

Technology Transfer and Business Support

Enterprise Europe Network Helps SMEs Profit from the Single Market

After 5 years in business, the Enterprise Europe Network has helped more than 2.5 million companies to make the most of the Single Market. It has also attracted around 35 000 small businesses to international brokerage events and company missions. Europe's largest business support network contributes to the competitiveness of SMEs by helping them to internationalize, innovate and access EU finance and funding. Close to 600 major players in the business support community have linked up in the network to offer a one-stop service to help companies reach their full potential.

With over 3000 professionals participating, the Network is present in more than 50 countries to help small companies seize the unparalleled business opportunities in the EU Single Market. It provides integrated support services designed to help small enterprises do business abroad and find European funding for their research and innovation projects. The Network was created in 2008 by DG Enterprise and Industry and is a key part of the EU's Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Program. It is managed by the Executive Agency for Competitiveness & Innovation (EACI).



The Network in Bulgaria, coordinated by ARC Fund, consists of 14 partnering organizations in 8 cities

As in the previous years, the focus was to help the internationalization of Bulgarian SMEs via business partnerships, to encourage and support innovation via technology transfer and modern innovation support services, and to facilitate access for SMEs to research programs and funding.

ARC Fund maintains the new internet portal of the network in Bulgaria,

www.enterprise-europe-network.bg, which is a prime source for business information and advice, technology transfer and innovation, consultancy and information on how to participate in national and European funding programs, especially in terms of technological development, research and marketing of new products and technologies. Each partner maintains its own, regional portal of the Network.

EN BG

network

enterprise europe

Bulgaria

HOME ABOUT US SERVICES NEWS EVENTS LINKS

Highlights »

- **Eighth National Innovation Forum, 18 December 2012, Sofia**

Applied Research and Communications Fund, Enterprise...

- **Awarded inventors from the Fourth National Exhibition "Inventions, Technologies, Innovations", 2012**

The **Fourth National Exhibition "Inventions, Technologies, Innovations"** was carried on 8-10 November 2012. The three-day event featured useful...

SUBSCRIPTION

enterprise europe network

В подкрепа на бизнеса

Enterprise Europe Network

The Enterprise Europe Network is your local gateway to a wealth of information on doing business, finding collaborative partners and increasing your competitiveness in Europe. Our expertise and services are available free to Bulgarian-based businesses.

We provide information and consultation services for:

- Finding Business Partners
- Transferring New Technologies and Know-how
- Applying for European Funding
- Participating in European collaborative R&D
- EU Laws and Standards
- Protecting your Intellectual Property
- Having your say in Europe

In Bulgaria, the Network brings together 14 organizations, located in Sofia, Plovdiv, Sandanski, Stara Zagora, Vratsa, Yambol, Dobrich and Ruse.

Learn more about the Enterprise Europe Network.

Search for technology, business and project partners in the Enterprise Europe Network's data base:

by Date	Search		
2012/11/30 20121024009	A Polish Company specialized in optoelectronic has designed and manufactured Photonics and Optoelectronics Set for investigation of the optical, elect...	Poland	REQUEST
2012/11/29 12	Fibre separation made of stillage from bioethanol production of second-generation...	Slovakia	OFFER
2012/11/28 20121128037	A Spanish leading designer and manufacturer of wedding dresses, gala dresses, party dresses, godmother dresses and accessories is looking for agents a...	Spain	REQUEST
	A Hungarian SME who has a		

Success stories »

- » **Sustainable Construction**

End of October 2012, CCI-Dobrich (member of Enterprise Europe Network in Bulgaria) in consortium with 9 European organizations, completed the work within **Proof Project**, financed by Leonardo da Vinci -...

Contact us

Funding Programmes:

- EU framework programmes
- Operational programs in Bulgaria

Publications »

- » **Network**
- » **(BG) All your business needs**
- » **(BG) Vesti Bulletin**
- » **(BG) Enterprise Europe Network Brochure**

Resources »

Business A - Z (downloads)

The website of the Enterprise Europe Network, found at www.enterprise-europe-network.bg

The activities of EEN – Bulgaria during 2012 were focused on different sectors like ICT, machine building, agri-food, energy efficiency. A series of capacity building seminars in support of entrepreneurship was organized to cover topics like sources of funding, models of co-operation (business networking,

clustering, PPP), internationalization of businesses, intellectual property and technology transfer. The seminars were attended by more than 400 participants and have been proven as a successful platform for knowledge exchange and networking.

Brokerage events

ARC Fund has organized annually business and technological brokerage and matchmaking events in various economic sectors including engineering, machine building, ICT, energy efficiency and renewable energy sources and food industry. These types of pre-arranged meetings allow for contact between businesses and research organizations

in search of business, technology and project partnerships (for international projects in European funding programs, participation in joint projects under different EU programs and initiatives, such as EU framework programs, operational programs under the EU structural funds).

Mobile World Congress

Enterprise Europe Network-Bulgaria organized a B2B partnering event during the Mobile World Congress, the world's largest mobile technology fair, on 27–29 February 2012, in Barcelona. The fair attracted nearly 1400 exhibitors from 205 countries. ARC Fund consultants from the Network supported the participation of four innovative

Bulgarian companies at the partnering event. They presented several new technological solutions like online browser games, Machine to Machine (M2M) solutions and mobile application development. The presented technologies provoked very high interest and 24 meetings were held.

FutureMatch, Cebit

Enterprise Europe Network Bulgaria organized a technology brokerage event in ICT during the biggest European exhibition in the field – CeBIT, 6–10 March 2012, in Hannover, Germany. The event attracted 391 participants, with 950 cooperation profiles from 39 countries and 1508 meetings scheduled. ARC Fund organised the

participation of six innovative Bulgarian companies (Comsys 54, CenterMine Ltd., InterConsult Bulgaria Ltd., WEB Technologies, Sirma Mobile, Step-Soft Ltd.) in the brokerage event. They presented several new technological solutions that were met with very high interest, resulting in more than 97 meetings scheduled.

CeBIT Bilişim

CeBIT Bilişim Eurasia is the largest and most important ICT trade show in the region, covering the entire spectrum of information technology, telecommunications, software and ICT-related services. In response to the current crisis, the European Commission published the 'Small Business, Big World - a new partnership to help SMEs seize global opportunities'. It urges European

small and medium sized enterprises to take advantage of the fast growing emerging markets outside Europe. CeBIT Bilişim Eurasia brokerage event, organized by the Enterprise Europe Network from 29 November - 01 December 2012, provided very good opportunities to the participating 8 Bulgarian companies to promote their innovative technologies on the Eurasian ICT market.



A glimpse into CeBIT Bilişim

ECAbit Network

ARC Fund, in partnership with and support from World Bank's infoDev Program, coordinated ECAbit Network activities to strengthen the incubation and innovation

ecosystems in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, (ECA) and Middle East and North Africa (MENA). A major component in these activities was the organization of a weeklong

training marathon in Istanbul for 27 experienced incubation professionals from the region that followed a participatory Business Incubation Management Training Program. Twenty-six of them were certified to subsequently rollout the training in ECA and MENA. In addition to that, 34 business incubator (BI) managers from 20 countries were trained in BI marketing and stakeholder management, monitoring, evaluation and benchmarking BI, virtual business incubation and other topical areas. In March 2012 the first follow-up training was delivered in Romania for 20 incubation managers on request from UNDP-Romania, who manages the government funded incubation program.

ARC Fund supported two Youth and Innovation Camps in Tambov, Russia, and Skopje, Macedonia. During the first one, organized by Tambov business incubator, ARC Fund's capacity in foresight methodologies was utilized to brainstorm potential adjustment of available foresight methodologies for incubators to provide value added services to the start-ups based on

foresight. The camp brought together participants from Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Belarus and Germany and the winner of the camp, an entrepreneur from Gomel, Belarus, spend a week at ARC Fund and had the opportunity to meet technopreneurs from the mobile industry and learn more about the technology transfer services EEN is providing. The camp in Skopje was organized by YES Incubator as a hackaton that met technology developers with potential investors, including LaunchHub and Eleven. The winners of the two camps will receive further mentorship and consulting services from ARC Fund and ECAbit to further develop its business.

ARC Fund coordinated the ECAbit Network for two mandates in the period 2008-2012 and one of its senior experts is elected to sit at the new board for the 2013-2015. ARC Fund facilitated the internationalization efforts of InfoDev program by assisting 9 companies from 7 countries in ECA and MENA and by drafting a new mentorship program for start-ups to be implemented on ECA regional level in 2013.

Study of the Current State-of-Art of Broadband Coverage and Use in the Rural Regions

In 2012 ARC Fund Group prepared an analysis of the current state-of-art and the development trends in the national ICT sector, commissioned by the Bulgarian-Korean ICT Coordination Center under the Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications and Sofia University. The findings and actionable policy recommendations

have been acknowledged by the ministry's officials and Korean public agencies and formed the base of a deeper and broader sectoral analysis of the ICT

The research findings revealed two main trends in the successful pattern of an innovative development in the ICT business sector in the last

decade:

- Bulgaria asserted itself as an outsourcing destination for highly innovative R&D activities as opposed to low-end business functions. A lot of R&D centers of large multinationals were established in the country, in many cases building on the assets of existing Bulgarian firms by infrastructure acquisition or by tapping into already developed know-how and human potential. Areas that experience increased investors' interest are software development, design and manufacturing of microelectronics for the automobile industry, industrial automatization, design and manufacturing of industrial robots, telecommunications, banking and financial services, medicine, etc.
- Bulgarian ICT firms asserted themselves on the international markets with locally developed products and services and gradually became multinational companies. They not only sell their products and services in multiple countries on different continents but also invest in some of these countries by opening up their own branches or setting up joint-ventures with other companies.

These trends are difficult to be precisely quantified and a more detailed and authentic picture of the innovative behavior of economic actors in the sector is hard to obtain due to unreliable R&D statistics. In this sense, incomprehensive official statistics remains one of the key challenges for the R&D and innova-

tion policy development of the ICT sector. According to conservative expert estimates of ARC Fund, official R&D indicators in the sector (number of companies, R&D expenditures and personnel) are underestimated 4 to 8 times. Such distorted data on the innovation activity is problematic because it creates the false impression that there are no conditions for innovations in the country's ICT sector. Another considerable problem consists in the inaccessibility of more disaggregated official statistical data. It impedes the in-depth analysis not only within the various aforementioned ICT subsectors, but also of the geographical distribution of ICT firms and R&D activities. The latter is of fundamental importance for the development of regions and regional innovation strategies.

Another trend, underlined in the analysis, concerns the roll-out of broadband internet networks in the country and the development of highly competitive market with more than 800 internet service providers, including in the rural areas. After the European Commission acknowledged in its official policy documents and statistics that the development of internet access in some Eastern European and Baltic countries is based primarily on combination of fiber, LAN and CATV technologies rather than DSL technologies like in the EU15, Bulgaria emerged as a leader on the share of broadband coverage in Europe and EU27. The main reasons behind this favorable technological and business model development in the country have been lax regulations and severe competition among a high number of internet providers. As a consequence, end users can

gain access at a very low relative price to a high-quality infrastructure, which also serves as a backbone for the development and supply of R&D intensive internet applications.

Despite the considerable expansion and upgrading of high-speed networks during the past decade private investments are not sufficient for the fulfillment of the government commitments, especially those associated with guaranteeing high-quality internet access in rural, less developed and remote regions. In order to overcome the existing disparities, a better and more extensive use should be made of both national and European funds. Based on the finding that in 2011 more than 94% of the Bulgarian population lived in places with at least one broadband internet provider (>1 mbps), the analysis calls for a proactive government support, which should concentrate on the creation of favourable overall conditions for the development of products and services by the private sector rather than on investments in the already well-developed physical infrastructure.

The analysis set up a series of policy recommendations and follow-up actions:

- Improving the official R&D statistics of Bulgarian companies, including in the ICT and other R&D intensive sectors by a close cooperation with the experts at the National Statistical Institute;
- The development and adoption of an integrated national strategy on technological and scientific research and innovations is a long-term commitment of ARC Fund policy activities,

backed up with both analytical (annual *Innovation.bg* reports, national ERAWATCH reports, ad-hoc analyses) and practical actions (drafting and supporting legislation development in the field, e.g. the draft *Innovation Law, National Broadband Strategy*, etc.);

- Increase of the budgetary subsidy for university disciplines related to ICT;
- Creation of a separate program within the InvestBulgaria Agency aiming at targeting and attracting foreign companies willing to offshore their R&D activities;
- Introduction of pre-commercial procurement as an effective instrument for competitive funding of innovative projects. ARC Fund is one of the first advocates for the idea, recognizing the high potential of pre-commercial procurement in the development of the national information society;
- Development of a special program for journalists in the area of R&D, innovations and ICT as part of the generally recognized need of communicating achievement of the Bulgarian scientific and business oriented research and follow-up technology transfers.

Analysis of the Present State of Affairs and Mapping Trends of Innovation Development in the ICT Sector

ARC Fund participated in a consortium commissioned for a comprehensive analysis of **broadband development in Bulgaria**. Following an innovative research methodology for analyzing broadband roll-out and socio-economic development in the country, initially introduced by ARC Fund in 2010 and publicly acknowledged by the Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications, ARC Fund directed its efforts towards the monitoring of existing broadband coverage, regional socio-economic disparities, usage of ICT and the legal regulations of broadband deployment.

The selected approach combined open public data from various sources with results of statistically representative surveys and data, collected through qualitative and desk research methods, offering a profound analysis on a single settlement level for the whole country. As a result, 19 regions were identified and ranked based on a combination of socio-demographic and economic factors for public invest-

ments in their broadband infrastructure. Furthermore, ARC Fund prepared an overview of the political and regulatory framework which defines the environment for development of broadband access and services.

The data and results produced by ARC Fund were fed into a GIS-based information system and a cost-benefit analysis of the planned public investment program. The information system will serve as a permanent reference point with reliable and latest data on broadband coverage. The findings of the analysis will aid the process of strategic goal-setting and will inform political decisions regarding the need for state funding in the sector during the next programming period. The sustainable nature of the project ensures that it can serve as a tool for future planning of state support related to the construction, maintenance and exploitation of broadband networks in rural and less-developed urban regions.

Improved SME Competitiveness and Innovation in Serbia

In 2011 - 2012, ARC Fund experts contributed to the consulting activities of GfA in developing Serbian innovation policy under the EU IPA program. ARC Fund's experience in monitoring innovation performance and elaborating evidence-based policies was used to identify policy measures that aimed at removing existing barriers that prevent SMEs in Serbia from realizing their full innovation potential. The analysis of

the state and performance of the Serbian innovation system was conducted on the basis of comprehensive and reliable data on a number of indicators related to innovations. ARC Fund experts crafted recommendations concerning modifications of the existing innovation support programs in Serbia as well as the development of new instruments to address identified barriers and gaps in the present provision of

support. The findings of the final report are expected to be fed into

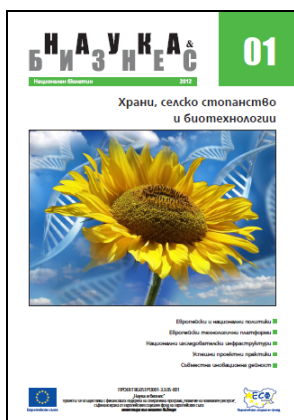
the process of national policy making in the field of innovations.

Science and Business Newsletters

In 2012, ARC Consulting launched a research project commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science for the preparation of a National Scoreboard to monitor the links between business and science. The findings of the study will be fed into the process of designing and implementing integrated policies in the fields of science, technology, education and business. Additionally, the structure of the Scoreboard, the data and analytical methods used are designed in such a manner as to enable regular future updates.

The structure of the report closely follows the list of priority sectors laid down in the *National Strategy for Development of Scientific Research 2020*:

- food, agriculture and biotechnologies;
- new materials and technologies with application in ecology, pharmacy, medicine and energy generation;
- energy efficiency and renewable energy sources;
- ICT;
- green chemistry;
- engineering sciences – optics and electronics;
- scientific instruments.



Newsletters No. 1,2,3/2012: *Food, Agriculture and Biotechnology; New Materials and Technologies with Application in Ecology, Pharmacy, Medicine and Energy; Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Sources*

For each of the aforementioned economic sectors, ARC Consulting

performed the following research tasks: (i) elaboration of possible

mechanisms for devising and implementing a national policy targeted at fostering the interactions within the triangle of knowledge; (ii) summary of newly introduced instrument supporting public-private partnerships and collection of best practices on European level related to forms of innovative partnership; (iii) comparative analysis of national and European practices for stimulating the interaction between science and business; (iv) identification and analysis of projects and initiatives jointly implemented by business and scientific partners in Bulgaria; (v) identification and analysis of good practices on European level

regarding mechanisms for innovative partnerships.

Besides the immediate outputs, providing an in-depth analysis of the linkages between business and science and the potential for their development, the project seeks a more long-term impact as well. The issued bulletins together with the methodological and research efforts can serve as a foundation for the introduction of a regular monitoring tool. This goal will facilitate the valorization of Bulgarian scientific achievements with the active and profitable support of the business.

Switch4Food

The Switch4Food (Services for Water and Integrated techniques for the food industry) project has been successfully finished this year with an international technical workshop and final awareness building event that took place in April/May. The main objective of this project has been to identify and analyze best practices and technological/methodological knowledge of SMEs in the food industry for water use and wastewater in order to allow their exchange and transfer among the project partners' countries (Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, Greece, Belgium, Germany, Turkey, and Israel). In particular, the objectives of Switch4Food have been to:

- identify at least 10 best and common practices in different sectors of food industries leading to the elaboration of guidelines;
- share methodologies and local

policy in order to transfer the experiences and practices from one region to others;

- define local cooperation agreements with European Policy Statements (EPS) (at least 5 EPS signed pilot agreements for each region) to support SMEs to implement environmental actions;
- identify new business opportunities thanks to a sustainability approach;
- disseminate the completed activities, methodologies tested and the best practices through local and international workshops for companies;
- facilitate the interaction among environmental consultants and SMEs of the food industry;
- create conditions for future synergies among different actors: SMEs, the EEN Sector Group 'Environment and Agro-Food', environmental service providers and local authorities;

To fulfill these objectives two eco-business clubs have been established within the project in Bulgaria, each of them bringing together SMEs, business associations and environmental services providers (ESP) from two sub-sectors which are particularly water-consuming, fruit and vegetables processing and soft drinks.

The eco-business clubs have provided common ground for their member SMEs on four stages: 1) to identify a common technological issue (e.g. reduction of water consumption) and/or common interest (e.g. reuse of wastewater in the production cycle); 2) to ensure appropriate professional (from environmental services providers) or informational (from the EEN partner)

advice for solving the issues at stake; 3) the implementation of the chosen innovative solutions has been followed up and their efficiency measured; 4) the final stage is internationalization of the companies and their successful approaches for water use and wastewater by linking the clubs from all nine project countries and stimulating new business contacts through Enterprise Europe Network. Thanks to the Switch4Food activities a set of innovative solutions for water purification and water re-use were introduced at the experimental farm in Golyamo Vranovo village. The tests have been proven successful with a potential to spread the method as a good practice to other farms in the country.

Complex Challenges – Innovative Cities

The Complex Challenges – Innovative Cities (CCIC) project began in January 2012 as a partnership among 14 partners from 10 different countries. It is supported by the INTERREG IVC program and the Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works; it is targeted at municipal and regional authorities across Europe in exploring the opportunities for successful and sustainable policy making on public sector innovation. ARC Fund is the only organization in the consortium which is not a public authority, and therefore has a special role. Relying on its long-standing expertise in supporting innovation and innovation-centered public policies, ARC Fund designed a comprehensive methodological framework to guide partner inquiries into innovation arising within and from the public sector on a local and region-

al level. For the first quarter of 2012, ARC Fund worked on a methodology and the overall logic for partners to understand existing opportunity windows, as well as pressing hurdles, for public sector innovation. In particular, CCIC applies four thematic perspectives, defined as innovation foci: public procurement, financial instruments, civil society inclusion and public enterprises.

Throughout 2012, all partners were involved in an in-depth mapping process of all local and regional stakeholders, and had to conduct at least 10 semi-structured interviews, identify and describe at least 4 good practices for the aforementioned thematic domains, and provide these to ARC Fund to work on a state-of-the-art report of public sector innovation. CCIC also features ambitious policy goals and

encourages knowledge transfer and networking among municipal and regional authorities in designing and implementing innovation, with a clear added public value.

Key achievements in 2012:

- ARC Fund developed a methodological framework to detail the logic of the different action components within the project, specifying standard steps and procedures for partners to follow during their stakeholder mapping and information collection activities;
- An online survey instrument was designed, together with detailed instructions to partners how to

distribute it across local and regional stakeholders. The survey is the key information collection instrument to inform the state-of-the-art analysis of public sector innovation. Over 1000 responses were received from 15 EU member states.

In the last quarter of 2012 ARC Fund commenced the work on analyzing the input from almost 100 semi-structured interviews done by partners with policy makers, civil society representatives, innovation planners and other societal actors. Key findings are expected to be available in early 2013.

BCreative

The Business kit for Creative start-ups in IPR, Venture capital and Entrepreneurial skills (BCreative) project was completed in August 2012. Nevertheless, strong efforts to ensure the sustainability of the platform have been planned by the consortium partners. It provides support to creative industries (CI) companies and individuals to help them thrive in the modern knowledge economy. The main targets included those working in advertising, architecture, art and antiques, crafts, design, designer fashion, film/video/photography, music/performing arts, publishing, software and computer games, television and radio.

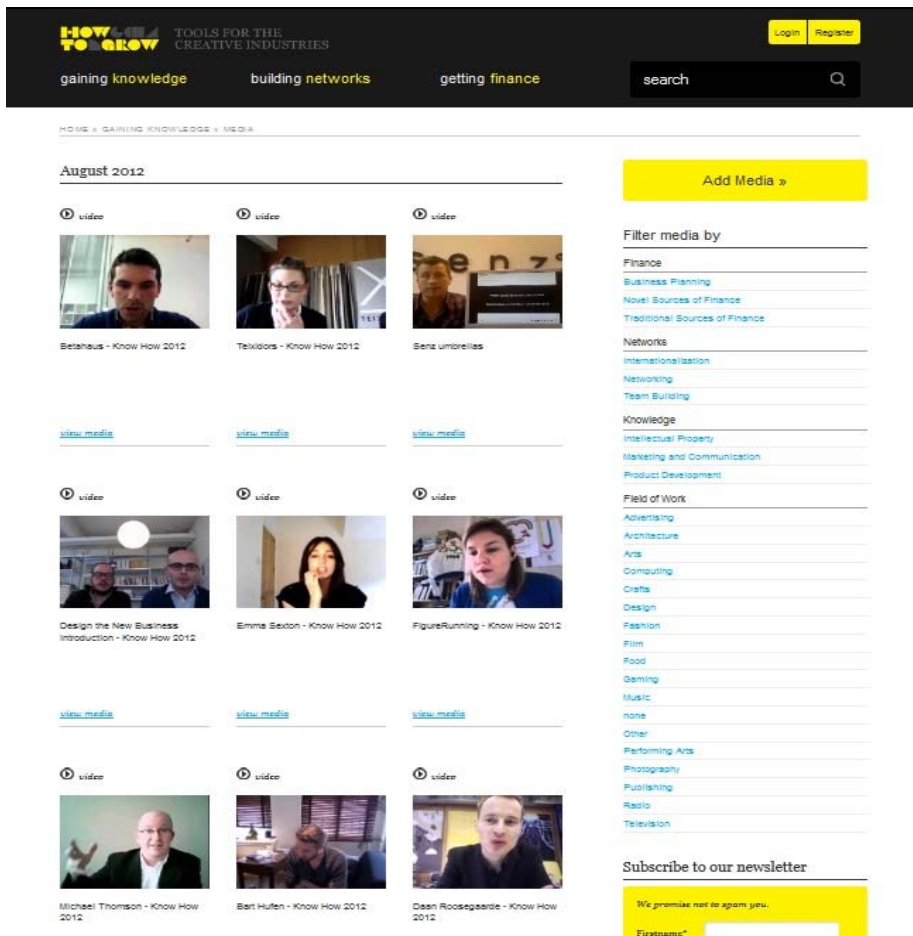
The year saw significant changes and improvements to the main output of the project, the “How To Grow” online platform. These included a complete redesign of the graphical interface and content elements to make it more appealing and useful to CI businesses across

Europe and beyond. The most significant of these changes has been the high level of original content that the project team has been able to generate for its users, with the generous donation of time and energy by CI related companies and individuals across Europe. This began with the ‘Know How – BCreative Live Event’ which took place on 27 February – 2 March. The platform was also integrated with the platform of the European Creative Industries Alliance, which was formally launched on 27 February and kicked-off the ‘Know-How’ live event. ARC Fund promoted this event in Bulgaria and was able to work with two Bulgarian companies, Betahaus Sofia and Cleantech, who agreed to provide virtual lectures through the platform. Overall, this event included five full days of speakers from CI businesses, financial experts and policy-makers who spoke about ways that Europe’s CI potential can,

and is, being realized. All presentations were streamed through the platform video interface, with the ability for virtual attendees to directly interact with the presenters through an in-browser chat window.

ARC Fund promoted the platform and its potential benefits on the territory of Bulgaria, organizing a workshop in July, 2012 that was

attended by representatives of CI companies and policy-makers. They discussed the platform and the future of CI in the country. Additionally, the potential use of the 'How To Grow' platform was presented by the ARC Fund team at the Game Development Summit (GDS Bulgaria 2012), focusing on promoting and discussing the digital gaming sector within the frame of the ON!FEST in Sofia.



Expert presentations during the 'Know How – BCreative Live Event'

InterValue

The project aimed to establish knowledge, support and inter-regional cooperation mechanisms to employ the R&D potential in South Eastern Europe.

The adopted bottom-up approach allowed interesting and valuable research to reach its market potential through a process of selection and promotion to relevant stakeholders. The focus was on two major cross-cutting sectors of major importance to the region (Infor-

mation and Communication Technologies and Energy/Environmental Technologies), allowing the selection of additional sectors in the implementation phase.

The work done in 2012 included:

- Identification of R&D results with some market potential created by research centers in the region;
- Creation of a transnational pool of experts that can offer their

advice on market potential, technical feasibility, scientific relevance and funding opportunities;

- Assessment by the experts of the market potential of selected R&D results;
- Development of exploitation plans and valorization agreements for the most promising of the assessed R&D results and support of their valorization potential;
- Systematic promotion of ties between researchers and businesses through focused broker-

age events.

A multilingual web 2.0 based knowledge suite complemented these steps, with complete methodological guides that clarify aspects to accomplish new product development and intellectual property management. The web platform is available at www.researchvalue.net.

ARC fund identified 42 promising research results that were assessed and four of them were supported on their way to the market.

BOO-Games

The project Boosting European Games Industry (BOO-Games) started in January 2012 and is supported by the INTERREG IVC program and the Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works. As part of the overall strategy to strengthen the conditions within Europe for the generation of growth and jobs in high value-added sectors, BOO-Games is based on the recognition that the potential benefits for EU citizens from the rapidly growing digital games market can be enhanced if the correct regional funding and support mechanisms are put in place for small and innovative game developers.

To this end, BOO-Games aims to support regional public authorities in understanding the positive impact that well-tailored support for digital gaming could have on their regions and citizens. It will do this by assessing different types of support, such as: public funding, private investment incentives, talent incubation, cluster development, improvement of public perception of the

potential for digital games. Public authorities and project partner organizations which are more advanced in this field will be paired with less experienced partners. This will allow for mutual learning and interregional cooperation that will help improve support strategies for the sector where they are needed the most and where high growth potential is available.

A database with relevant stakeholders was designed and launched, and the BOO-Games regional analysis report on the gaming sector in Bulgaria was drafted. Also an online survey was launched in all countries participating in the project. ARC Fund hosted an event, entitled "Support to the creative industries and the games industry." The meeting was attended by policy-makers, company CEO's, and representatives of enterprise support organisations from the digital gaming and creative industries. The meeting verified the main challenges previously identified through research:

- insufficiency of highly qualified specialists in the digital gaming sector;
- lack of understanding by the tax authorities of the specifics of the game development companies;
- need to improve the forms of financial support.

KNOW-HUB

The KNOW-HUB project on “Enhancing regional competences in strategic management of innovation policies” bridges the gap of shortage of knowledge, skills and experience of European regions in designing and implementing the new generation of smart and effective strategies for innovation. The project actively collaborates with the Smart Specialisation Platform in their work on reviewing and improving their Smart Specialisation Strategies for

Research and Innovation. During 2012, the KNOW-HUB practitioners exchanged visits for peer-reviewing their recent innovation policies and initiatives to identify key issues and good practices to be shared with others. ARC Fund was the methodological leader of the peer review process by designing guidelines, questionnaires and templates to structure the reviews in a coherent way for all regions.



KNOW-HUB involves 13 organizations from 10 European regions

In all KNOW-HUB undertakings ARC Fund closely collaborates with the Gabrovo municipality, the Bulgarian region in the KNOW-HUB project. Besides its mentoring role, ARC Fund assisted Gabrovo municipality in hosting the review by the Weser-Ems region of Germany and in making the visit to the Nord Pas-de-Calais region in France. The Fund also supported the local initiative of the municipality to screen the economic performance of the local companies in order to identify key competitive advantages of the region.

The experience from each peer review visit was summarized in regional reports featuring SWOT analyses, specific case studies, good practices, bottlenecks and shortcomings that are used as input to Mutual Learning Circles seminars. The seminars are used as knowledge transfer platforms to elicit key issues and lessons learned on policies for smart specialization and effective instruments for innovation policies.

KNOW-HUB maintains a web site www.know-hub.eu that will feature a smart encyclopedia on regional innovation strategies and

instruments; repository of good practice examples; blog and newsletter on important activities related to the smart strategies and policy instruments in the EU; short videos lectures on regional innovation and library of interesting publications and reports carefully

selected for readers. The project will also deliver two practical guides with reference to the knowledge and good practices identified in KNOW-HUB as well as training sessions for public stakeholders to spread win-win collaborations beyond the project consortium.