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This TOPICS issue focuses mainly on actual research themes of VICOMTech, the INI-GraphicsNet member in San Sebastián, Spain. VICOMTech, after the start of activities early in 2001, is consolidating its position locally and internationally during its second year of operation, based on a broad range of national and European projects. As an important complement, this edition will have contributions from other members of the INI-GraphicsNet. Most of them introduce joint research projects with VICOMTech, which underline the remarkable evidence of the tight cooperation in the practice between INI-GraphicsNet members.

The direct relationship with a real media broadcasting group - EITB, Basque TV & Radio-, the telecommunications partner of the INI-GraphicsNet Foundation in this joint-venture, has provided a rich and fruitful cooperation scenario and a key research line on Digital Interactive TV, where the synergies between the latest technologies of Computer Graphics and Broadcasting are fostered through applied research.

Another significant area of cooperation highlighted in the present edition is the use of Mixed Reality Technologies for Cultural Heritage dissemination. VICOMTech has the advantage of having direct influence in a region with much cultural diversity (for example, Basque, Spanish and French languages coexist), reflecting a truly European flavor where the multiculturalism and the variety of traditions and cultural expressions are part of everyday life. The possibilities of Mixed Reality technologies to disseminate this valuable cultural heritage are reflected in the related

articles. The VICOMTech participation in the European Projects »art-E-Fact« and »artnouveau«, together with ZGDV and Fraunhofer IGD, is a clear hint of the importance of these activities.

The reader will find some articles related to Digital Interactive TV & Video services. One article describes the advanced Digital TV research laboratory of VICOMTech, which supports Computer Graphics applications and the MHP standard, and replicates the entire TV broadcasting cycle via terrestrial, cable or satellite signal. Another article is about an industrial research project from two Basque TV producers, interested in innovative Computer Graphics applications for sports broadcasting in Digital TV. A third article is about the advanced platform iTV from ZGDV for enhanced interaction with video contents via the Internet, which addresses the real possibilities of the Internet to enrich video transmission and interaction.

There are some interesting articles as well related to Mixed Reality for Cultural Heritage. In the EU funded Project art-E-Fact, a generic platform for the creation of interactive art experience will be developed using advanced technologies of Mixed Realities and Digital Storytelling. An EU Thematic Network for the transition to the digital era of arts and culture is the purpose of Artnouveau. The cooperation of VICOMTech with San Telmo Museum (San Sebastian's main museum) and the Deusto University for dissemination of information about the old iron age culture in the Basque region is also a good example of research in this area. In the field of Knowledge

Management, the EU-funded Project WIDE (where the INI-GraphicsNet is represented by Fraunhofer IGD, VICOMTech and CCG) aims to develop a semantic web-based information management and knowledge sharing system for product design and engineering. The EU project MUMMY, led by ZGDV, aims to enable mobile, personalized knowledge management based on the usage of rich multimedia to improve the efficiency of mobile business processes.

Last but not least, 3 additional projects are presented. In the Abateus project, VICOMTech in collaboration with ZGDV develops Basque conversational 3D avatars for TV and multimedia for an important 3D TV & Film producer. In cooperation with the Medical Applications Division of Fraunhofer IGD a joint project on the VITAL standard for vital signs is presented.

The interchange of Spanish and German researchers from VICOMTech and Fraunhofer IGD, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and the German service DAAD, enables a collaboration in the area of Large Model Visualization and is also described in this issue.

Finally, the newest member of the INI-GraphicsNet (GraphiTech) is also introduced in this issue. We wish our new Italian partners great success and give them a friendly welcome to the network. We believe, that Graphitech soon will become an important node of the INI-GraphicsNet.