Europe's infobahn

The basic technical preconditions for the transmission of moving images have been put in place over the last 10 years. These include advances in the area of micro-electronics and the steadily increasing availability of a standardised Europe-wide ISDN net. This acts as an information highway, providing the necessary structural foundation for an extensive market in visual communications products.

Some of the products arrived at in the course of this rapid technological development have already established a firm foothold in the market. These can be roughly divided into three categories:

Goods sales are currently being achieved with videoconferencing systems, which facilitate real time moving image communication through broadband channels.

Stand-alone video telephones, which in Europe have been developed by firms such as Telenorma, Dornier, Alcatel/SEL and Philips among others, make do with the ISDN narrow band with 2*64 KBit. By comparison with video-conferencing systems, narrow band transmission suffers to a greater or lesser extent from poorer picture quality and repeat speeds. These systems will probably achieve real market acceptance only at a price of between 1,000 and 1,500 DM apiece, since what is on offer here is more or less straightforward video telephony.

The growing number of low-priced PCs both in industry and in private households has led to PC-integrated multimedia visual communications products coming more and more to the forefront throughout the world. The last CeBIT in Hanover provided an opportunity to inspect the first multimedia products, which were then just beginning to appear.

Right from the start Wendt + Klütmann KG has specialised in the development of PC-integrated visual communication products for a variety of market sectors. One example is a solution developed for the security market sector, the IDIP® Security System, which uses visual communication to enhance security on site. By using ISDN as a carrier it became possible for the first time to carry out low cost transmission of video pictures over any distance in the event of an alarm.