

Technology Transfer and Business Support

Capacity Building for Greening Bulgarian Innovative SMEs



In 2015, ARC Fund continued its work on **fostering the greening of innovative SMEs in Bulgaria**. This was done within the framework of the “**Capacity Building for Greening Bulgarian Innovative SMEs**” action, executed in cooperation with the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) and funded by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and Innovation Norway. In order to tackle environmental challenges, accelerate the uptake of environmental technologies and

increase local competitiveness, the project team developed an **online self-assessment tool for SMEs** on green behavior and performance, and prepared the **Green Innovation.bg report**. The report was based on an analysis of the overall progress of the country in terms of green growth, the national and EU-level policy and regulatory framework promoting green innovation in Bulgaria, and the current technological activities in SMEs from the green perspective.

Online self-assessment tool

ARC Fund’s team performed numerous in-depth interviews to assess the measures and technologies Bulgarian SMEs use to improve their green performance. Overall, most Bulgarian SMEs have not yet made the most of the financial and environmental benefits of green innovations. This is largely the result of lack of funding, both within the companies and from external sources. Many companies also lack the human and financial resources to assess their energy performance and therefore to identify the most suitable measures to improve their energy management. In light of these conclusions, ARC Fund, in cooperation with external energy experts, developed

an online self-assessment tool to help local SMEs in their first steps towards improving their energy management and environmental performance. The tool allows them to evaluate their energy management practices and establish how their energy expenditures affect their final production costs. Furthermore, registered users can see how they perform in comparison to their competitors in terms of size, sector and location. The tool will be promoted through a series of events, so that it reaches a large number of Bulgarian SMEs and helps them to start improving their energy performance.



Ефективен енергиен мениджмънт

Направете оценка и анализ на енергийната ефективност на вашата компания

Започнете теста

● намерете повече за проекта и организацията

TRANSINNOV

In 2015, ARC Fund commenced the implementation of the action **TRANSINNOV**, together with three partners: Agence de Stimulation Technologique (Wallonia, Belgium), Bretagne Développement Innovation (Bretagne, France) and ASTER (Emilia Romagna, Italy). The project aims to **better structure and drive innovation ecosystems, based on knowledge and technology**, which lead to all types of innovation into SMEs. This is to be achieved by identification of practices, experiences and pilot projects, set up by the project partners in order to enhance and amplify collaborations, networks and ecosystems of knowledge and technology transfer.

Identified good practices will be shared among partners and serve as the basis for the first draft of the design options plan (DOP). The draft will be distributed to the local actors and SMEs. In order to stimulate the local innovation ecosystems of each partner and to start a learning process at the European level, the result of the project will be disseminated as widely as possible. Improvement of knowledge transfer in a structured ecosystem should contribute to the creation of a favorable ecosystem for SME innovation in which public enterprises, SME intermediaries, end users, suppliers and enterprises are encouraged to collaborate for radical innovation that may not yet be described and formulated as a project.

European Transport Network Alliance

The overall objective of **ETNA Plus** is to **foster innovation in trans-national transport cooperation** with a focus on promoting the active participation of new actors and regions in EU research calls and projects. Transport National Contact Points (NCPs) are key players in this mechanism, but their role has been complemented and enhanced by other relevant stakeholders and knowledge hubs like ARC Fund.

In 2015, the ETNA Plus partners further developed their **partner search service** to facilitate participation in Horizon 2020 Transport calls and other relevant funding sources.

The network organized two **ETNA Plus webinars** and two **ETNA Plus Academies** for capacity building and knowledge exchange on Horizon 2020 Transport proposal building and project management.

Within the Framework of the **Horizon 2020 Transport Information Day (5 November 2015, Brussels)**, the project **ETNA Plus organized a networking and brokerage event** – jointly supported by ETNA plus and Enterprise Europe Network, represented by ARC Consulting. The b2b event was focused on the topics covered by the Transport Work Program 2016-2017. The networking and brokerage event took place in the afternoon, following the information sessions carried out by the European Commission in the morning. The b2b event was attended by 208 participants from 31 countries across Europe and more than 280 bilateral meetings were held.

The project web site www.transport-ncps.net features all relevant information in the field of transport such as news, factsheets, newsletters, open calls, partner search tool and training materials.



ETNA Plus networking and brokerage event during the Horizon 2020 Transport Information Day (5 November 2015, Brussels)



ETNA Plus participation in the Horizon 2020 Transport Information Day (5 November 2015, Brussels)

Enterprise Europe Network – world's largest support network for SMEs with international ambitions

Since its launch in 2008, the **Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)** has evolved as a key instrument in the EU's strategy to boost growth and jobs. At present it is the **world's largest business support network** that brings together over 600 partner organizations, such as chambers of commerce and industry, technology centers, universities and development agencies in 60 countries in Europe and across the world. EEN's main focus is to help small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) seize opportunities for business and technology development in the EU single market. Fulfilling this mission,

the EEN partner organizations are linked up through powerful databases with over 13,000 business and technology profiles, sharing their knowledge and sourcing technologies and business partners across all Network countries.

At the same time, EEN serves also as a gear between the European SMEs and the EU institutions. The European Union runs various programs and initiatives that offer financing and development support to SMEs, which the 4,500 EEN advisors promote among entrepreneurs, often



Map of EEN-Bulgaria nodes

providing advisory guidance as well. Furthermore, EEN is the shortest channel for the European Commission to collect opinions and feedback from SMEs for better design of its prospective policies and initiatives that concern the European business.

This year marked the beginning of the new program period for the Enterprise Europe Network (2015-2020), which is co-funded by the European Commission. ARC Fund continued its engagement as coordinator of Enterprise Europe Network's national consortium through its consulting subsidiary ARC Consulting Ltd. The Enterprise Europe Network – Bulgaria includes 12 partner organizations in Sofia, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Yambol, Sandanski, Vratsa, Dobrich and Russe.

One of the important events this year was the launching of the new portal www.een.bg for business information, advice, and opportunities for cooperation. The portal operates according to the priorities set by the EEN's work program, which requires that each partner, including ARC Fund, maintains its own regional EEN website.

Other activities in 2015 included the ongoing information and advisory support to SMEs from different industries with traditional focus on sectors like ICT (a major driver for growth of the Bulgarian economy), machine building, mechatronics and automation, textiles, food and beverages. With its expertise in project management,

smart specialization and technology transfer, ARC Fund regularly delivers capacity building support to the business clusters in Bulgaria. ARC Fund is a founding member of the Cluster of Mechatronics and Automation and the Association of the Business Clusters – the umbrella organization of around 20 of the largest clusters in Bulgaria.

Brokerage meetings, business missions and seminars

Every year ARC Fund organizes **business missions and technological brokerage events in various economic sectors**, e.g. ICT, green industry, engineering, and machine building. Such pre-arranged meetings facilitate contacts between businesses and research organizations looking for business, technology and project partnerships (e.g. for EU funding programs in research and development).

As in previous years, in 2015 ARC Fund was among the co-organizers of the International Brokerage Events at the Mobile World Congress (in Barcelona, March 2015) and CeBIT (in Hannover, March 2015) – leading international events in the mobile communications and ICT industry. Five Bulgarian ICT companies took the opportunity to visit the exhibitions at preferential conditions (reduced participation fee, participation in parallel events, professional consultations in the fields of industrial property, project financing, etc.) and to conduct fruitful negotiations on-site with potential suppliers of new products and technologies. Another



The new website of Enterprise Europe Network – Bulgaria

global ICT event, during which the EEN team at ARC Fund co-organized business-to-business meetings, was Horizon 2020 ICT Conference in Lisbon in October. Other five Bulgarian companies had the opportunity to arrange almost 60 meetings with future R&D partners and business clients. In November, ARC Fund participated in the



B2B meetings on the EEN stand at Mobile World Congress, Barcelona (2-4 March 2015)

A driver for the increased involvement of ARC Fund in ICT supporting events was its renewed membership in the EEN's Sector Group "ICT Industry and Services" during its semestrial meeting on the sidelines of CeBIT-Hannover. The group combines business expertise with local contacts and knowledge of the ICT industry and provides tailored support to help SMEs innovate and grow internationally.

By tradition, in March ARC Fund, together with the Bulgarian Industrial Association, partner in EEN – Bulgaria, organized two brokerage meetings during thematic fairs at Inter Expo Center Sofia – Industry Matchmaking IMM 2015 and Go Green 2 Environment. Over 70 companies from Bulgaria and abroad shared experiences and ideas, showcased their achievements and learned more about the news and trends in their respective industries.

Throughout the year, ARC Fund co-organized together with its EEN partners abroad 4 company missions – one incoming of Croatian companies to Sofia in May and 3 outbound in Thessaloniki (May), London (September), and Gothenburg (October).

In its role as coordinator of the national

very successful "ICT - Go International" brokerage event in Skopje (Republic of Macedonia) – a pilot forum organized by EEN members in South East Europe. Also in November, ARC Fund participated in the H2020 Transport Information Day and Brokerage Event that took place at the European Commission in Brussels.



B2B meetings during EEN international brokerage event at CeBIT, Hannover (16-20 March 2015)

EEN consortium, ARC Fund continuously organizes intra-consortium activities, stakeholder meetings (in the framework of the Innovation Business Club and the Association of Business Clusters), as well as information days and capacity-building seminars on access to EU funding for the 2014-2020 period, innovation management, green business and others.

The EEN advisors at ARC Fund have provided support and extensive consultation on business internationalization, technology transfer and EU programs participation to almost one hundred new organizations (in addition to already registered network clients), the majority among them being small and medium-sized enterprises. Twenty-five Bulgarian companies have participated in brokerage meetings and business missions, organized by EEN in Bulgaria and abroad, which resulted in over 140 business and technology cooperation contacts between local and foreign companies.

The European Commission has entrusted the Applied Research and Communications Fund the role of information and advisory service provider for the SME Instrument

– a new financial instrument, aimed at highly innovative small and medium-sized European enterprises under the “Horizon 2020” framework program for research and development. Two ARC Fund experts were awarded licenses by the *European*

Innovation Management Academy, allowing them to provide innovation management consulting services with the *IMP³rove tool* — a proven international methodology for assessing and improving the innovation management of companies.



Top left: participants in Go Green 2 Environment brokerage event in Inter Expo Center Sofia (13 March 2015); top right: cluster conference in Varna, co-organized by Enterprise Europe Network at ARC Fund (12 June 2015); bottom left: meetings during the ICT Company Mission in Gothenburg (Sweden), co-organized by Enterprise Europe Network at ARC Fund (22 October 2015); bottom right: ICT Go International brokerage event in Skopje (Republic of Macedonia) (13 November 2015).

IMP³rove innovation management assessment of SMEs

IMP³rove

IMP³rove is a **methodology for systematic assessment of all aspects and activities, related to the management of innovation products and processes in companies.** The methodology was approved by the European Commission in 2006 and at present it is part of the services provided by certified EEN advisers. The assessment is based on the “House of Innovation” concept of A. T. Kearney, which analyzes the innovation management performance



Source: A.T. Kearney

House of Innovation concept for innovation management

along the following key dimensions: innovation strategy; innovation organization and culture; innovation life-cycle management; innovation enabling factors; and innovation results. Thanks to the unique and large IMP³rove Benchmarking Database, the innovation management assessments allow for national and international benchmarking.

As member of the EEN Network, ARC Fund is entitled to a number of Enhancing Innovation Management Capacities (EIMC) service packages that provide IMP³rove innovation management assessment free of charge for SMEs with high innovation potential.