

EtherCAT Plugfest well attended

"A Plugfest is a kind of LAN party for developers", said one participant in an attempt to describe the event to his colleagues. Not a bad comparison, even though Plugfest doesn't focus on PC games, but on interoperability between devices.

The EtherCAT Technology Group held the first of these interoperability meetings at the end of January, and 15 manufacturers with a total of more than 50 different EtherCAT devices had followed the invitation. Groups of slave devices were commissioned in turn with four different master implementations. And all devices could successfully be operated in a single network within a short space of time.

A special highlight was the demonstration of a tool access to a running EtherCAT network from the notebook of the commissioning engineer via UPD/IP to the master, which provides transparent access to the device in the network. While drive control and I/O updates take place with very short cycle times via the EtherCAT system, the EtherCAT devices can be accessed from any point by configuration or diagnostic tools. Existing manufacturer tools can be connected to this interface quite easily. This EtherCAT feature will be demonstrated with several masters and tools at the EtherCAT Technology Group stand at this year's Hannover Fair (Hall 9, Stand F13).

Plugfests are no substitute for the official conformance test currently being prepared by ETG, but they provide an excellent pragmatic interoperability and implementation test and offer developers valuable information and ideas. Devices tested at a Plugfest merit a high degree of confidence. Plugfests also contribute to the further development of specifications by enabling interpretation gaps to be detected and closed. The next EtherCAT Plugfest will take place on April 4/5.

**→ EtherCAT Technology Group stand at the Hannover Fair:
Hall 9, Stand F13**

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