



Project no. 023220

PROMPT

"Peripheral Regions Oriented Measure for the Promotion of Technological Intelligence"

Specific Support Action

Structuring the European Research Area



Publishable Final Activity Report

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1. PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

For SMEs and organisations located in the peripheral regions of Europe, to join the very best of Europe's technological organisations in complex and high-tech research projects aiming at results of world-level excellence is of course no easy task, and this is the main objective of the PROMPT network, composed of organisations from the Canary Islands, Crete, Madeira, EGE region in Turkey, Sicily, the Balearic Islands, Malta, Sardinia, Iceland and Cyprus.

In order to create the necessary conditions for successful participation of local SMEs from European peripheral regions in research projects, PROMPT partners had to identify and select:



● **INNOVATIVE SMES LOOKING FOR SUPPORT**

Taking into account their potentiality to participate in Research Projects together with the Top European Research Centres, PROMPT partners from every participant region conducted Simplified Technology Audits on the SMEs. From among the organizations that underwent these Technology Audits, those with potential for international technological cooperation were selected. Their specific profiles, capabilities and innovative ideas were presented in a common portfolio of innovative SMEs (available at www.promptnet.org). This portfolio aims to disseminate the information on and the willingness of the identified SMEs to these Top European Research Centres, which are working in their respective sectors to promote joint projects. The key selected areas are Information & Communication Technologies, Agro-industry & Fisheries, Energy & the Environment, Medical Technologies and Tourism.



- **INNOVATIVE IDEAS LOOKING FOR SMES** The project creates a Think-Tank composed of regional groups of researchers, scientists and industrialists, in order to generate ideas for technological development in sectors relevant to the addressed regions, suitable to be led and exploited by local SMEs. The PROMPT project provides the SMEs, including those which have taken part in the previous action, with training programs, assessment and key information about the Framework Program, the rules of participation, the project management and the search for partners.

- **RESEARCHERS, INNOVATION MANAGERS AND TECHNICIANS** PROMPT partners prepared Staff Exchange guidelines (available at www.promptnet.org) to promote mobility mechanisms between researchers, innovation managers or technicians with EU-project experience and staff from regional SMEs and other organisations. Partners developed a campaign aimed at European research organisations and high-tech SMEs within the identified sectors in order to identify researchers, innovation managers and technicians with experience

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of EU project participation who are willing to take part in “staff-exchange” schemes with researchers and technicians from peripheral-region organisations and SMEs and support the submission of Marie Curie and related programmes staff exchange schemes involving the interested organisations in order to financially support them.

Quantified and easily measurable objectives have been set for each of the main project activities:

- ✓ The performance of 250 simplified technology audit schemes in 10 peripheral regions of Europe
- ✓ The identification of a minimum of 50 SMEs and other organisations with a potential for successful transnational technological cooperation.
- ✓ The organisation of 1 European Road-Show for a minimum of 15 top European research organisations. As a result of this task, it was expected that a minimum of 10 peripheral SMEs and other organisations would be involved in FP6 proposals.
- ✓ The constitution of 1 Think-Tank of top academics, researchers and technologists capable of generating a minimum of 10 ideas for technological development that should be exploited through RTD projects within the scope of FP7 or other pan-European initiatives, with the participation of 40 SMEs/SME Groupings.
- ✓ The promotion of a minimum of 10 staff-exchange schemes between peripheral and mainland SMEs and other organisations, involving research and technical staff.
- ✓ The involvement of 50 SMEs/SME Groupings in FP6 and FP7 activities.

2. THE CONSORTIUM

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Fundació IBIT (Spain)



**Innovation Center
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EGE UNIVERSITY
(Turkey)



Malta Enterprise
(Malta)



**Research Promotion
Foundation** (Cyprus)

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3. PROJECT RESULTS

The project started in September 2005 and, since the beginning, partners have got into contact with the potential “customers”: the SMEs, SME Groupings, Research Groups and other stakeholders. These contacts were made by different means: interviews, meetings, information events, phone, e-mail, etc. As a result, specific advice sessions and support to the SMEs and other organizations were offered by the partner institutions and several research project proposals have been presented to the 6th and 7th Framework Programme.

The common **key sectors** for all the regions involved in this project were analyzed by the partners and prioritised to focus the efforts on them. The selected sectors were: *ICT, Tourism, Agroindustry & Fisheries, Medical Technologies and Energy & the Environment.*



Technology audits and portfolio of innovative SMEs



285 technological audits were carried out on SMEs and related organizations which could be interested in taking part in European R&D activities within the ten peripheral regions. Within these organizations, a total of **78 firms** were selected and the representatives of the chosen organizations were contacted to collect information for the presentation of their companies using a common single-page template.

With this information, the **portfolio of innovative SMEs** with potential to take part in European R&D Projects was drawn up. It was edited and printed in a booklet and electronic format, in order to be used by the consortium to find partners for potential R&D Projects. The number of audited and selected organizations for the portfolio has been continuously updated. Available at prompt website www.promptnet.org



Regional events

The partners have organised and/or participated in the **68 national and regional events** to present the PROMPT network, including fairs, conferences and seminars. The advice sessions of PROMPT partners are mainly focused in bilateral meetings about FP7 and PROMPT activities with SMEs and other organisations. During dissemination and training events, SMEs with project ideas were selected to organise bilateral

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meetings with NCP experts or consultants in order to identify first the eligibility of their proposal in FP7 programs and then the topic and prepare a draft of the proposal. On the other hand, these SMEs have been registered so that they can be informed of open calls and potential partner searches related with their main activities.

The consortium organised **common regional events**, such as the presentation of PROMPT network by the ITC in “FP7 opportunities seminar” in the Balearic Islands in November 2007 or the presentation of the **PROMPT final results** in Sardinia, in February 2008 with the participation of the representatives of all the consortium members and local stakeholders.

International road-shows

In order to better serve the aim of the Road-show, the partners decided, instead of organising one large road-show that would invite a few Research Centres, to participate on behalf of the PROMPT network in **22 international road-shows** that large European Centres were attending. PROMPT partners promoted the portfolio of SMEs to research centres and analysed a subsequent potential formal presentation. This was a way of improving the efficiency of this action with the following activities:

- ✓ Presentation of the PROMPT project, partners and portfolio of selected SMEs;
- ✓ Bilateral meetings;
- ✓ Workshops for the identification of common project ideas;
- ✓ Stands with dissemination material.



The consortium created synergies between the partners to participate in these events as one entity. For example, ITC and FORTH/STEP-C participated using one stand at the **INNOVATION FAIR** at Udine (Italy) and IBIT and CIT registered a common profile in order to arrange pre-meetings during the Future Match Event in **CEBIT** at Hannover (Germany).

Training activities

A total of **13 training activities** were offered by the consortium to the target organizations. The aim of this training programme was to train research managers and administrators of SMEs located in the outermost regions (including staff from those SMEs or SME Groupings which have received the technological audit and from any other SME considered as a potential project leader) in writing professional and competitive proposals for the Seventh Framework Programme. The training programme also includes information activities about the FPs and available tools.

A series of information events, starting from the beginning of the project, are providing the SMEs with all the necessary information to apply for FP6 and FP7 calls for proposals. A series of regional and thematic information events took place, in addition to presentations of the specific programmes; they include workshops looking at the programme's themes in more detail and general aspects of the Framework Programme.

Think-tank sessions



For the generation of the project ideas, each partner contacted regional scientists, researchers and industrial experts in order to define ideas for technological projects within the previously identified relevant sectors. A total of **26 think-tank sessions** have been organised.

The ideas have been created and discussed by the regional expert groups, and shared and discussed with the rest of the partners to create synergies between regions and to analyze the potential best actions.

Staff exchanges

Another action of this project was the preparation of staff exchanges between peripheral SMEs and research groups in Europe. The different alternatives for funding these staff exchanges have been studied, and the consortium has initiated the contacts with the potential SMEs and research centres.

A **staff-exchange booklet** has been prepared in order to carry out a campaign close to European research organisations to attract researchers, innovation managers and technicians with experience in participating in EU projects to the SMEs of the peripheral regions. Available at PROMPT website www.promptnet.org.

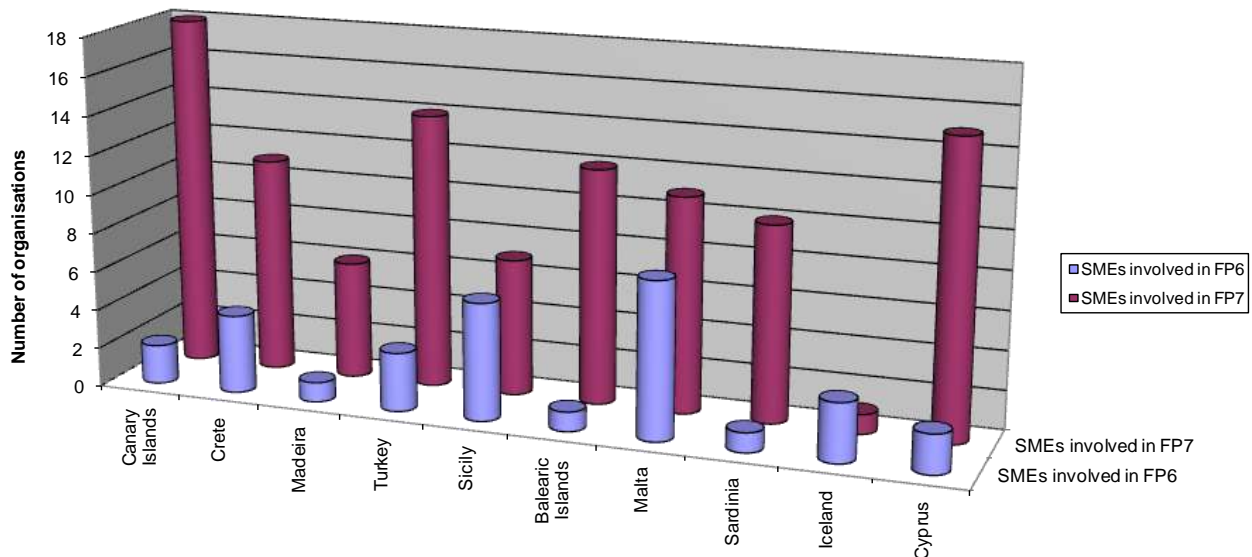
Four regional events have been organised to disseminate the FP7-People opportunities among the local SMEs and R&D centres and 21 potential paths for mobility actions identified.

The main achievement of this activity is the submission of **6 Marie Curie Applications** and **12 other mobility proposals** between SMEs and R&D centres.



Involvement of SMEs/SME Groupings in FP6 and FP7 activities

The following bar chart shows, by region, the progress of the involvement of SMEs and other organisations in FP6 and FP7 proposals with the assistance of PROMPT partners.



4. NEXT STEPS



During the last consortium meeting, PROMPT partners held a brainstorming session in order to think about the lessons learned and identified the key points to involve SMEs in FP activities. The conclusions arrive at a three-step scheme in order to improve the results, as follows:



1. **Lack of resources from SMEs:** One of the most important issues for SMEs is to improve the access to human resources, experience, expertise in certain fields, contacts and suitable finance by means of:

a. Awareness: “To catch the SMEs interest”

The dissemination events conducted by PROMPT partners are an excellent starting point to make the EU funds to support the SME activity related with R&D&I visible. They should also be a contact point to hold bilateral meetings to talk about the SME project ideas.

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b. Pre-evaluation: “To identify the correct ideas”

- i. Broad European interest, no local ideas: during advisory sessions, innovative project ideas from SMEs were identified, but not always of European interest. A pre-evaluation phase with experts will direct the proposal to the right source of financing.
- ii. Right consortium: once the “correct idea” is identified, it is important to build the right consortium, with a European dimension, complementarity and multidisciplinary, selecting partners from research and industry to bridge the gap between research and exploitation.
- iii. Knowledge on EC priorities: in order to focus the proposal on the European priorities, PROMPT network will be close to working groups with EC (consultants, regional offices in Brussels, NCPs)

c. Pre-evaluation: QUALITY

- i. Board of scientists, technicians, management experts: this board will be composed of experts from the PROMPT network, with experience in EU projects.
- ii. Peer-review: the board of experts will pre-evaluate the quality before submitting the proposal to the FP7 call,
- iii. Confidentiality: taking into account that the project ideas are confidential, the PROMPT experts will sign a Non disclosure Agreement for the evaluation.

2. Financing - in order to solve the financing problem the following are vital in successful applications for FP7 funds:



a. Preparation of the proposal

- i. To identify regional / national funds to write the proposal: one of the difficulties in involving SMEs in FP proposals is the cost of preparation of the proposal. Some countries such as Spain or Malta have specific programs to finance the preparation of an FP7 proposal.
- ii. To include staff from the PROMPT network to prepare FP7 proposals

b. Physical participation of SMEs in the network.

- i. To stimulate regional initiatives for SMEs participating in international events: another point to take into account is to directly involve SMEs in face-to-face meetings with their potential partners in Europe, supporting them in the participation in fairs, brokerage events and other international events.
- ii. To synchronise consortium events with international events: PROMPT network meetings will be synchronised with other events to create synergies with future actions.

3. Public affairs “lobbying”: finally PROMPT network will be close to working groups with EC such as consultants, regional offices in Brussels, NCPs...

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5. PUBLISHABLE RESULTS

Available at PROMPT website www.promptnet.org.

- Portfolio of innovative SMEs

This portfolio aims to disseminate the information and the willingness of the identified SMEs to participate in European research activities.

Sectors: ICT, Tourism, Agro-industry & Fisheries, Medical Technologies and Energy & the Environment.



- Staff-Exchange booklet

This Staff-Exchange guidelines are designed to promote mobility mechanisms between researchers, innovation managers or technicians with EU project experience and staff from regional SMEs and other organisations.

Regions: Canary Islands, Crete, Madeira, EGE region in Turkey, Sicily, Balearic Islands, Malta, Sardinia, Iceland and Cyprus.

