



A small revolution in water monitoring

A project financed by the Eurostars programme is about to fix a plumbing problem worth billions of euros.

You will never hear it broadcasted on the airwaves, but AZ Radio, a project funded by the Eurostars programme, is likely to be a topic of conversation on the boards of many a multinational on the water supply market. The AZ100 Radio Data Logger, the device developed during the project, is a data-logging system that detects leakages in water pipelines by analysing sound waves. It does it faster, cheaper and with more accuracy than any similar tool presently available. Data-logging is the process of using a computer to collect and analyse data through a set of remote sensors. In the AZ Radio case, it is also a way to make sure our taps do not run out of water.

Developed by Germany's F.A.S.T GmbH and Austria's MTA Messtechnik GmbH, two engineering SMEs, and made by F.A.S.T, AZ Radio brings an answer to some rather urgent questions. In some EU countries loss in water supply due to leakage stands at 50% and more. At the same time, demand for water is rising worldwide, pushed by food producers and other major industries. A policy review published by the European Commission last year evaluates the cost in damages and lost economic potential due to water scarcity in the EU to 100 billion euros. The need for a solution has

never been so pressing and experts are forecasting that the commodity will almost inevitably become more expensive in the future.

Global ambitions

Whereas it usually takes several weeks between a leakage occurring and it being identified, located and repaired, with the AZ Radio system installed, the whole process takes only a few hours, using significantly less manpower. With a specially-equipped mobile trouble-shooting unit, water suppliers can react rapidly to the issues identified through data collection.

For Hans-Peter Karle, managing director of F.A.S.T, the most important benefit in getting Eurostars funding was the time it bought him. The financing received allowed him to sort out many teething problems linked to the complex technology behind the product at development-stage, rather than after its market launch. The reliability of the AZ Radio is now giving F.A.S.T the edge over its competitors.

Ever since the completion of the Eurostars project in 2011, interest in the company has been growing steadily. Orders have been placed by large communal water suppliers in Luxembourg, Germany and Austria,

with even bigger contracts about to be concluded in Brazil and the Middle East. Since launching the product earlier this year, the company has created new jobs, achieved

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an additional turnover of 300.000 euros, and is expecting a growth of around 100% over the next three years alone. 'Every water supplier will eventually need a system like ours, with costs rising and resources getting scarcer year by year,' Karle explains.

Project participants:
Germany, Austria

Budget: 1.4 MEuro
Duration: 36 months

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