



SEE IFA Network

Electronic Newsletter | No. 1 | December 2009 |



Content

- 01 | **Project summary**
- 02 | **Project progress in the first Reporting Period**
- 03 | **Events**
- 04 | **Next steps**
- 05 | **Contact**

01 | Project summary

The SEE-IFA network is a network of European national and regional innovation & finance agencies (IFAs), authorities and universities, which collaborate within an EU-funded project. Lead-managed by Austria-based aws, it unites eleven partner organisations from ten SEE countries, joining forces to strengthen the capacity of IFA project partners to effectively provide innovation and technology support to micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs). The project has a budget of EUR 2.7 million and will be implemented between March 2009 and December 2011.

02 | Project Progress in the first Reporting Period

Contracting

In the first six months of the project, the following contractual relations have been officially established:

- **Subsidy Contract** between aws (Project Lead Partner on behalf of the project partnership) and JTS (Joint Technical Secretariat on behalf of the programme management authority).
- **Partnership Agreement** between all Project Partners.

The **IPA Grant Contract** which needs to be concluded separately between the partner organisation and the EC delegation of FYROM (Macedonia) has been delayed due to administrative reasons and is expected to be concluded by December 2009.

Reporting

After completion of the first reporting period (March-August 2009), each partner had to prepare a partner report (consisting of a financial report and an activity report as well as extensive supporting documentation) and have it validated by a predefined national control body – e.g., in the case of Austria, by the Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth. On this basis, a consolidated progress report was prepared by the Lead Partner (aws) and submitted to the

JTS, along with an application for reimbursement for the first period. For partner countries still faced with national control issues (e.g. Italy), reimbursement of expenditures will have to be postponed to the second reporting period.

Project Communication

In the first months of the project, a communication strategy for all project partners was developed by the Lead Partner's communication team, along with a project logo, communication guidelines and a project information folder. The project website www.see-ifa.eu, which is under the responsibility of AMCSIT (RO), is still under construction and is expected to be finalised by December 2009.

Needs and Gaps Analysis: Innovation finance instruments

A comprehensive needs and gaps analysis has been carried out in the partner countries, identifying strengths and weaknesses of national innovation support systems as well as good practice models. From these studies, conclusions will be drawn regarding innovation finance and support needs in the SEE area. This synthesis will form the basis for subsequent work packages, which include the identification and implementation of suitable instruments, the establishment of an Innovation Finance Agency (IFA) in the region as well as extensive capacity building activities.

Feasibility Study: Cross border patent and licence fund

Since the project will also involve the development of a concept for a cross border patent and licence fund, basic research activities for a feasibility study have been initiated. Insights gained from experts' interviews and comprehensive desktop research studies will help to define the appropriate legal, financial and operational framework, and a funding and marketing concept will be drawn up. At the conclusion of the project, a pilot fund containing a number of pilot technologies will be established.

03 | Events

Partner Meetings

Kickoff meeting, Vienna

On 10 July 2009, awa hosted the project kickoff meeting in Vienna. The representatives of the partner institutions discussed the general outline and timeframe of the planned activities, financial management and reporting procedures. External guests from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth, the Austrian Institute for SME Research and the consulting company Regional Consulting International participated in the discussions, contributing with their expert opinions to a successful outcome of the meeting.

Thematic Seminar & Steering Group Meeting, Bucharest

From 24-25 November 2009, the project partners met in Bucharest for the first Thematic Seminar on the needs and gaps analysis and Steering Group Meeting, which was hosted by AMCSIT-Politehnica of Romania (responsible partner for the analysis). At the meeting, the status quo of the project, challenges and steering needs were discussed and the next steps decided upon.

Local Support Group (LSG) Meetings

So far, local round table discussions were held in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia and Serbia. On these occasions, the local project partners presented the project and discussed its potential as well as options and procedures of an LSG with representatives from ministries, development agencies, SMEs and/or innovation experts. Valuable inputs for project implementation could be generated while information on the project was disseminated.

International Conferences / Events

From 14-15 October 2009, project staff from the Lead Partner participated at the SEE Annual Conference in Sarajevo, where conclusions from the first call for proposals (CfP) of the SEE Transnational Cooperation Programme were drawn, experiences exchanged and the objectives and scope of the second CfP presented.

04 | Next steps

The next steps include an in-depth analysis of the country reports to identify the countries' needs in terms of national innovation support systems in order to select suitable instruments and create an appropriate design for establishing new IFAs. Moreover, a detailed training plan, including study visits, internship programmes and intensive training courses in Austria and Italy will be formulated. Further, work will continue on the feasibility study concerning the cross border patent fund.

Next meetings:

Training needs assessment meeting

Thematic Seminar 2

Intensive training course (patent and licence management)

Winter 2010, place tbd

Spring 2010, Milan

Spring 2010, Vienna

05 | Contact

Andrea Waclik

austria wirtschaftsservice

Ungargasse 37

1030 Vienna

Phone +43 1 50175 – 530

Fax +43 1 50175 –900

a.waclik@awsg.at