

Three comprehensive initiatives in the service of research and innovation driven SMEs

The European Commission (EC) has identified the need to enhance the research and innovation capacities of European small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and has designed specific measures within the 7th Framework Programme that supports this ambitious objective.

The FP7-SME-2009-1 call, aimed at investigating national and regional level programmes and initiatives supporting research activities for the interests and benefits of SMEs. The final aim is to provide a comprehensive insight into these programmes and initiatives in terms of their structures and methodologies used and most importantly their impact on SMEs. The results of the three studies will be used to define a strategy for the future research actions in favour of SMEs in the European Research Area (ERA), while the regional/national programmes will be able to use the results to improve the impact and effectiveness of their support programmes in favour of SMEs.

The GPRIX, MAPEER SME and RAPPORT projects, funded from this call, aim directly or indirectly to support and increase SME participation in European research programmes and activities. These initiatives will

- build direct links to more or less active SMEs in research, technology and development and analyse their experiences and reasons for their participation (or not) in the relevant support programmes
- analyse the range of services provided by implementation intermediaries in terms of access to local, national and international research and good practice procedures
- analyse the capability and effectiveness of these intermediaries to help SMEs to get involved and take advantage of the changing innovation and knowledge creation environment, as manifested in the "open innovation" concept
- analyse the impact of identified support measures on SMEs
- formulate recommendations for new support measures which better address the needs of SMEs

www.research4smes.eu

Who are the beneficiaries of these initiatives?

The beneficiaries of these projects can be divided into two major groups

- SMEs that intend to participate in research and innovation funding programmes
- managers of programmes designed to support SMEs at local/regional/national or EU level

SMEs participating in the activities will have the opportunity to explain their experiences and reasons for their participation (or non-participation) in the programmes supporting research, development and innovation (R+D+I). The result of the survey on SMEs needs and barriers towards participation in R+D+I activities, together with the mapping and analysis of a large number of the relevant European funding programmes will enable the three projects to issue recommendations to decision makers and influence the designing and planning of future programmes in order to pave the way to more SME friendly programmes.

Programme managers and policy makers will benefit from the project results by receiving studies on good practices with regards to support measures for research and development and innovation in SMEs and recommendations on amending their programmes in favour of SME.

How to participate in the work of the initiatives?

Are you an SME, or a programme manager or an SME stakeholder interested in our activities and would you like to connect with our initiatives? On the joint portal of the three initiatives (www.research4smes.eu) you find useful information on the activities that partners are performing in the regions and countries in which they are responsible. You are welcome to contact the involved persons and participate in our efforts to make R+D+I programmes more SME friendly!



Initiatives of the European Commission studying R+D+I supporting programmes for SMEs



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Paving the way for SME friendly R+D+I programmes

The MAPEER SME project is supporting activities to create the background conditions in which Research, Development and Innovation (R&D&I) is welcomed, supported and nourished in European SMEs.

The ultimate goal is to increase the participation of SMEs in the European Union (EU) R+D+I programmes, by improving the conditions for participation and overcoming the barriers for innovation activities. Accordingly MAPEER SME has defined some critically important objectives:

- Boost SME R+D+I activities and performance by bringing down barriers for SMEs across the EU to get them into the “research and development and innovation loop”.
- Provide R&D&I funding plan for Europe by establishing a database of regional, national and EU level R&D&I programmes
- Assess the needs and expectations of SMEs and transform their views into recommendations for policy makers and programme managers
- Utilise and benefit from synergies of EU initiatives in the R&D&I field and initiate structured policy dialogue between the various players at EU and national, regional levels (DG RTD, REGIO, EAC and ENTR, along with national and regional level) through the European Experts’ Panel on SMEs.
- Set-up and develop sustainable mechanisms to provide advice to the EU, the national and regional policy makers and programme managers (from R&D&I related Ministries, research agencies and intermediaries) as well as SME stakeholders.

<http://www.mapeer-sme.eu>

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Knowledge for business innovation in SMEs

This project has three aims:

- To develop a reference guide of good practices including benchmarks for strengthening the knowledge exchange and technology transfer between public sector research and SMEs
- To develop a blueprint paper on new emerging forms of SMEs support for research with the involvement of large corporations in a context where open innovation and public-private partnerships have increasingly gained importance;
- To engage policy-makers and other stakeholders into a dialogue and ensure the ‘translation’ of the reference guide and the blueprint paper into a roadmap for embedding the more suitable practices and policies.

The underlying rationale

This project considers not only the engagement of SMEs into the research process but also enabling SMEs to access developed knowledge and competencies of the research community. In addition to the science-push programmes, it looks into the demand-pull initiatives where the focal SME drives the process. The work puts a strong emphasis on the SMEs of lower absorptive capacity and how to open up their horizons to external research capabilities. Our hypothesis is that if Europe manages to upgrade a significant part of those SMEs, the economic and social benefits will be enormous.

The work is deployed through a “funnel” strategy:

- identify the requirements of different types of SMEs with special emphasis on the level of their absorptive capacity,
- a survey to map the full range of existing initiatives along the different types of SMEs and the different levels of absorptive capacity,
- create key performance indicators to measure the impact of existing schemes,
- investigate in depth the top performing initiatives and
- develop benchmarks for public sector research or public-private partnership schemes.

<http://www.rapport-project.eu/>

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Good Practices in Innovation Support Measures for SMEs

● What will the project do?

The GPrix project aims to identify and disseminate good practices in innovation support measures directed towards SMEs in traditional industries in 7 European regions by developing a methodological framework for collecting data on existing Innovation and R&D support programmes in the public sector. These measures will be benchmarked with EU support programmes and a set of recommendations will be produced for improving the design and implementation of research and innovation programmes in the upcoming framework programme.

● Why is this important?

A great number of measures currently exist to directly or indirectly support innovation in Europe. These measures play a key role to help organizations to innovate better and faster, by addressing specific market and system failures hindering European companies, and in particular SMEs, to fully exploit their innovation potential.

● Which regions are included?

The study will cover 7 European regions all characterized by the relative weight of traditional sectors in their economies, including a large number of SMEs operating on those sectors, covering the following regions: North/Central of Portugal, Limousin in France, Emilia-Romagna in Italy, West Midlands in the UK, Comunidad Valenciana in Spain, North Brabant in the Netherlands and Saxony-Anhalt in Germany.

● Which sectors are covered?

The study will cover the automotive, textiles, leather, food, ceramics and mechanical/metallurgy sectors, as long established industries, major source of wealth creation and employment in the region, and most important, still retaining the capacity for innovation.

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

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