples of good sustainability practice for inclusion in the knowledge database. Contact jonathan.hey@creax.com if you want more information.

We expect to present further updates to the project work at the ETRIA TRIZ Conference in Aachen in November (Reference 3) and also, after the initial pilot workshops, in TRIZ Journal.

References

- 1) 'SUPPORT Sustainable Innovation Tools Project', TRIZ Journal, March 2003.
- 2) Mann, D.L., Dewulf, S., Zlotin, B., Zusman, A., 'Matrix 2003: Updating The TRIZ Contradiction Matrix', CREAX Press, June 2003.
- 3) www.etria.net