

Opportunities for convergence – the co-operative approach

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Integration was a general trend and objective of many projects and activities in telecoms R&D in the nineties. This was caused by new networks and technologies that rapidly emerged after decades in which the telephone networks had a kind of monopoly position. It was an attempt to include them into the existing networks. These new networks include fast spreading mobile networks and the Internet. Related activities such as IN (Intelligent Networks) – Internet integration, or fixed mobile integration are still well in mind. However, towards the end of the nineties it became obvious that the objective of Integration became less pursued. At the ITU Telecom 99 Forum and fair in Geneva it was generally agreed that priorities have shifted from *Integration* towards *Convergence*. This was certainly in recognition of the fact that building a unique all-encompassing system is not feasible, e.g. due to economical reasons and complexity issues.

Eurescom – the European Institute for Research and Strategic studies in Telecommunications' has been involved or co-ordinating a number of projects and activities in which convergence was the goal or a major element of work. Eurescom's mission is to provide the most cost-effective consulting and management services for the collaborative innovation activities of its customers in the information and communication technology sector. Areas for convergence covered by Eurescom are not limited to telecommunications networks, like e.g. fixed-mobile convergence, but include to a great extent also telecom – IT convergence. Examples are the area of Middleware, but also the wide scope of Beyond 3G Systems, which try to bring together the various mobile, wireless, and also fixed line technologies, devices and applications.

At Eurescom there is a great spectrum of activity types, including Eurescom projects, short studies, European projects in EC FP5 and FP6, Eureka's CELTIC initiative, and organisational support for initiatives like the WWRF and the Digital Media Project (DMP). This presentation will give an overview of the activities carried out within Eurescom in the area of convergence. In addition to an overall view, some relevant projects in the various areas will be presented, exploring the respective specific area and identifying possible solutions.

