

→ Another successful EtherCAT Plugfest ensures interoperability



The 6th EtherCAT Plugfest took place in late September 2008 in rooms at the LTI company's site in Lahnau, Germany. More than 50 participants representing a total of 13 master and 17 slave manufacturers from Germany, Europe and the United States took up the invitation, evidence of the great interest from EtherCAT Technology Group (ETG) member companies in the event.

The EtherCAT devices presented at the Plugfest are often about to go into series production so their behavior is tested once more in an environment with other industrial devices and optimized if need be. To this end, all slave devices are operated alone and in various combinations with all masters during the two days of the event. The devices are additionally tested using the official ETG conformance test tool. However, the manufacturers of already established devices and master implementations are also present in order to ensure the continuous interoperability of their products with new ones.

The idea of the event is to ensure that the commissioning of the system is as simple as possible for the end users of EtherCAT devices. Devices from different manufacturers are often attached to one master in real applications. The master itself is usually determined by the chosen controller. The combinatorics resulting from these possibilities are reenacted at the EtherCAT Plugfest. Commissioning difficulties, e.g. due to missing information regarding start-up commands or due to a PDO configuration that was incorrectly set up, etc. are quickly discovered and eliminated before the release of the product.

For the first time ever this year, there was an Asia Plugfest especially for the Asian ETG members on October 15 and 16, presented by Prof. Moon from the Sunchon University in South Korea. Participants from South Korea, Japan and several other Asian countries joined the event. This development underlines once more how internationally widespread EtherCAT technology has become.