Eu-Design. An award to Ergonomics

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In 1954, while in Italy the Golden Compass Award, an award to the Italian design, was born, in Germany the most important international award for product design and communication was established: the Red Dot Design Award. Nowadays, we can find a multitude of design awards, and among them ergonomics has always had a marginal role, although in order to define an artifact as a "GOOD PRODUCT", the most important aspect is given precisely by how the object interacts with the user-man. During the design phase, this problem is often addressed by taking ideas from the experience or on the basis of the designer’s flair, but today in order to meet the needs of users, that have become more and more alert, and given the fact that the range of choices has become more and more extensive, an ever deeper knowledge of ergonomics has become fundamental. At present, there are still very few companies that have realized the importance of producing artifacts that are perceived by users as suitable for them in terms of physical and cognitive interaction. It is necessary to raise awareness among companies on those issues related to ergonomics and to reward those that have already taken these issues into consideration.

Starting from these observations, Isabella Tiziana Steffan and Cinzia Dinardo had the idea, with the help of SIE, the Italian Society of Ergonomics, to create an international ergonomics award: Eu-Design. The award will be given periodically to products, services and digital artifacts that show a particular attention to the issues of ergonomics of life and daily work, presented by designers or manufacturers. The nominees will be evaluated by a panel of experts who will select nine artifacts, three for the "Product" category, three for the "Digital Artifact" category and three for the "Service" category. The nine finalists will be involved in an event that will be held in the autumn of 2015. The finalist companies will have the opportunity to showcase their products in an exhibition space and "tell" them to the public. During the event a 1st prize for each of the three categories of the award will be given. The selection criteria will take into account the sensitivity of the company or designer on the use of ergonomic tools and methods, including having done on the product, digital artifact or service a Usability test or tests with real users.

In the current phase of promotion and launch of the initiative, some “famous” examples will be illustrated, in different fields of application, highlighting their ergonomic peculiarities: for example, Olivetti computer keyboards. This company’s sensitivity and attention towards ergonomics became systematic and conscious since the 40s.

The EU-Design award aims at being an opportunity to:

- Explain and raise awareness on the role of ergonomics.
- Promote the role of ergonomists in designing, producing and evaluating products and graphical user interfaces for life and work environments.
- Promote an active collaboration between companies and ergonomists.