

# Grenoble Isère Report



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## VIEWPOINT

# At France Telecom R&D, even objects speak

**Communicating with inanimate objects might seem an impossible task but France Telecom (FT) maintains it can be done.**

From scarves that send and receive email messages to smart fridges that warn you when they start running low on fresh produce, a host of everyday objects packed with ICs and sensors are revealing their potential as communications terminals. At the FT R&D laboratory in Meylan some 60 investigators are thinking up next generation telephones. And as they get smaller, phones are increasingly likely to become part of the decor. Patrice Senn, who heads the research team, explains: "We are now looking at the concept of ambient intelligence. The idea is that when you walk into a room you trigger various responses and automatically connect to the network via the surrounding objects." To show off its know-how FT R&D recently presented a smart library containing books that can connect readers to internet sites related to the author and other useful sources. Another example is a communicating scarf, now on show at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMa). The R&D team in Meylan is also involved in several European research teams, as well as contributing to local projects with CEA and STMicroelectronics on possible uses for new transmission technologies.



## SPOTLIGHT

# Mondiaquartz in Bernin

Quartz is an extremely pure material that withstands very high temperatures. In particular electronic chip manufacturers use quartz in their thermal treatment furnaces. Mondiaquartz, a local firm launched in 1996 with a workforce of 20, has developed a process for transforming and shaping quartz that meets the most stringent requirements for ultracleanliness. Thanks to this process it hopes to become the preferred supplier of leading microelectronics firms. Mondiaquartz is located in Bernin, just down the road from the new STMicroelectronics – Philips-Motorola Crolles 2 Alliance R&D centre. It has just installed a powerful production line, with two class 10 clean rooms and a 1,500 sq m air-conditioned workshop.

## UPDATES

**Crolles 2**, the new Alliance R&D centre operated by STMicroelectronics, Philips and Motorola was officially opened on 27 February by the French President Jacques Chirac. Crolles 2, which will design and manufacture next generation chips, is unique in Europe. It represents the largest industrial investment in France in the last 10 years – a total of €3bn spread over five years with strong support from local and national government. It will account for 1,200 direct jobs.



**Novellus Systems Inc.** the US equipment manufacturer (\$1.3bn revenue worldwide), is transferring its European headquarters from the UK to Bernin, near Grenoble, just opposite the STMicroelectronics fab, the aim being to expand business with its new neighbour. Novellus employs some 40 people in Grenoble-Isère and about 120 in Europe as a whole. It specializes in advanced deposition, surface preparation and chemical mechanical planarization equipment for high-volume production of semiconductors at the lowest possible cost.

**Tedisy** based in **Montbonnot**, has been chosen by Airbus France to supply its digital television channel TV Info. This fully automated channel is designed for in-house communication and will be broadcast over 250 televisions and LCDs all over France. The three-year contract will earn Tedisy more than €500,000 in just the first year.

## KEY EVENTS

## Grenoble to lead France's proteomics efforts

Claudie Haigneré, France's Minister of Research, has announced that a national centre of proteomics excellence is to be set up in Grenoble. Proteomics is a new science at the crossroads between gene sequencing, the study of protein structure and biocomputing. It contributes to a better understanding of the complex interaction between genes and the proteins they code. It aims to identify new therapeutic targets then develop new forms of medical treatment.

Grenoble-Isère already has human and technological resources in this field in the form of CEA-Grenoble's mass spectroscopy proteomic analysis platform. The Partnership for Structural Biology (PSB) launched recently by the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility (ESRF), Institut Laue Langevin (ILL), the Institute of Structural Biology (IBS – a mixed research unit affiliated to Université Joseph Fourier, CNRS and CEA) and the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) supplements these resources. With the biocomputing platform, operated by the National Institute of Applied Computer Research (Inria Rhône-Alpes) in Montbonnot, Grenoble-Isère at last has the technology to explore the complex relation between the structure and function of proteins and gain a better understanding of their interaction.

The recent announcement crowns efforts by Rhône-Alpes Génopole since March 2000 to make Grenoble an international centre of excellence in proteomics and structural genomics.



## Proteins for health

ESRF's structural biology research programme already enjoys an international reputation, but the opening of a new beam line devoted to crystallography will give it an additional boost. EMBL's Grenoble outstation – with the main lab in Heidelberg and others in Heidelberg, Hinxton and Monterotondo – will be setting up an infrastructure dedicated to high-speed expression of proteins. ILL, the world's leading neutron source, has contributed to important discoveries in life science, thanks in particular to the use of a wide range of innovative

instruments. IBS is one of France's top labs in this sector, with access to powerful technology – cristallography, NMR, cryoelectron microscopy, etc. The four research facilities, all located on Grenoble's scientific research park, have been working together for several years. With the Partnership for Structural Biology (PSB) they will be pooling part of their resources and manpower (about 100 people) to study various proteins selected for their medical potential. Here again the aim is to gain a better understanding of how the human body works at molecular

level. Pharmaceutical firms have started joining the project. The PSB will also work closely with the Institute of Virology that Université Joseph Fourier is setting up at the same location (also involving ESRF, EMBL, IBS and ILL). It will be researching the most dangerous viruses. All these bodies will be fully operational by 2004.

# Agrifood industry in Isère

**Soviba's recent arrival confirms the area's appeal for food firms**

Strategically placed, Rhône-Alpes represents a market of 4.5m consumers, easy access to the whole of south-east France and significant logistics facilities. This no doubt explains why Soviba, Terrena's meat-processing subsidiary, has decided to set up a new plant at Bougé-Chambalud, near Beaurepaire, in the west of Isère, a rural area well known for its orchards. Until now Soviba's operations were restricted to western France (Angers, Villers Bocage and Saint Maixent). But France's third largest meat processor needs to be located close to its customers, to meet delivery deadlines and new traceability requirements for fresh food. The new production unit has an annual capacity of 7,000 tonnes of beef – with sausages, kebabs and steak accounting for two thirds of output, and hamburgers making up the rest. It covers 7,000 sq m and cost €11m. The local authorities actively supported the project, which is expected to create some 150 jobs between 2003 and 2005. Soviba also has plans to develop new "traditional" ranges to cater for buyers in Rhône-Alpes and the south of France.

Soviba's arrival confirms the appeal of the northern part of Isère for the agrifood industry. Several international companies have been operating in the area for many years, particularly in meat and dairy processing. Since 1976 the town of Aoste – not to be confused with Aosta in northern Italy – has been associated with a brand of cured ham



marketed by the firm of the same name. Aoste, the world's top producer of ham, now belongs to the Sara Lee group. It employs 650 people at its Isère facility (100,000 sq m), producing 45,000 hams a week. Another big player is Danone. It manufactures 169,000 tonnes of produce per day at its Saint Just Chaleyssin factory, with a workforce of 300. Every year it collects 120m litres of milk from 1,500 producers in Rhône-Alpes.

Just a short way along the A7 motorway, in Vienne, is Sodiaal's largest production facility. With a workforce of 650 it produces 140,000 tonnes of dairy goods a day under the Yoplait brand (including some 17,000 125 g pots) and packs 280m litres of milk a year under the Candia brand.

Brioche Pasquier, France's top baker, also moved to Rhône-Alpes from further west for exactly the same reasons as Soviba. Its Charancieu factory – one of five producing croissants, brioches, pains au chocolat and jam-filled "Pitch" cakes – supplies all of south-east France, part of Italy and soon Switzerland. The site, currently being extended to occupy 18,000 sq m, employs 380 people.

It is located near a major motorway intersection.

A number of smaller firms are springing up beside the big corporations. Pierre Martinet, based in Saint Quentin Fallavier, has made a name for itself as the French market leader for ready-to-serve lettuce and salads. Output totals 35,000 tonnes a year, featuring 65 different recipes. External growth has enabled it to climb to fourth position in the savoury bakery market (pies, flans, etc.), marketing a further 4,500 tonnes of produce. It has a total workforce of 700 with €152m revenue in 2002.

However there is another side to food in Isère. Grenoble walnuts, the first nut in France to qualify for an appellation contrôlée, Chartreuse liqueur, Saint Marcellin cheese or Bleu du Vercors-Sassenage (another appellation contrôlée) all contribute to the area's reputation at home and abroad.



## NOTEBOOK

## 2003, a big year for Berlioz

"La Côte Saint André, a very small town in France, stands on the side of a hill overlooking a broad, fertile plain, with a majestically dreamy silence."



This was how Berlioz, writing in his memoirs, recalled the town where he was born and spent the first 18 years of his life. Two hundred years later Isère is preparing to celebrate the composer in fitting style, all the way through the year. For its 10th edition in August the Berlioz festival, in La Côte Saint André, will be extending its programme to attain a truly international dimension. It will be featuring world famous conductors, including Rostropovich and Krivine, with 16 major concerts focusing on Berlioz. Other festivities will be organized all year long and all over Isère, from Grenoble to Vienne, with conferences and exhibitions.

A special CD-Rom will be produced for local schoolchildren and Perrin, which manufactures luxury silk scarves in Grand Lemps (exclusive supplier to Hermès), will be producing a Berlioz design specially for the occasion. In short the whole department will be contributing to promoting the great Romantic composer. Another key event will be the reopening, in June, of the Berlioz Museum, in his birthplace in La Côte Saint André. The exhibition has been completely redesigned, renovated and extended. The house itself dates from the 17th century and contains a unique collection of period furniture, original scores, travel notebooks, portraits and musical instruments that belonged to the composer. It conjures up the life and work of a visionary, but troubled genius, largely misunderstood during his own lifetime.



## Airstar in the Hollywood limelight

**Brotherhood of the Wolf, The Mexican (starring Brad Pitt, Julia Roberts and James Gandolfini), Cast Away (Tom Hanks) and Mission Impossible 2 (Tom Cruise)**, to name but a few, were shot under the powerful light diffused by Airstar lighting balloons. The invention started life in a small Isère-based firm in Champ près Froges that employs 32 people. Airstar has made a name for itself in Hollywood thanks to a full range of balloons tailor-made for the needs of the film industry. They include the Gaffair – an ultra-silent air-filled balloon that produces 5,600 kilowatts of all-round light per hour. In recognition of its contribution to moving pictures Airstar has just won an Academy Award for its range of lighting balloons.



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