

BUSINESS & INNOVATION SUPPORT NETWORK (BISNet) Transylvania

Originator: Emil Toma: Regional Development Agency Centru,

Web www.bisnet-transylvania.ro **E mail:** emil.toma@adrcentru.ro **Tel:** +40 358 401 276

1. SUMMARY OF GOOD PRACTICE

▪ **Overview & Aims**

A seven year programme, the **BIS Net Transylvania Network** was set up to increase competitiveness and innovation capacity of the Centru and Nord Vest Region, by providing efficient integrated business and innovation support services enabling a ‘no wrong door’ facility for SMEs approaching the wide range of agencies involved for help and advice. The programme is aimed at:

- ✓ Enhancing the competitiveness and increasing support for the development of SMEs and large companies in the two Regions involved, in synergy with all relevant public and private, national, regional and local stakeholders.
- ✓ Increasing the capacity and competitiveness of European businesses and innovation enterprises.
- ✓ Increasing the participation of Romanian SMEs in the Community Framework Programme for Research & Technology Development.

▪ **Key Resources**

- **Key Partners**

Regional Development Agency Centru form part of a consortium of 7 partners all working alongside a variety of national and regional stakeholders:

Partners	Regional Development Agency Nord-Vest Technical University of Cluj-Napoca (UTC-N) Transylvania University of Brasov and National Institute of Research & Development of Optoelectronics-INOE 2000 Technology Transfer Center (CENTI) The National R&D Institute for Electrical Engineering ICPE-CA- ECOMAT Business and Technological Incubator Transylvania Bank- Banca Transylvania
Regional Stakeholders	Chambers of Commerce in the Region, Business Support Organisations, Universities, Local and Regional Authorities
National Stakeholders	National Authority for Scientific Research, FP7 National Contact Points, Romexpo Exhibition Center

- **Funding & SME Contribution.**

Key Funding Body: 60% of the Network’s funds are financed by the EC Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme with co-financing from both public and private partner

resources (€464K) providing a combined budget of €2.76M. SMEs have free, unlimited access to business support services provided by the network.

- **Eligibility Criteria** The programme is open to any type of SME; Target beneficiaries include all types of SMEs, microenterprises and research centres. Although focusing on SMEs, large companies are also eligible for support with no upper limit of employees or turnover.
- **Terms & Conditions** Applicants must be from the geographical area covered by BISNet Transylvania: Regions Centru and Nord-Vest.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

Running from 2008-2014, 60 people have been involved in delivering the programme. Using a combination of events, training, 1 to 1 contact and marcoms activity, implementation has included:

- ✓ Raising awareness and dissemination of Network services; EU innovation and research related policies, financing opportunities, legislation, standards, public consultations.
- ✓ Advice on EU legislation, standards, accessing finance and direct contacts etc
- ✓ Dissemination and support for accessing research and innovation funding.
- ✓ Assessing the potential of technology businesses, needs and funding opportunities; Technology and innovation transfer; IPR and protecting/exploiting ideas.
- ✓ Help to formulate project ideas and if required support to find the right partners.
- ✓ Proposal-writing and project management skills. Assistance for closing cooperation agreements.
- ✓ Support for business export and brokerage services; help to find new foreign markets, and new business partners.
- ✓ Regional dissemination of existing regional business opportunities and foreign business opportunities.

- **Key Stats** Results to date for both regions participating in the programme include:

KEY MEASURE	2008 -2011
INCREASED AWARENESS OF EUROPEAN ENTERPRISE NETWORK (EEN) SERVICES; (Innovation & Research, Financing, Business opportunities etc)	
Companies benefitting from information services	101,564
Business representatives attending training & dissemination events	5,335
Companies benefitting from tailored information services	916
INCREASED AWARENESS OF REGIONAL SUPPORT; (Access to Finance, IPR)	
Companies benefitting from regional support services	757
IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONALISATION SUPPORT SERVICES/BROKERAGE SERVICES	
Companies participating in brokerage events/company missions	220
Bilateral meetings arising from brokerage events/on-site visits to other, normally transnational, companies and trade missions to exhibitions etc.	669
Partnership proposals (i.e. business cooperation/technology offers, technology requests etc)	276

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- **What has worked well** Key successes to date include:
 - ✓ Set up and communication with the business support network representatives recommending and offering network services, especially during the first implementation period.
 - ✓ The promotion campaign, raising awareness of the EEN and the services offered.
 - ✓ Good cooperation with other regional stakeholders offering SME support.
 - ✓ The involvement of company representatives in developing trade missions and brokerage events, facilitating contacts with companies abroad.
 - ✓ Creation of partnership proposals and generation of new contacts between regional companies and potential overseas partners.

- **What didn't work so well?** Key challenges
 - Initially sceptical of the concept of both free services and services available from a European Network, it took a lot of promotion and dissemination to convince companies of the benefits. Unfamiliar with participation and benefits from brokerage opportunities and events, companies needed a lot of convincing to get involved in international activity/trade.
 - Companies opting out as a result of difficult methodology i.e. administration and paperwork.
 - The reluctance of SMES to take up the services during difficult economic conditions.
 - Time needed for the 7 partners to embed the new approach, the diverse/wide range of services offered and the work methodology involved.

3. KEY LEARNING POINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

Appreciation of the initiative has grown as clients get more involved, feedback indicates that clients are very satisfied with services provided through the network.

- **Transferability**
 - **Key threats for the future and transferability identified to date include:**
 - ✓ Low participation of companies arising from difficult economic circumstances i.e. recession
 - ✓ Political instability
 - ✓ Lack of confidence in public bodies
 - ✓ Lack of policies/inappropriate policies for SMEs support
 - ✓ Integrity of partnership proposals produced inside the Network
 - **Transferable practices include:**
 - ✓ The efficiency and effectiveness of the approach
 - ✓ Access and membership of the EEN offering SMEs free business and innovation support services.
 - ✓ Coordination of services providing a platform to develop new programs for supporting the SMEs
 - ✓ The strong commitment to collaboration and a joined up offer from regional and national stakeholders involved

FURTHER INFORMATION:

You Tube - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FAQGvIBjoA>

Regional Development Agency Centru Web: www.adrcentru.ro

European Enterprise Network - <http://portal.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/>

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