



Increasing the participation of small and medium enterprises in EU IST funding

<http://www.epristart.org/>

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About EPRI-start

The EPRI-start project, funded by the European Commission, is designed to increase the participation of small and medium-sized organisations (SMEs) from the new member states (NMS) in EU Information Society Technology (IST) projects. It has been launched to **identify and approach** appropriate SMEs in the NMS, **inform** them about the opportunities of project funding and to **offer support** aimed at the participation in IST projects and obtaining financial support. The EPRI-start consortium consists of 12 partners, one for each new member states as well 2 German partners, Teleport Sachsen-Anhalt (the co-ordinator) and empirica (responsible for dissemination and political activities). A full list of all partners, including contact details, is provided at the end of this document.

This newsletter has been set up as part of the project's dissemination activities and is aimed at a **broad audience**, including decision makers on the European and national level, SMEs and their associations, similar projects and other interested actors. In each issue, the newsletter monitors EU activities, provides an overview of what the project has been doing, informs about upcoming events and presents an analysis of selected issues of interest.

Analysis (intro)

In the last edition of the EPRI-start newsletter we focus on upcoming research opportunities in the EU's Seventh Framework Programme and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme. These two new funding mechanisms are described in our toolkit "What's in for SMEs", which is briefly introduced in the SME Monitor Section. At the end of the newsletter we present a workshop report by Mr. Kalinkin and Mr. Baranov on "the Baltic ICT community on the way to FP7".

EU SME Monitor

FP7 and CIP: what's in for SMEs?

Two key funding opportunities will come into force in 2007, namely the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP7) and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP). While the CIP will focus on **downstream aspects** (closer to market) the framework programme keeps being targeted towards **trans-national cooperation** in RTD. Both programmes offer a variety of opportunities and support actions for SMEs.

Program me	Sub-programme	SME opportunity
FP7	Cooperation (9 thematic areas)	SMEs can participate in projects in the 9 areas, higher co-financing, simplification of procedures, 15% of the total budget is reserved for SMEs
	Ideas (basic research)	SME can participate in basic research
	People (mobility)	industry-academia partnerships
	Capacities (infrastructure, clustering and others)	Funds for SMEs to outsource research
CIP	ICT Policy Support	SME can participate
	Entrepreneurship and innovation	Funding instruments for SMEs

In order to provide more detailed information about these opportunities the EPRI-start programme has developed an FP7/CIP info pack entitled *FP7 and CIP: What's in for SMEs*. This document is available at the EPRI-start website.

More info:

http://www.epristart.org/epristart/Material/20060710_info_on_FP7.pdf

EU-level events highlight importance of SMEs

Two recent events have highlighted the importance of SMEs for the European economy. Firstly, the **Vienna Conference on the European Charter for Small Enterprises** took place from June 13-14, 2006. This charter was approved at the Feira European Council (June 2000) and advocates SME support actions in ten key areas. Each year progress in supporting SMEs is reviewed. This year's event brought together 320 participants from 47 countries, representing national, regional and local policy makers, business organisations and support providers from the EU, candidate countries, Norway, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean. The workshop focused on three priority areas, namely;

- Getting more out of the single market (easy access to legislation and standardisation information)
- Business support, in particular for start-ups and business transfers and
- Successful eBusiness models, in particular to support eBusiness uptake by SMEs.

Additional workshops focused on the Euro-Mediterranean Charter and one person enterprises.

During the event a variety of good practice SME support actions were presented. Ms. Maive Rute, Director at the Commission's Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry, gave an overview of the state of play in SME support actions. In the context of the Lisbon agenda, only half of the EU member states address SME policy issues in their national reform programmes.

Additionally, the **SME day** held in Brussels on June 6, 2006 highlighted the fact that small and medium sized enterprises are a crucial sector for the EU economy and that information and communication technologies are key for their growth.

More info:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/charter/conf2006/index_en.htm

<http://www.smeday.eu/>

COMIST: Integrating the new member states in eWork innovation networks

Creating a pan-European Research and innovation area is the key objective of EU research policy. However, the main challenge in achieving this goal is the fragmentation of research communities on the national and the European level. In this context the **COMIST** project, funded by the EU, focuses on strengthening the innovation system in the new member states in the area of new work and business environments as well as

building strong integrative networking relations. In particular, COMIST targets NMS SMEs acting in the manufacturing, agro-food and logistics sector. COMIST undertakes four main actions:

- strengthening the role of NMS organisations in innovation networks
- Building a network of communities (integration into AMI@Work on-line Communities)
- Communication, awareness and event organisation
- Establishing a consortium-building infrastructure (eRegistry function)

Interested SMEs are invited to register at the COMIST website.

More info: <http://www.ami-communities.eu/wiki/COMIST>

EPRI-start activities

EPRI-start gets "thumbs up" at review meeting

The review of the EPRI-start project, conducted by independent experts on behalf of the European Commission, resulted in a very positive evaluation of the project. In particular the reviewers commented on the high management standards, including the creation of detailed work plans, regular contacts and meetings as well as attention to detail. Challenges encountered during the project were identified in an early stage and remedial actions were proposed and discussed with the Commission's Project Officer. In particular, the activities to analyse the needs of NMS SMEs have been particularly welcomed by the Commission. The review therefore recommended that the project should continue, giving minor recommendations for specific work packages.

EPRI-start sustainability activities

The EPRI-start partners have invested a lot of effort in collecting high quality data on IST SMEs from the new member states, which is available publicly in the EPRI-start database. However, as the project will end in September the EPRI-start consortium is currently investigating how to ensure the sustainability of the project results. In this context we are currently in contact with several EU funded projects and national contact points, which would be interested in sharing the data accumulated by EPRI-start:

- **IST-World**

This project aims to set up and populate an information portal with innovative functionalities that helps to promote RTD competencies in IST in the New Member States and Associate Candidate Countries and facilitates and fosters the involvement of different research entities in joint RTD activities.

- **COMIST**

The COMIST project aims to increase the participation of NMAS organisations in IST activities according to a systemic innovation approach. COMIST supports and implements a general collaboration and interaction environment through the instrument of virtual or networked communities (see report in this issue)

- **EPISTEP**

EPISTEP is an FP6 project which aims to enhance SME participation in IST European Technology Platforms (ETP) in the Sixth and Seventh Framework Programme (see report in EPRI-start Newsletter No 2)

- **ECOLEAD**

ECOLEAD aims to create strong foundations and mechanisms needed to establish the most advanced collaborative and network-based industry society in Europe. It is based on the vision that "in ten years most enterprises will be part of some sustainable collaborative networks that will act as breeding environments for the formation of dynamic virtual organizations in response to fast changing market conditions."

Once the negotiations with these projects have been finalised, EPRI-start will seek to migrate its database to these projects to ensure the sustainability of its core feature also beyond project's end. We will inform and consult our SME partners in the process.

New website from Slovakian partner featuring EPRI-start

The Faculty of Management of the Comenius University in Bratislava has introduced a new website featuring their projects undertaken in a European context. The **e-Europe Research & Development Centre** presents current and past IST projects as well as EU funded projects in other areas. The website provides a general description of the EPRI-start project as well as concrete results for the benefits of its target audience (currently prominently featuring the EPRI-start info pack on FP7 and the CIP).

More info: <http://www.fm.uniba.sk/erdc/>

NMS SME relevant Events

Global Forum 2006: Digital Convergence

The "Global Forum / Shaping the Future" is an annual, non-profit, independent, international invitation-only event dedicated to business and policy issues that affect the successful evolution of the Information Society. Since its inception in 1992, the Global Forum brings together more than 300 international key actors and experts from more than 30 countries.

The 2006 edition of the Global Forum 2006 is all about digital convergence. Topics that will be discussed include challenges for software, government and business (including SMEs). The forum will take place from November 9-10 in Paris.

More info:

http://www.items.fr/globalforum.php3?id_rubrique=75

Analysis (full text)

The Baltic ICT community on the way to FP7 – a workshop report

By **D. Kalinkin and K. Baranov (Inforing AS)**

The workshop "the Baltic Community on the way to FP7" (29-30th June 2006) was organised in Laagri by Inforing AS (Estonia) and funded by the Information Society Programme of the European Commission (Project IST4Balt) in co-operation with EDNES (France). The workshop brought together senior government representatives from the Baltic States, high level officials and experts from the European Commission, international organizations, the IT sector, small and medium private companies (SMEs) as well as public organizations. Altogether approximately 100 participants from 9 European countries participated. The workshop was organized in 9 sessions with 43 speakers.

The workshop aimed at strengthening scientific and technological co-operation and collaboration among the European Union countries in the fields of mobile services and applications, software and e-services, innovations, e-Learning, e-Logistics, e-Health, e-Work, e-Inclusion, audio-visual and cross-media content for leisure and entertainment. These issues were discussed in the context of **new opportunities for international co-operation, research and development within the EU'S Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP7) and its Information Society Technologies (IST) Priority.**

The main sessions of the workshop were:

- **Session 1.** Introduction to IST4Balt project, EU Seventh Framework Programme and IST Priority
- **Session 2.** e-Collaboration in Estonia
- **Session 3.** IST projects: new collaboration and funding opportunities (including EPRI-Start project activities)
- **Session 4.** Baltic IST: e-Inclusion and employment
- **Session 5.** Baltic IST supporting structures: National Contact Points and information services
- **Session 6.** SIMS workshop: Mobile Services and Applications
- **Session 7.** e-Collaboration in artificial intelligence applications

- **Session 8.** IST Training and e-Learning
- **Session 9.** Baltic IST: Software and services, eInclusion, eHealth, eWork

The event was opened by the honorary chairman of the workshop - Vladimir Velman, Member of Estonian parliament. In his speech he clearly underlined the importance of international collaboration, especially in the field of science, research and technological development. He also encouraged local IT&T community members to cooperate closely within the framework of the EU IST programmes and highly appreciated the very good level of the Estonian Information Society.



Jean Bonnin, the president of EDNES spoke about the IST4Balt project and new opportunities for the Baltic ICT community within the framework of the IST4Balt project and IST programme. He expressed the hope that collaboration between European countries, especially the New Member States, will develop rapidly and successfully. The project manager of EDNES – Alexander Beriozko provided a short training course devoted to the EU Seventh Framework Programme. He presented the latest news, a brief description of the FP7 and gave some advice for those who are going to participate in this programme.

SMEs had the opportunity to present their solutions and ideas to a wide audience. Presentations of Edisoft, EstPit Projekt, Inforing, Softmedia, LinuxCare, Trillian, NeolaSoft, Gennet, ScanPix had a strong R&D basis and business application. **SMEs benefited in particular from the third session “New collaboration and funding opportunities” which was organized as a training course** for companies who are interested in participation in the EU Seventh Framework and IST programme. The first speech of this session was made by Peter Woolsey, EC IST Directorate e-government expert, who clearly identified main priorities and tasks for those who would like to benefit from the EU activities. In addition case studies were presented by representatives of NMS SME.

Other sessions also promoted ideas of the modern Europe focusing at Information Society Technologies. Their topics were – eLearning, eInclusion, eCollaboration, Mobile Services and Applications, eHealth, IST supporting structures. A number of NGOs and IT associations were also presented at the workshop. These included the Estonian Information Technology Society, European Union Innovation Centre, Tallinn Technology Park, Archimedes Foundation representatives – Jaan Oruaas, Taavi Tiirik, Raul Palutaja, Liina Raju spoke

about the activities and tasks of these organizations.

The workshop “Baltic ICT community on the way to FP7” had a very positive impact on the local IT&T community. The workshop made it possible to **bring together developers, customers,**



political decision makers and start the discussion of new opportunities for the promotion of IST in the Baltic States. Participants have successfully used this event to receive advice from and exchange information with EC representatives, politicians and other experienced companies and organizations. They have also profited by finding new partners and building new relationships and promote their ideas as well as by finding out more about EU IST activities.

More info:
<http://www.istbaltia.net/workshop2006/>

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