

Business Support on Your Doorstep

In Focus

Delivering value to Europe's SMEs

The Enterprise Europe Network reached millions of companies during its first three years, as shown in a compressive progress report. But there is still potential for more growth

THE NETWORK'S THREE-YEAR report shows that partner performance is good and gathering momentum.

"Considering it is just over three years old, the Network has achieved unexpected goals, laying the foundations for it not only to continue, but possibly to grow in terms of new instruments and tasks," said Joanna Drake, Director and Deputy SME Envoy, DG Enterprise & Industry, at the Annual Conference held in Warsaw last month.

Key results include holding more than 19 000 local events for SMEs, with more than 742 000 participants; helping 5 000 companies to sign business, technology or research partnership agreements; and answering close to 375 000 questions on EU topics. Information is also provided to 5.7 million companies.

Since its launch, The Network has

expanded to 50 countries, increasing its capacity to help companies expand into new markets.

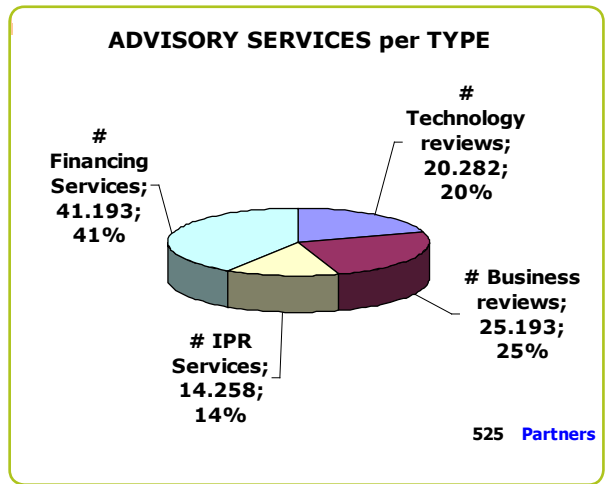
"These results, along with feedback from the European Parliament and Member States, show that the Network is performing extremely well and gathering momentum," says EACI Director Patrick Lambert.

"We have an excellent basis to improve our services further and reach even more SMEs."

The figures show that the Network's main added value is the wide range of advisory services in specialised areas, as shown in the accompanying chart (above right).

As the Network embarks on the next phase of its development, it will seek to become an even more important partner for small- and medium-sized companies.

It will also play a key role in helping Europe achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, as outlined in the Europe 2020 economic and



growth strategy, and in helping SMEs tap into research funding through the EU's Horizon 2020 programme.

"The Network is a network of excellence and so are the professionals who make it work," said Drake. "Nevertheless, the potential for further expanding the client base is still huge. How many of the millions of SMEs operating within the EU are aware of the existence of the Enterprise Europe Network? And how many of those that are aware of its existence are also aware of the range of opportunities that may be made available? The answer is simple: by far not enough."

She called on the Network to keep improving and spreading the word about its services.



The dark blue line shows the number of partnership proposals made by Network partners in months 18 to 36. The lighter blue line shows the number of agreements generated in the same timespan.

NetView

'Your Europe Business' helps small businesses think big

THE MULTILINGUAL WEB portal, managed by the EACI, is a practical guide to doing business in Europe.

Do you have a client that wants to expand to another EU country but needs information about requirements for setting up foreign branch offices, performing services abroad, or cross-border taxation issues?

A good starting point is 'Your Europe Business', a free online guide to doing business in the world's largest market. User-friendly and jargon-free, it is a one-stop shop for information on cross-border issues from national and EU authorities.

The portal – managed by the EACI since March 2011 when it took

over from DG Enterprise & Industry – covers the entrepreneurial life cycle, from launching to winding down a business, and contains information on administrative procedures and practical requirements divided into 26 chapters. It also directs entrepreneurs to e-government services, online forms, and to business support organisations providing tailor-made assistance.

Naturally, there is a close connection with the Enterprise Europe Network, and about 750 Your Europe visitors a month click through to the Network website. Besides telling your clients about the portal, you may also want to direct them to the Your Europe Business group on LinkedIn. ☺



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Event

The Network in SME Week

THE ENTERPRISE EUROPE Network was well represented at the European SME Week Summit, held in the European Parliament, in Brussels, on 6 and 7 October.

Co-organised by the EACI, the workshop 'Local and Regional Business Support' featured Network partner Marion Jammot, from the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, and entrepreneur Susan Hayes, known as 'the positive economist'.

Olle Schmidt, Member of the European Parliament, chaired the workshop and particularly welcomed having two businesspeople on stage to talk about their experience.

Marion and Susan are behind one of the latest success stories in the Enterprise Europe Network.

Susan, managing director of Hayes Culleton, looked to the Network to make

one of her biggest dreams come true: going international.

Thanks to Marion's help, her financial training and educational consultancy firm now does business in Malta, Belgium and other countries. was nominated for this year's Rising Star Award.

"This initial step was essential," she told the audience.

"Do I recommend the Enterprise Europe Network?"

Yes, wholeheartedly,"

said Susan Hayes, sparking many reactions and questions from the audience.

The EACI also represented the Network at the exhibition held on the first day of the Summit, providing visitors with information on the services offered by the Network. ☺



@EACI

Susan Carroll

Communications and
Network Support,
Unit C



Susan spent much of the summer organising the Annual Conference – and enjoyed seeing the event come together. "It's always energising to see so many of the great people in the Network in one place."

Drawing on her international journalism experience, Susan also coordinates the Network's branding, visual identity, success stories and media relations, among other duties. She studied journalism in her hometown at Dublin City University and previously worked as a press officer for the European Commission in Dublin.

In her spare time Susan makes the most of Brussels' rich cultural offerings from live music to great art museums.

For job profiles of all EACI staff see:
Intranet>Who's who>EACI and DG ENTR



Success Story

Finding the right connections

Estonian mobile-payment SME hooks up with Portuguese partner

IF YOU HAVE ever used your mobile phone to pay for a Facebook game or smart-phone application, there's a good chance you may have used a payment system developed by Estonian SME and Network client Fortumo.

Since it was founded in 2007, the Tartu-based firm has supplied payment systems for more than 57 000 clients including Rovio Mobile, the Finnish creator of the popular video game Angry Birds.

For help expanding beyond the Baltics and Scandinavia, Fortumo turned to Network project manager Henri Hanson at the Tartu Science Park. He invited Fortumo to a brokerage fair organised by Spanish Network partner ACC1Ó at the 2010 World Mobile Congress in Madrid. "It's business matchmaking at its best," says Hanson.



Call on us: the Network helped Fortumo reach four new markets

At the event, Fortumo hit it off with NVIA Portugal part of the NVIA Group providing premium SMS services in 14 countries and a client of Network expert Carina Araújo from Agência de Inovação (ADI) in Lisbon. Soon after,

the companies agreed to cooperate with NVIA helping Fortumo break into Latin America. "Thanks to the Network, we could get into four countries quickly and smoothly," says Andrei Dementijev, Fortumo's head of operations. "This would have been impossible without local contacts."

Get in touch

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Submit your success stories

FirstClass > Conferences > Network Daily > Network Forum > Success stories



Good Practice

Keeping the customer satisfied

Two Network partners find that the best way to measure success is to ask clients directly. With that in mind, each organisation developed questionnaires for its respective clients

WHILE THE APPROACHES differed slightly, both set out to demonstrate that the Network values its customers. "We wanted to show our clients that we care about them," says Velina Savcheva, European integration expert at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry

in Vratsa, Bulgaria. "Our core task is to help SMEs, so it is important to get their feedback."

Her organisation attached a short client questionnaire to three of its electronic bulletins – covering European news, technology and business partnerships – with simple queries about design and content. The responses inspired the partner to make changes, such as grouping business offer profiles under industry categories. That has already sparked an increase in expressions of interest.

Meanwhile in Slovakia, the Regional Advisory and Information Centre Presov surveyed clients past and present about their assessment of Network services used. As an incentive, it offered respondents a free USB memory stick.

"We heard back from 35 satisfied

clients, including one who forged a business partnership with our help but who hadn't let us know," says Maria Radvanska, manager for EU business support. "That is great motivation for our whole team."

Get in touch

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Submit your good practices

FirstClass > Conferences > Network Daily > Network Forum > Good practice





The Network in Bulgaria

Only the best for Bulgaria

Helping SMEs achieve their full innovation potential is a priority in the Balkan nation

"ONE POSITIVE OUTCOME of the financial crisis is that our companies finally appreciate the need to innovate and to go international," says Angel Milev, Bulgaria's country coordinator and programme director at the Applied Research and Communications Fund (ARC Fund).

For guidance, more and more SMEs are turning to the Network's 14 partner organisations, whose responsibilities are divided along geographic lines. "The fact that we operate as a single consortium helps us promote the Network brand in Bulgaria, which is now quite well-known," says Milev.


Every year on the Network's behalf, ARC Fund organises a National Innovation Forum where top policy makers and representatives from business and research brainstorm on improving the climate for business and innovation. ARC Fund is also helping to draft Bulgaria's first law that will seek to stimulate innovation through new financial and administrative structures.

Meanwhile, innovation services are a growing area for all partners. Clients tend to be active in sectors such as ICT, machine building, alternative energy, textiles and furniture production.

Since Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007, the EU market has become more attractive. Among the Bulgarian companies the Network has helped to expand into Europe is a maker of eco-friendly flame retardants that will soon be exported to Belgium. The Network has also helped a developer of advertising design hardware and software to sign a partnership accord with a Polish SME.

Later this month, the Network will

host four German machine-building companies at the International Technical Fair in Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second-largest city.

The trade fair, the country's largest, will showcase the latest technological advances in several industries including transport, electronics and power engineering. 

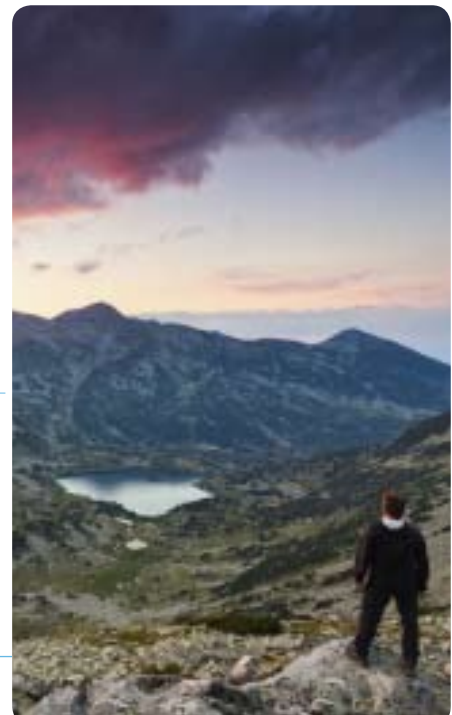
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More information

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.bg>



Helping companies to reach full innovation potential is at the top of the agenda in Bulgaria

News in brief

Goodbye to Dave Reynolds after 10 years service to the Network

Network partner Dave Reynolds (right) from East of England IDB Limited is saying farewell after 10 years working in the current and previous networks.

For his team members, he has always had the time and the energy for any work issue or just a chat. He is always willing to tap into his vast experience, to shed some light, ask questions and suggest improvements.

The same goes for the partners in the Network. It was Dave who proactively disseminated profiles to 300+ Network colleagues each week when the AMT wasn't working, starting with a comment on the weather and ending them with a friendly cheer.

His positivity and enthusiasm has been picked up by colleagues and clients alike. No wonder his big smile and sometimes old-fashioned jokes helped to oil so many partnerships.

Many thanks to Dave and good luck for the future from the whole Network!



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