

EXPLORVIRT: EXPLORATORY RESEARCH ON THE FOOTWEAR-CONSUMER INTERFACE DEVELOPMENT WITH A VIEW TO RAPID PROTOTYPING

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ABSTRACT

The Romania’s integration in the EU will have a significant impact upon the footwear national industry, which will have to face, on one side, the pressures of the European producers’ competition, and the Asian competitors on the other side. An important problem of the Romanian footwear industry is the subcontracting. As the wages-related costs will increase, two alternatives are opened before the footwear industry: *to accelerate reorganization or to give in before the competition –related pressure and to orient towards a lower quality.*

The *ExplorVIRT* project, within the CEEX (Research for Excellency) national research program, proposes the development of an innovative climate for the footwear sector in Romania, and the results obtained will lead to the increase of the manufacturing companies’ abilities, especially of the design-development team, to valorize “the consumer’s voice”. The proposed research activities within the partnership project aim at reaching a high scientific and technical level by considering the opportunities, the methods and the instruments of creation and development of an interface between the consumer and the footwear product. It is a breaking new ground project, at our country level, in the field of the footwear product prototypes (virtual and physical), marking the transfer from the mass production to the consumer-oriented production by new concepts, adjusted to the footwear industry and capable to add value to the product development process in this important field of the national economy.

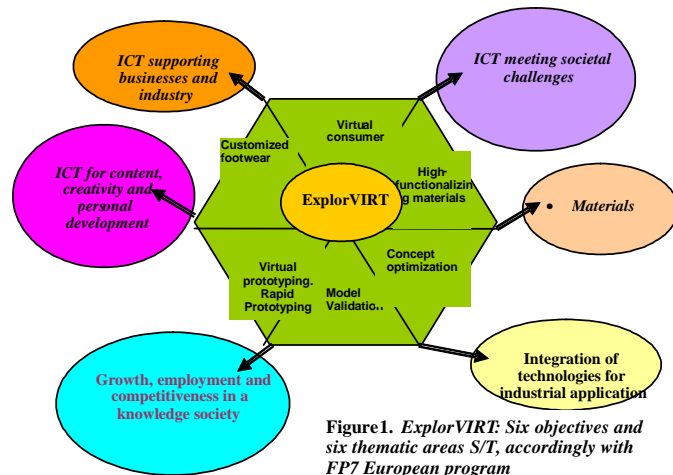


Figure 1. ExplorVIRT: Six objectives and six thematic areas S/T, accordingly with FP7 European program

This paper will describe the following items:

- Presentation of the ExplorVIRT project general and specific objectives (figure 1);
- Project justification, considering the national and European context ;
- Technical, economical and social impact of the project.

The *ExplorVIRT* project is strongly anchored in the European research realities; it synergically converges towards the objectives of others European projects (for example, www.cec-made-shoe.com), without overlapping it, and it will create from the perspective of the estimated scientific results, the opportunity of increasing the international visibility of the Romanian research in the field.

KEYWORDS

Footwear, customized product, rapid prototyping, virtual consumer