

# Technology transfer and business support

## Enterprise Europe Network – EEN



In 2008, the two largest networks of the European Commission providing advice to businesses (European Network of Innovation Relay Centers and the Network of Euro Info Centers) joined efforts and merged into a new initiative of the EC named the Enterprise Europe Network. The Network is the main instrument of the European Commission in implementing its policy to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), laying special emphasis on innovation as a key driver of competitiveness. EEN is represented in Europe by 557 information and consulting centers with over 4000 experienced professionals. The network provides its services to companies and research organizations without sectoral restrictions or preferences.

The European Commission considers the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) to be an important European and national public service in the sphere of innovation, technology transfer and the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises at European and national levels. It provides SMEs with services for international collaboration, for developing innovations and/or participating in technology transfer, and for participating in joint research projects with the financial support of the EC framework programs (FP7 and the

Competitiveness and Innovation Program (CIP). In addition to this range of services, the Bulgarian network further offers country-specific support for businesses by helping them to take advantage of the Operational Programs (OPs) under the Structural Funds in Bulgaria.

The opportunities of the single market still remain under-exploited by Bulgarian SMEs. It is the mandate of the Enterprise Europe Network-Bulgaria to help the small businesses internationalize, innovate and tap into new opportunities for growth and development. The provision of high quality business and innovation support services, delivered in close proximity to local SMEs and designed to meet the needs of the Network's clients, underpins our ambition to establish the Enterprise Europe Network as the number one reference point for the Bulgarian SMEs in internationalization and innovation matters.



It is very important for the network in Bulgaria to link the needs of its clients up with the latest policy developments at



*Map of the coverage of the EEN contact points in Bulgaria by Province*

European level. By virtue of the nature of the network, SME and innovation policies retain their central role in shaping the majority of support services. The network's activities also reflected major political headline priorities and are inspired by the most important policy developments, such as Europe 2020 and, in particular, the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative.

The Network in Bulgaria consists of 13 partnering organizations in 8 cities, is coordinated by ARC Fund, and covers the whole territory of the country.

Evolution and continuity marked the year of 2010 for the Enterprise Europe Network in Bulgaria. Three years after its launch, the network's regional structures have been consolidated and provide a solid foundation for partners to deliver on the key aspects of the Network's mandate to help SMEs make the most of the single market. As in previous years, the focus was to help the internationali-

zation 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 internet portal of the Network in Bulgaria, [www.enterprise-europe-network.bg](http://www.enterprise-europe-network.bg), which is the leading Bulgarian portal 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. The Internet Portal of the Bulgarian node of the Enterprise Europe Network and the regional sites has been visited more than 11 million times in the last 3 years.

Website: Enterprise Europe Network

The activities of EEN – Bulgaria are complemented by a diversified portfolio of ac-

tivities focused on different sectors like ICT, transport, creative industries, and tourism.

### *Brokerage event for clusters and companies in the field of Information and Communication Technologies*

For the past 12 years the Applied Research and Communications Fund, has organized annual business and technological brokerage and matchmaking events in various economic sectors, including engineering, machine building, ICT, energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. 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 can take place under different EU programs and initiatives, such as EU framework programs, operational programs under the EU structural funds, programs such as Intelligent Energy, etc.).

The preparation, format and program for ICT CLUSTER MATCH 2010, held in the town of Plovdiv from September 29 – October 1, 2010, was new for this type of event in Europe. The aim of the ICT CLUSTER MATCH 2010 was to allow for clusters and component companies, research, and consulting nongovernmental organizations to discuss business opportunities and technological partnerships on the basis of previously ex-

changed information. The shape of the event allowed the exchange of contact information, technology and business profiles, presentations and promotional material between the participating clusters and companies.

The novelty, which was introduced in the preparation, organization and conduct of the event, is associated with an individual approach to analyzing, systematizing, and offering information and advice to a cluster on funding opportunities for joint international projects such as projects under the EU Framework Programs, including the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Program and OP Competitiveness (specifically under Priority 2). The consultants of Enterprise Europe Network – Bulgaria, together with specialists from the Ministry of Economy Energy and Tourism (MEET) developed and provided clusters with systematic information on the general and specific objectives of the above listed programs. This included the requirements for the documentation necessary, and the steps in preparing and submitting project proposals by cluster consortia, as well as information regarding the implementation stages of projects.

### *FutureMatch*

The Enterprise Europe Network Bulgaria organized a technology brokerage event in ICT during the biggest European exhibition in the field – Ce-

BIT, from March 2-6, 2010, in Hannover, Germany.

CeBIT is the world's leading fair for infor-



*The FutureMatch ICT technology brokerage event in Hannover, Germany, 2-6 March 2010*

mation and communication technologies (ICT) in Europe.

Despite the economic crisis and the restricted financial resources of the companies to attend international exhibitions, **FutureMatch 2010** and the efforts of the EU's largest mechanism for supporting SMEs – Enterprise Europe Network, attracted more than **400 participants** from **46 countries** and **1,359 bilateral meetings** were held during the event.

The ARC Fund consultants from the Network supported the participation of **five innovative** Bulgarian companies in the brokerage event. They presented several new technological solutions like software for improvement of mobile sales team efficiency, an intelligent platform

for the modernization and development of information systems, a mobile surveillance system and an integrated business software solution for management and control of hotels, chains of hotels and property management companies. The presented technologies provoked very high interest and more 80 meetings were held.

The immediate results from the meetings included a contract for new software development and the participation of Bulgarian SMEs in an FP7 research project. These are the first indicators that the FutureMatch added value for the companies. Other successful outcomes are expected.

Website:  
[www.b2match.eu/futurematch](http://www.b2match.eu/futurematch)

### *Support for enterprise and business incubators in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*

ARC Fund has coordinated the **Network of Business Incubators and Technology Parks in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECAbit)** since 2008. By its active participation in ECAbit, ARC fund provides additional internationalization opportunities for Bulgarian enterprises and extends its policy and advocacy outreach to governments from the Commonwealth

of Independent States. In 2010, ARC Fund assisted the Moldovian Agency for Innovation and Technology Transfer, Moldovian Technology Transfer Network and the Caspian Investment Centre (Azerbaijan) on both policy and project development. ECAbit gained increasing recognition both by the international incubator community and the governments from the ECA region



*From left to right: Stefan Schandera (Regional Facilitator, InfoDev, World Bank), Elshan Musayev (President, Caspian Investment Centre, Azerbaijan), Intigam Babayev (Deputy Minister of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Azerbaijan), Mammad Musayev (Chair, National Confederation of Entrepreneurs, Azerbaijan) and Todor Yalamov (ECAbit Coordinator, ARC Fund) at the Advancing Innovation in ECA conference, held in Baku, Azerbaijan on 2-3 December 2010*

as a reliable and valuable partner for local economic development.

The fifth regional ECAbit's conference, Advancing Innovation in ECA, was held in Baku on December 2-3, 2010 and focused on Investment readiness and business incubation infrastructure for youth entrepreneurship. It attracted more than 50 participants from 15 countries. The conference featured an infoDev training on investment readiness for incubator managers (current and prospect), train-

ing for pre-incubation and start-ups (for young Azerbaijani entrepreneurs) and a strategic discussion for ECAbit priorities in 2011. Probably the most significant policy impact of the conference was the decision of the government of Azerbaijan to launch a Youth Innovation Center as a pilot incubator for young entrepreneurs and the expectation of ECAbit to play an instrumental role in setting up the initiative in the country. More information on the conference could be found at: [www.ecabit.org/?p=335](http://www.ecabit.org/?p=335)

### *B-Creative*

In 2010, ARC Fund continued its activity in the **'Business kit for Creative start-ups in IPR, Venture capital and Entrepre-**

**neurial skills' (BCreative)** project along with 8 partners from across Europe. The main activities of BCreative remain its fo-



*The BCreative platform "How to Grow"*

focus on overcoming the challenges that businesses in the creative industries (CI) (including advertising, architecture, art and antiques, crafts, design, designer fashion, film/video/photography, music/performing arts, publishing, software and computer games, television and radio) face in achieving their business goals. BCreative will make this assistance available through an online platform containing a toolkit that is tailored to the needs of companies in the sector. It will aid in overcoming challenges such as finding business partners and the sharing of expert business advice and in understanding the legal environment surrounding the protection of intellectual property. It will also help businesses acquire the necessary financing, business, and entrepreneurial skills to fully develop and bring their products and services to the market.

In 2010, the partners worked on finalizing the conceptual and technical details of the tools and began the migration of these tools onto the online platform. There are two planned phases for the rollout of the tools on the business kit platform. The tools which have been under development will be made available on the projects website throughout 2011.

The development of the tools had been based on an in-depth assessment of the existing needs of creative companies across Europe and the challenges they face in achieving their goals. In addition, by mapping what existing business support services companies use and why they use them, BCreative has built on previous successes (and will link to them) and will attempt to avoid failures in the development of a sustainable and effective platform for improving the opportunities for businesses in the creative industries. Once the platform and toolkit are deployed, the ways that the platform is used will be monitored using data capture techniques to create an iterative way of constantly improving it and tailoring it to the needs of stakeholders in the sector. Also in 2010, ARC fund investigated the possibilities for implementing an Innovation Voucher Scheme in support of the Creative Industries in Bulgaria.

## TOUREG



The main objective of the Research Driven Cluster for Tourist Sector Competitiveness and Knowledge (TOUREG) was to improve the competitiveness and strategic position of the tourism sector and in particular tourist-oriented sectors in European regions. ARC Fund elabo-

rated an analysis of the situation of the services sector linked to tourism in the South West region of Bulgaria, and presented technology offers and requests of the SMEs in a Technology Map web-tool which helped to identify potential synergies, technology transfer opportunities and collaborations.

A report on synergies and complementary features on the tourist-oriented service sector titled, *Analysis of Regional Technological Trends – A Global Analysis and Differences among R&D Public Policies*, was prepared.

In aiming to support SMEs from the tourism sector in innovation activities, the TOUREG consortium developed a hand-

book on how to efficiently apply IT to the tourist sector and an itinerary for the generation of technology transfer.

To achieve the viability and continuity of the international cluster's activity, a joint Action Plan will be prepared which, in view of the preliminary analyses produced and of the priorities drawn up for action in all the regions taking part, includes actions of mutual interest. These actions are capable of being performed in the framework of other European initiatives, such as programs included in the 7th Framework Program and CIP.

Website:  
[www.tourisminnovation.eu](http://www.tourisminnovation.eu)

### InterValue

**InterValue aimed** to establish knowledge, support and inter-regional cooperation mechanisms aiming for the exploitation of the R&D potential in South Eastern Europe. The objective is to help exploit academic research for the sake of R&D sustainability and regional development.

The adopted bottom-up approach allows interesting and valuable research to reach its market potential through a process of selection and promotion to relevant stakeholders. The focus is on two major cross-cutting sectors of major importance to the region (Information and Telecommunication Technologies and Energy/Environmental Technologies) and will allow for at least one other sector to be selected by each of the partners in the implementation phase. The methodology adopted by the project includes the following steps:

1. Identification of R&D results created by research centers in the region that have some market potential;
2. Creation of a transnational pool of experts that can offer their advice on market potential, technical feasibility, scientific relevance and funding opportunities;
3. Assessment by the experts of the market potential of selected R&D results;
4. Development of exploitation plans and valorization agreements for the most promising of the assessed R&D results and support of their valorization potential;
5. Systematically promote linkages between research and business through focused brokerage events.

These steps are complemented by a multilingual web 2.0 based knowledge suite, with complete methodological guides that clarify aspects to accomplish new product development and intellectual


InterValue Platform

### Collaboration for the Valorisation of R&D

The INTERVALUE Platform supports the process of valorisation of research results. It is not only a meta-repository of R&D results, but also a collaborative space facilitating the interaction between researchers, companies and experts, improving the collaboration and knowledge sharing, and supporting a culture of innovation among them. [Learn more »](#)



#### R&D Repository



Providers from universities and research and technological institutions submit their research outcomes that lead to the development of new products, new production processes and new services.

[Visit the repository ▶](#)

#### Valorisation Plans



A network of experts help researchers to create valorisation plans for their R&D results covering technical feasibility, IP protection, market potential and funding potential.

[View the valorisation plans ▶](#)

#### IP Agreements



License agreements and new products developments are facilitated through on-line learning roadmaps, inter-regional brokerage events, newsletters and pilot applications funding.

[Learn more ▶](#)

property management. The web platform is available at

[www.researchvalue.net](http://www.researchvalue.net)

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

### Switch4Food

**“Services for Water and Integrated techniques for FOODindustry” (SWITCH4FOOD)** aimed to identify and analyze best practices and knowledge (technologies/methodologies) of SMEs in the food industry for water use and wastewater to allow their exchange and transfer among the partnering countries.

The objectives of Switch4Food were 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 where more than 500 companies will be expected to attend which will be invited to join the Club approach;
- Facilitate the interaction among environmental consultants and SMEs of the food industry in order to filter and tailor the technical offers to SMEs’ needs;
- Create fruitful future synergies among different actors: SMEs, the EEN Sector Group ‘Environment and Agro-Food’, environmental service providers



and local authorities. It means that the SMEs of clubs will be encouraged to participate in company-to-company visits (at least one for each region) organized inside of the Sector Group;

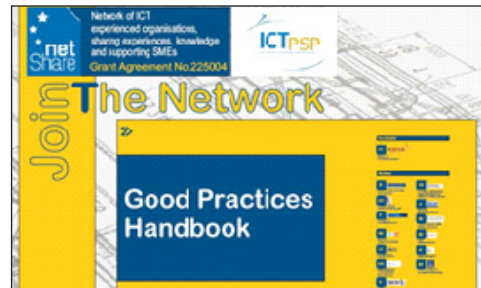
- Involve EEN partners in the promotion and diffusion of the methodologies and gained experiences, in training activities, and in the promotion of technologies and best practices identified.

The objectives will be achieved through awareness raising and training seminars, company visits and environmental audits, regular meetings of the companies, consultants and ESP providers participating in the established environmental clubs, promotional events and company-to-company visits.

Website: [www.s4food.eu](http://www.s4food.eu)

### NET-SHARE

NET-SHARE creates, animates and manages a network of experienced ICT organizations throughout the EU for the popularizing and sharing of knowledge and good practices from ICT initiatives among local SMEs. An interactive handbook of over 45 good practices including three from Bulgaria (Saturn Engineering, Optix and the Mechatronics and Automation Cluster) was created to spread innovative services and approaches developed within the former eTEN program and by individual organizations. The handbook's practices cover microelectronics, embedded systems, microsystems, e-services and knowl-



*The Net Share interactive Handbook of Good Practices*

edge networks.

Website: [www.net-share.eu](http://www.net-share.eu)

### STAR-NET TRANSPORT

The aim of the Star-Net Transport project, implemented within the EC Seventh Framework Program, was to provide holistic support for the successful participation of European SMEs in Sustainable Surface Transport activities (such as haulage, logistics, ICT applications, naval technology, car building, railway transport and the economics of transport). Project partners provide sets of services on promoting call opportunities, assessing the technological state

of the potential SME applicants, identifying promising project ideas, developing and disseminating partner search profiles and assisting inclusion of Transport SMEs in project proposals under the Seventh Framework Program. For the year 2010, three Bulgarian SMEs were assisted to join project proposals within FP7.

Website: [www.starnet-transport.eu](http://www.starnet-transport.eu)

## EU4SMEs

'EU Policies for SME's' (EU4SMEs) began in 2010 and is a project within the EEN which promotes the network as a reliable partner of the EC and provides vital feedback from SMEs.

The basic objective of the project is to facilitate consultations between the EC EU-accession country-based SMEs in order to include their opinions in the EU-level policy making process, thus ena-

bling the direct involvement of SMEs.

The action's aim is to raise the SMEs' awareness on forthcoming EU policies affecting their business, to promote the EC's valuable activities in performing wide consultations with affected economic actors, to give substance to ex-ante impact assessments, and to facilitate the participation of SMEs' in the consultation process.

## TransBonus – Connecting Transport Researchers

In 2010, ARC Fund implemented the second phase of the TransBonus project, which was funded by the European Commission under the 7th Framework Program for Research and Technological Development (FP7).

The overall objective of TransBonus was to improve and promote closer Scientific and Technological (S&T) cooperation opportunities between Europe and the Western Balkan Countries (WBCs: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia) in the area of surface transport. It further established an EU-Balkan transport network of researchers, universities, industrialists and experts among these countries in order to improve and enlarge the research capacity of Western Balkan centers of competence. This included improving linkages with research programs and human resources through trans-national placements of research staff and knowledge.

The objectives of the project were accomplished by:

- the creation of a database providing collaboration and technology profiles

for WBC and Bulgarian transport researchers;

- the promotion and awareness raising of funding opportunities available at the European level that can support international cooperation among WBC transport researchers;
- the provision of training and support for academics and researchers in the Seventh Framework Program in order to help them prepare for engagement with European programs;
- the setting up of a matching tool called "Project Lab" which facilitated the creation and preparation of effective project proposals and stimulated partnerships in surface transport;
- the implementation of expert study visits between the partners from the Western Balkans and EU partners to promote networking across Europe;
- stimulating partnering schemes and collaboration between researchers and business in surface transport stakeholders in the Balkans;

TransBonus had a very novel methodology, allowing the beneficiaries of the project not

only to acquire knowledge about FP7 and to be trained in project proposal development, but also allowing them to participate in an internal call for proposals, which resemble real FP7 calls, but on a smaller scale. This simulation showed transport researchers from WBCs that participation in FP7 is not as complicated as it looks and eligible organizations from the region should be more active.

A number of pre-proposals were submitted under the second internal call for proposals (the first one was launched in 2009) with a deadline of May 31, 2010. These pre-proposals were evaluated according to the FP7 evaluation guidelines and four of the proposals that passed the evaluation threshold of 10 points were selected for further project development during the workshop for project proposals development, organized in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina from

July 7-9, 2010. The aim of the workshop was to bring together potential applicants, assist them in developing their ideas and in structuring the best four pre-project proposals from the internal call into project proposals that would be submitted under the calls of FP7, which were published at the end of July 2010.

Forty-six participants from universities, private companies and NGOs from Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, the Netherlands, Macedonia, Malta, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in the workshop.

Another TransBonus activity with a potential longer-term effect was the expert study visit, organized in the Netherlands from September 16-17, 2010. The objective of the event was to expand the scientific relationships and networking between the researchers from the WBCs and their Dutch colleagues. During the first day, partici-



*Participants in the workshop on proposal writing for FP7, held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina on 7-9 July 2010*

participants visited the Technical University Delft where they got acquainted with the transport research at the university, the Valorization Center and some of the on-going projects of the university. After that, they had the opportunity to go to the Dutch Road Authority where they watched a short documentary film about traffic management in the Netherlands and made a tour of the test center for traffic systems. On the second day, participants travelled to the Eindhoven University of Technology where they became acquainted with the current research of the staff and the laboratories they use to perform it. After that they went to the TNO Automotive where, after several presentations about the work and projects of the organization, they saw the lab and the test center.

The last TransBonus event in 2010 was organized in Sofia from December 6-8, 2010. The first day was dedicated to a regional workshop, titled "Transport Research and Business cooperation in SEE." Transport researchers from the partnering WBCs, including Romania, Turkey, Croatia, Slovenia, and representatives of businesses from Bulgaria, participated in the workshop. Most participants presented their research and/or projects they were currently working on and after that a discussion on the possibilities of cooperation between business and science representatives was made. The event also created good networking opportunities.

The second day was dedicated to an expert study visit to the premises of "Vagonoremonten zavod" – 99 AD – Septemvri. The enterprise was founded in 1941 as a railway-carriage repair workshop and is the only enterprise for the production and repair of wheel-sets in Bulgaria. Participants got acquainted with the activities of the factory and visited the workshop for the production of wheel axles.

The tangible results of the project are the following:

- A roadmap for research capacities and funding opportunities in WBC transport research;
- 150 researchers informed and directed towards FP7;
- 11 national Idea Generation Events (only 10 were planned initially);
- 63 new project proposal ideas (only 50 were planned initially);
- 5 events in the Balkan countries linking transport researchers and industry;
- The publishing of 26 PR research profiles (initially only 25 were planned);
- A workshop for project proposal development (additional activity, not planned initially)
- 5 projects submitted under the FP7 call for proposals, launched in 2010 (this result was not planned at all initially).

Website: [www.transbonus.net](http://www.transbonus.net)

### *Capacity Building for Banning and Phasing out Asbestos in West Balkan Countries*

In 2010, ARC Fund started the implementation of the **Capacity Building for Banning and Phasing out Asbestos in West Balkan Countries** project, which was funded by the Civil Society Facility Hori-

zontal Activities: Support to Partnership Actions "Environment, Energy Efficiency, Health and Safety at Work" of EuropeAid. The Gauss Institute from the FY Republic of Macedonia coordinated the project,

and the other partners included the Ecological Association HELIKS from Serbia and the Association for Development, Advancement and Promotion of Ecological Agriculture, Tourism and Environmental Protection from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Contrary to the huge efforts of EU countries to phase-out asbestos-containing materials and to impose strong health and safety measures for workers and other persons who are in contact with asbestos-containing materials, there are very limited or almost no measures undertaken in this direction in Western Balkan Countries. Because of that, the overall objective of the project has been to strengthen the capacity of Civil Society Organizations from the Western Balkan Countries (WBC) in order for them to be able to deal with the asbestos issue in their countries.

The specific objectives of the project are:

- To create partnerships between Civil Society Organizations from the West Balkan Countries interested in dealing with the asbestos issue as well as partnerships with similar organizations from the European Union;
- To transfer know-how from EU Member States (especially New Member States) about their experience in dealing with the asbestos issue;
- To increase public awareness about the presence of asbestos containing materials and their harmful effect on human health;
- To lobby for prompt transposition and implementation of the EU Asbestos Directives into the national legislation of West Balkan Countries.

Since Bulgaria has experience both in dealing with asbestos and in transposing the EU asbestos directives, its role in the project is to provide data and to share its know-how with the other partners from the WBCs. One of the main activities of the project in 2010 was the Balkan conference, which took place from June 17-19, in Ohrid, FY Republic of Macedonia. Its aim was to transfer knowledge from the experienced EU Member State of Bulgaria to the Western Balkan Countries which were preparing to transpose the EU directives about asbestos into their national legislation. In addition to the transfer of know-how in the directives transposition, another goal of the Balkan conference was to build the capacity of the WBCs so that they can cope with the asbestos problem as soon as possible. Further steps that needed to be taken by the WBC's in order to achieve the goal of banning and phasing out asbestos were also discussed. Two Bulgarian experts from the Ministry of Environment and Water participated in the Balkan conference and presented the Bulgarian experience in dealing with the issue.

Furthermore, two Bulgarian experts, who have been dealing with the asbestos problem in Bulgaria for more than twenty years, were tasked with the preparation of a report, whose aim is to list the steps that were taken in the country in order to phase out asbestos and to present the Bulgarian action plan used to transpose and implement the EU asbestos directives.

Website: <http://noforasbestos.net/>