Three FP6 successes for QUESTOR:
PRODESTS/WAPSCIENCE/SOPHIED

The Queen's University Environmental Science & Technology Research (QUESTOR) Centre has secured funding under FP6 for three projects due to begin in 2004 that will have Europe-wide significance.

PRODESTS
The first project, **PRODESTS** (**Pro**motion, **De**monstration and Development of **S**ustainable Environmental **T**echnologies for **S**MEs), aims to assist the spread of EU-funded sustainable environmental technologies across the small- and medium-sized business sector. A two-year Coordination Action (stepping up economical and technological intelligence), PRODESTS brings QUESTOR EU funding of 93,000 euros. It is a large project with 27 partners, five of whom are from candidate countries, and the remainder from across Europe. The Coordinating partner is based in Germany.

In many EU member states, research centres like the QUESTOR Applied Technology Unit are actively supporting local SMEs through the development and introduction of new, environment-friendly technologies. However, precisely because of the regional character of these initiatives, organisations in other areas and other states do not have access to the experience that has been gained.

PRODESTS aims to progress the transfer of knowledge and its benefits across the sectors and the Member States. QUESTOR will help identify the barriers that prevent the rapid exploitation, commercialisation and distribution of the outcomes of EU-funded research, and will formulate strategies to help overcome these barriers. The Centre's expertise in this area was acknowledged earlier in 2003 when it was cited as an exemplar by Universities UK in its submission to the government's Lambert Review of links between business and higher education.

WAPSCIENCE
The second project, **WAPSCIENCE** (**Wa**stewater Treatment **P**lant Improvement by **S**mart Sensors and **C**omputational **I**ntelli**gence**), is a two-year Cooperative Research project (horizontal research activities involving SMEs) with a German Coordinator. The project brings QUESTOR EU funding of 91,600 euros.

WAPSCIENCE aims to improve wastewater treatment at industrial and municipal sewage treatment plants by developing online ion sensors for nitrate and ammonia compounds. The aim would be to remove these compounds to a satisfactory level, so that the remaining biodegradable elements contained in the wastewater will decompose without problems.

It is anticipated that the new technology will improve the operation of wastewater treatment plants by 10-20%. The sensors will be tested during field trials in the partner countries – Ireland, Germany, Greece and the Netherlands. The QUESTOR Applied Technology Unit will manage the tests in Northern Ireland, and will work closely with the SME partner, Dundalk-based ANORD Control Systems, during field trials in the Republic of Ireland.

SOPHIED
The third project, **SOPHIED** (**S**ustainable **O**riginal **P**rocesses for **H**ealthy **I**ndustrial **E**cofriendly **D**yes), is a five-year Integrated Project dedicated to SMEs. Bringing funding of 230,000 euros to QUESTOR, this large project involves 29 partners, including a Belgian Coordinator, two partners from candidate countries, and the remainder spread across Europe.

SOPHIED relates to the textile and dying industry. This is an important activity in Europe which has, in recent years, largely shifted to the developing world due to both the cost of labour and increased production costs associated with the requirement for a higher level of environmental protection.

SOPHIED aims to overcome some of the environmental problems through a novel bioremediation technology that will render a range of dyestuffs less toxic to the environment than the current products. QUESTOR will lead the development of bioremedial wastewater treatment processes for the colour industry, and will be involved in demonstrating the newly developed technology to SME partners across Europe.

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