

Press Release

Montreal,
September 9, 2008

Fraunhofer IIS and VoiceAge provide reference for upcoming MPEG audio codec.

GERMANY/CANADA: Leading providers of audio codecs Fraunhofer IIS and speech codecs VoiceAge Corporation have announced that their proposal for a new MPEG audio codec has been selected to provide the basis for ongoing standardization work. The new technology is the first-ever audio codec to support high-quality compression of both speech and audio at very low bit rates.

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* Fraunhofer USA Digital Media Technologies, a division of Fraunhofer USA, Inc., promotes and supports the products of Fraunhofer IIS in the U.S.

Standardization body MPEG (Moving Picture Experts Group) initiated a global search for the new codec in October 2007, ultimately securing submissions from eight companies – many of them market leaders. Following a very rigorous testing procedure that involved approximately 80 listeners in 11 test laboratories grading a total of 65,000 subjective responses, the new technology devised jointly by Fraunhofer IIS and VoiceAge Corporation was declared to be the winner during an MPEG session in July 2008, thereby becoming the basis for future standardization work.

When completed, the new codec (working title: 'MPEG Unified Speech and Audio Codec') will provide superior quality at very low bit rates between 12 and 64 kbit/s for both music and speech in comparison to existing, state-of-the-art audio and speech codecs, respectively.

Applications expected to benefit from the new codec's combination of high quality delivery and low bit-rates include digital broadcasting systems, mobile TV, and multimedia downloaded applications via wireless networks.

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For Fraunhofer IIS, the new project – due for completion in early 2010 – represents the latest stage in a successful history of audio innovation that includes the development of mp3 and the co-creation of AAC and MPEG Surround.

“We are delighted that MPEG regards our proposal as the best foundation for this important new technology,” says Bernhard Grill, head of the Audio department at Fraunhofer IIS. “Enhancing the quality of both music and speech at lower bit rates has been a headline priority for Fraunhofer IIS for some years now, and we regard this new codec as a major step forward. We look forward to its completion and all the new opportunities that it will give rise to.”

For VoiceAge, the adoption of our technologies in a new ‘MPEG Unified Speech and Audio Codec’ is a recognition that low bit rate audio is paramount in wireless networks and that speech is becoming an essential component of new multimedia broadcast and streaming applications.

„For many years now, VoiceAge has maintained its leadership in low bit rate speech and audio coding“, says Redwan Salami, Vice-President R&D at VoiceAge. “We are proud that our technologies have been selected to form the basis of this new and important MPEG standard for unified speech/audio coding. With the spread of digital broadcasting systems and multimedia applications, this new standard will open exciting possibilities for service providers and users.”

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Fraunhofer IIS

Founded in 1985 the Fraunhofer Institute for Integrated Circuits IIS in Erlangen, today with 585 staff members, ranks first among the Fraunhofer Institutes concerning headcount and revenues. As the inventor of mp3 and co-inventor of the MPEG AAC audio coding standard, Fraunhofer IIS has reached worldwide recognition. It provides research services on contract basis and technology licensing.

The research topics are: Audio and video source coding, multimedia realtime systems, digital radio broadcasting and digital cinema systems, integrated circuits and sensor systems, design automation, wireless, wired and optical networks, localization and navigation, imaging systems and nanofocus X-ray technology, high-speed cameras, medical sensor solutions and communications technology in transport and logistics.

The budget of 68 million Euro is mainly financed by projects from industry, the service sector and public authorities. Less than 25 percent of the budget is subsidized by federal and state funds.

www.iis.fraunhofer.de

VoiceAge Corporation

VoiceAge[®] is a leading developer of digital speech and audio compression solutions for devices that operate over fixed and mobile networks, including internet, cellular, Wi-Fi, WiMAX and convergence applications as well as consumer electronics.

Our business activities focus on: speech and audio compression technology R&D, standardization, codec and audio processing software implementations and IPR licensing. Using designs based on our widely deployed flagship ACELP[®] technology platform, VoiceAge[®] speech and audio codec solutions deliver unsurpassed quality experienced daily by well over two billion users worldwide.

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