



## **aws starts EU-programme for networking of innovation agencies**

**Eleven south east European (SEE) innovation and financing agencies have gathered for the kick-off meeting of the SEE-IFA project at Austria wirtschaftsservice (aws) headquarters in Vienna. Austrians and South East Europeans will take advantage of know-how transfer and networking.**

**Vienna, July 2009.** – Representatives of innovation and financing agencies from eleven SEE countries are gathering on Friday in Vienna. At the kick-off meeting, the start is set for the SEE IFA network. The EU financed project aims to organize know-how transfer and to help strengthening the capability of the agencies to support innovation of small and medium enterprise (SME) in South East Europe. Delegates from Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia (FYROM), Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Italy and Greece are taking part. Austria wirtschaftsservice (Austrian economy service), the Austrian innovation and financing agency is leading the 2.7 million Euro project, which will run until January 2012.

aws project manager Roswitha Mosburger: “We are working together to ease the access to grants financing innovative projects for small and medium enterprises and to enhance the service quality of national agencies.” The Austrian and other European good practice models of guarantees and innovation funding should serve as a model for other countries. A fund for cross-border marketing of patents and licenses should be set up. National agencies comparable with the Austrian model are to be developed.

Staff working on innovation financing from South East Europe will take part in a twinning program at the aws headquarters in Vienna for a specific time period to enhance competence transfer and enable them to act as multipliers in their home countries.

South East Europe is characterized by clear differences in development. Technology and innovation often have to be imported. Stronger networking and enhanced access to European partners shall strengthen the economies sustainably.

aws-CEO Johann Moser: “I’m very pleased that aws is coordinating this European Union project. It underlines the excellent international reputation of aws. An improved innovation structure and a stronger South East European economic area will benefit not only the South East Europeans, but Austria as well. Businesses that expand to South East Europe should in the future benefit from an efficient funding infrastructure in the respective countries.”

### **About SEE-IFA**

The SEE-IFA network is a European network of national and regional innovation & finance agencies, authorities and universities (from Austria, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia (FYROM), Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Italy and Greece). Within its **mission of transferring innovation-boosting know-how to the south-east European countries** the overriding project goal is to strengthen the capacity of innovation systems in the partner countries by **furnishing a know-how platform**

**(SEE-IFA Network) and establishing institutions and programmes** to promote innovation in micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The project is lead-managed by Vienna-based austria wirtschaftsservice (aws). It started in March 2009 and will run until December 2011. The budget amounts about € 2.7 million.

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