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Success Stories

SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

Researchers' Success Stories / November 2011

European Funding: an opportunity for Small and Medium Enterprises

Rainbow Photonics AG is a small company with nine employees, known as a producer of devices based on terahertz technology. At least two facts about the company are unusual. First, it coordinates a big project funded by the European Union (EU) – which the EU would like to see more. Second, it is led by women – which is rather exceptional in the high-tech industry.

Good for business

For Rainbow Photonics AG, the COSIT-project is an opportunity to conduct research that will ultimately lead to a new saleable product – research that would not be possible without external funding: "We could not bear the cost of two years of research relying solely on the expected revenue of the resulting product",says Carolina Medrano, who leads the company as CEO together with Mojca Jazbinsek (CTO) and Blanca Ruiz (Product Manager).

Dr. Carolina Medrano
Coordinator COSIT project

Good for research

For the European Union (EU), the involvement of an SME like Rainbow Photonics AG is an opportunity to profit from the expertise of people who know the markets' needs and what the "real-world" problems are when research is implemented.

How to get funding

COSIT is funded by the EU's Future and Emerging Technologies (FET)-Open funding scheme. Rainbow Photonics AG learned of this scheme during an Euresearch event and by an e-mail from an officer in the EU Commission. "At first we were not sure whether it was right for our company. But having the information from Euresearch, we decided to submit the requested 5-page proposal with our idea", says Carolina Medrano. Both the 5-page proposal and the following detailed one were accepted.

"The project enables us to conduct research for two years that will lead to the development, engineering and marketing of a new product."

Finding reliable partners

"As a project coordinator, doing one's own work is one thing; making others do the rest, is quite another", says Carolina Medrano. The partners' reliability and quality of work is key. Luckily, as the coordinating institution, Rainbow Photonics AG was able to select the project partners according to the needed expertise: Metz University (France), Institut Jozef Stefan Ljubljana (Slovenia), and CICESE Centro de Investigación Científica y de Educación Superior de Ensenada (Mexico). "These are institutions with a high scientific reputation doing excellent research work known internationally and to us", says Carolina Medrano. Now within the frame of this project they will work together during two years, starting in January 2012.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

COSIT (Compact High Brilliance Single frequency THz Source) aims at developing a device that can detect the tiniest flaws in materials used for medical applications, for example knee implants. Companies producing such materials need to detect irregularities smaller than 10 µm (= 0.01 mm) in less than 100 ms per pixel. Such irregularities can grow to an extent that the implant has to be replaced. So far materials are checked manually – which, apart from being costly, is not completely reliable.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Project Name:	COSIT – Compact High Brilliance Single frequency THz Source
Research Area:	FP7 – Cooperation – Information and Communication Technologies – Future and emerging technologies (FET)-open
Coordinator:	Dr. Carolina Medrano
Organisation:	Rainbow Photonics AG
Start Date - End Date	2012/01/01 – 2013/12/31
Duration	24 months
Project Cost / Funding:	1.28 million Euro / 966 868 Euro
Contract type:	FP7: Specific Targeted Research or Innovation Project (STREP)