**GENERAL**

The programme eConf was developed by France Telecom. It is a mere software client, based on H.323 and handling application sharing according to T.120.

We tested the so-called "studio version" by eConf in release 3.5.1. The test took place in September 2003.

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**INSTALLATION**

The installation runs fast and without problems but it still takes some time until the first start of the software. After the first installation the programme calculates a key which is dependent on the used system. This key has to be sent to the producer who notifies the real licence key. The clearing is separate for every user. Also if the administrator enters the key he just unlocks eConf for himself.

After the first start the video conference software is configured with according query dialogs. Audio- and video tests are integrated in these dialogs. The only stumble block within the configuration is given by the marking. The E.164-Alias is called telephone number here, in the field "Alias" the H.323 name is expected. The consistence of the markings within the programme isn't complete anyway.

The SIP functionality of the programme requires the additional installation of a plug-in. Up to now we couldn't establish a connection using this protocol because there are still "version conflicts" between the main program and the plug-in.

eConf runs under all current versions of Windows whereby the user is able to choose between three designs: the conventional look (image), the so-called "Black Stone"-look (image) and the "Virtual Desktop" (image). The last two designs are more based on the colour variety of Windows XP.

eConf can be operated with a Video Capture Card or a USB Camera.

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**TEST**

The handling is easy and intuitive. There are several possibilities to reach the menu items for nearly all of them.

The connections are established in a moderate time. eConf transmits in every test always with H.263 but only in QCIF. The programme even transmits QCIF if it is the only participant in a MCU Conference which actually requires CIF. Only when a second participant enters the conference it switches to CIF while operating.

The quality of the video connections was only rarely convincing although they ran always very stable. In a connection with ViaVideo 5.1 no image was received, with ViaVideo 3.0 it worked well. As a reason for this, France Telecom states a false declaration of the video format from ViaVideo 5.0 on. For a successful dial-up the Codec H.263+ at eConf mustn't be active. Therefore the key

HKeyCurrentUser\Software\France Telecom\&Conf\Player\AvancePanel = 1

has to be put into the registry. Now the user still has to deactivate the item H.263+ in the extended configuration of the programme.
We couldn't manage to establish a connection with the available 4CIF. At least eConf selected CIF as image format when choosing 4CIF. Because of this it seems doubtful to us that the studio version is usable for big rooms.

The audio connections were always stable and in satisfactory Qualität, mostly in G.722.

The start of the data circuit was possible without any problems if eConf did initiate the conference. When eConf was invited it was not possible to do the first start of the T.120 programmes by eConf.

After a successful set-up by the opposite side the data circuit could be started by eConf.

All tested data circuits were successful. The menu item for starting an application sharing by eConf is a little hidden and not as easy to be found as all the other functions.

A simultaneous use of the full screen view and the data circuit is definitely not possible. Yet when starting the programme the user has to choose between the full screen option and the use of T.120.

The statistics were very significant. In addition to the used protocol they also display the lost packages and the jitter.

With the MCU we tested a CP conference with 7 participants about 40 minutes without any problems.

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**CONCLUSION**

Together with a good USB Camera EConf is an recommendable alternative to NetMeeting.

The expense of the programme is 49 Euro for the standard version (up to 384 kbps) and 59 Euro for the Version Pro(up to 768 kbps). A high-quality USB Camera (e.g. Logitech Quick Cam Pro 4000, Philipps PC VC 680) is approx. 80-90 Euro.

**Technical Data**

Producer: Company France Telecom