
Introduction

In 2014, the Applied Research and Communications Fund (ARC Fund) capitalized on the momentum of its 23-year history in continuing its mission to promote the knowledge economy. It realized this mission through its applied research and analyses, the development of new policy concepts and deployment of innovative policy-making tools, and by bringing together key stakeholders to discuss and disseminate its research findings. It implemented and managed projects in the areas of science, innovation and information society, technology transfer and business support, a safer online experience for children, and by promoting the use of forward-looking studies and public engagement tools and methods in research and innovation policy-making.

During 2014, ARC Fund focused its research and advocacy in a number of innovation-related areas:

- developing policy intelligence in green and sustainable innovation;
- researching the preconditions which support social innovation;
- promoting the role of workplace innovation;
- formulating policy recommendations to support the management of public-sector innovation;
- creating and disseminating an informational base for the evaluation of research, technology and innovation policies in South East Europe; and
- supporting the uptake of design innovation by policy-makers across the EU.

The year also marked a notable milestone in the development of ARC Fund – the tenth iteration of the National Innovation Forum and the publication and presentation of the tenth Innovation.bg report. *Innovation.bg* is ARC Fund's most visible public policy output and analyzes the development and health of the Bulgarian innovation system. The forum brought together high-level decision-makers, including the President of the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as prominent academics, and business leaders.

Building on a lengthy history in performing innovation-related research and analyses, by 2014 ARC Fund was well positioned to launch a four-year research project focused on improving the assessment and management of sustainable innovation. The project covers all EU Member States through a partnership of 19 partners from 12 EU countries and a network of 16 country correspondents.

Beyond these innovation-oriented activities, ARC Fund provided technology transfer and business support services through a number of channels. These included: efforts aimed at improving the capacity of regions across Europe to design and implement their *Smart Specialization Strategies for Research and Innovation*; activities fostering innovation in the transport sector through facilitating the participation of new actors in European funding programs; and building and animating a European network focused on improving the quality of life of elderly people by stimulating the market update of ICT solutions. ARC Fund also provided specific support to the digital gaming industry by organizing a digital game competition, as well as digital game development workshops for children.

The year of 2014 also marks the seventh year of ARC Fund's leadership of the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) in Bulgaria, which brings together 14 partnering organizations from around the country. During the year, EEN focused on the ICT sector, in view of its high potential to step up the development of the entire economy evidenced by ARC Fund's research findings. EEN also organized a number of brokerage meetings, missions and seminars, and facilitated the participation of Bulgarian companies in various inter-

national business events. These focused on several sectors, including information, communication and mobile technologies, machine building, sports technology, e-government and e-health, and cluster management. Also, during the European SME Week held across Europe at the end of September, ARC Fund and the Enterprise Europe Network organized an event that focused on discussing and disseminating workplace innovations within the framework of the European Workplace Innovation Network. It also partnered with the National Agency for Regional Development of Serbia in organizing a business mission of Serbian enterprises to the European Union Representation in Bulgaria.

Through its coordination of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Center – a member of a European network of 30 centers across the EU referred to as InSafe, and of the International Association of Internet Hotlines entitled INHOPE – ARC Fund received and processed nearly 2,000 reports of content and conduct on the internet which was illegal and harmful to children. Additionally, over 400 children, parents and teachers were consulted by the Bulgarian Helpline for Online Safety. Over 80 teachers were also trained in the application of a methodology entitled *Prevention of Virtual and Real Violence by Interactive Education in Schools* in order to improve their knowledge and skills in helping children to avoid online risks. The methodology was applied in over 170 schools across 5 Bulgarian cities. In addition to working directly with the target groups, ARC Fund contributed to policy formulation in the area of child care, child justice and education through its involvement in the elaboration of *Report Card 2013*. This report evaluated how successful state institutions and administrations have been in fulfilling their commitments to children, and improving their well-being and safety. ARC Fund also contributed to the annual *Activity Plan of the State Agency for Child Protection*. By the end of 2014, the state announced its intention to pass a Law Amending and Supplementing the Penal Code in this area.

With respect to its foresight work, ARC Fund finalized its role in the development of energy roadmaps for regions and cities in South East Europe. Over the year, it developed, presented, and demonstrated the use of a key energy technologies roadmapping methodology to members of the EnVision2020 project consortium. By the end of the year, roadmaps were developed for the target regions and cities within the project. ARC Fund also undertook two large-scale technology assessment pilot activities aimed at applying technology assessment methods in the development of policy intelligence. One of these pilots focused on the application of technology-based solutions to problems associated with aging, and another on issues related to sustainable consumption, which mobilized over 100 Bulgarian citizens to contribute their views and aspirations in this area. Building on these developments, ARC Fund, in its capacity of partner in the Engage2020 project, also worked on aggregating existing public engagement methods and tools from Europe and around the world. This took place in 2014 and aimed to increase the engagement of societal actors in research and innovation. It culminated in the completion of a report containing 57 factsheets which described various engagement methods and tools. It also included information regarding the key challenges that they address, the stakeholders that are involved, and the depth of engagement of the participants that they mobilize.

ARC Fund and ARC Consulting's Key Achievements in 2014 included

- publishing the flagship report *Innovation.bg* for the tenth time and organizing the Tenth National Innovation Forum and Contest for Innovative Enterprises;
- managing or partnering in 30 international projects;
- providing business support services to over 150 new organizations through the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN);
- facilitating the participation of 40 Bulgarian companies in brokerage meetings and business missions in Bulgaria and abroad, which resulted in over 140 business and technology cooperation contacts between local and foreign companies;
- receiving and processing close to 2,000 reports of content and conduct on the internet which were illegal and harmful to children through the Safer Internet Center;
- consulting over 400 children, parents and teachers through the Bulgarian Helpline for Online Safety, operated by the Parents Association, a partner of the Safer Internet Center;
- organizing a Europe-wide event on workplace innovation that brought together companies and researchers from across Europe;
- kicking-off a Mobilization and Mutual Learning (MML) Action Plans: Mainstreaming Science in Society Actions in Research project focusing on stimulating and researching public participation in sustainable innovation;
- organizing a national competition for innovative digital games; and
- designing, training and deploying a key energy technologies roadmapping methodology in the SEE region.