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EU FUNDING HAS GIVEN SUSSEX-BASED ELYSIUM UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES TO COLLABORATE IN EUROPE

It has also been able to double investment in research and projects like MIGRATOR 2000 - which has helped people move to the new JPEG 2000 graphical standard - have kept Elysium on track commercially

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International standards take a long time to formulate and reach agreement on. Richard Clark, MD of Sussex-based Elysium Ltd, was working on enhanced videotex systems at BT when he first became interested in the idea that images could be 'embedded' in a digital document. Now, some twenty-five years later, he is the last remaining founder member of the *Joint Photographic Experts Group* committee, better known as JPEG.

Richard acknowledges that a small company such as Elysium will only ever hope to exploit specific niche opportunities out of a technical standard such as JPEG. However, the company is committed to investing at least 10-15% of its turnover on R&D and welcomes the opportunity provided by EC support for international standards initiatives. *"Without funding from the ESPRIT, ACTS and IST programmes, it is doubtful whether European participants would have been able to act in a co-ordinated way alongside their US-based and far-eastern colleagues"* says Richard.

Elysium is also very active in the international Open Source initiative, from which key world-wide web technologies such as Linux, Apache and PHP have emerged. When Richard began to take a co-ordinating role in the UK's JPEG community, he naturally looked to the web to provide a communication infrastructure for committee members. In turn, the British Standards Institution became interested in this new way of working and Elysium now provides BSI's electronic document management system. This holds more than a hundred thousand documents for over 20,000 members of more than 2,000 committees, making very significant savings over previous paper based distribution.

Participation in standards meetings led to the identification of businesses from other countries with a similar company ethos and complementary interests and Elysium began looking for a suitable collaborative project to become involved in. In 1999, in anticipation of publication of the new JPEG 2000 standard, they were invited to join a French-led consortium to move existing JPEG-related tools to a more powerful and flexible environment. Elysium's main interest in the MIGRATOR 2000 project was continuing development of the web techniques they were using within BSI and elsewhere. As developer and host of the web-site, they were able to build and validate a strong and flexible XML based web framework that is used in much of their current development work.

MIGRATOR 2000 ran successfully for eighteen months and its closing technical review gave it a categorisation of 'exemplary'. It delivered a number of early demonstrations of the technology underpinning JPEG 2000, helping keep Europe as a significant player in a field that had been hitherto dominated by North American and Japanese technology. The project provided Elysium with the shared resources and expertise needed to develop their XML tools, but it also gave them PR and visibility within the standards community and beyond (having produced the first JPEG 2000 browser plug-in) and increased awareness of these markets and the way to approach them.



JPEG 2000 image during transmission showing region of interest (around text) imaging first

Towards the end of the MIGRATOR project, it became clear that the publication of the JPEG 2000 standard was only a stepping-stone in the development of useful applications for the work. Elysium began producing a reference document for potential users of JPEG 2000, such as the medical and surveillance industries and large-scale digital image databases. The MIGRATOR consortium has been expanded to work on the advanced networking components of JPEG 2000 and to develop a digital imaging portal. The success of the earlier project made it much easier to recruit the kind of partners needed for the new initiative and the 2KAN project (www.2kan.org) was launched in March 2002. It is another step in a process that Richard Clark sees as extremely valuable: *"EU funding has given us useful opportunities to collaborate within Europe, and effectively magnify our investment in research many times over. Following international standards through to viable commercial applications can be a lengthy process, and our involvement with EU projects has kept us on the right track commercially."*



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