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Modern businesses must react quickly to changes in the marketplace if they are to remain competitive. Flexibility measurements can play a large part in improving organisational structures. This is the topic of the article "[Flexibility management in the factory of the future](#)" which was published in the "eStrategies" newsletter.



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Project Summary

Today's radical changes in competition, technology and customer expectations are creating an increasingly uncertain environment. Production managers need a new kind of decision support in the business environment. They need methods and tools to assist them on decisions about planning, monitoring and changing a production system. The ability to change with uncertainty is often referred to as the flexibility degree of the system. The flexibility ability of a company refers to its capability to change and adapt under different change drivers. It is difficult to account for flexibility in a decision process if it is not defined in a quantitative manner. Integrating quantified flexibility measures into lifecycle and change management can be a key factor in enhancing the effectiveness and competitiveness of the European industry.

The main objectives of the X-Change project are:

Key Data

The X-Change project is funded by the European Commission under the Sixth Framework Programme (Project Reference 16801) as a Specific Targeted Research Project (STREP). It belongs to the action line FP6-2004-IST-NMP-2 Integrating Technologies for the Fast and Flexible Manufacturing Enterprise.

- The development of several innovative, live, 'near-realtime' flexibility measurement methods as part of a flexibility evaluation toolbox with wide applicability range.
- The integration of the results of the flexibility measures, the flexibility indicators, into existing change management (business) processes.
- The realization of this flexibility evaluation toolbox into an open-interface X-Change lifecycle platform able to facilitate lifecycle and change management in production systems and extended enterprises.

X-Change aspires to cover the entire lifespan of production systems while adopting a holistic approach by

addressing production and business processes in a multi-level structure.

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X-Change

The project started in September 2005 and will last for 30 months with a project funding of 1.3 million euro. The consortium consists of 7 European partners from industry and academic research. It includes manufacturers, software development companies and academic institutions. The manufacturers come from diverse sectors, thus cultivating the development of generic solutions, while the software development partners are already active in the area of knowledgeable decision-making and web application development. The academic institutions have been involved in a significant number of relevant lifecycle management projects.