1. Publishable summary

Through EU-funded research projects, many outstanding new technologies and knowledge are developed. However, these are rarely applied in the digital media and internet industries. Furthermore, SMEs currently benefit to a relatively lower extent from the new knowledge and research efforts when compared to larger companies. Besides, those smaller companies still experience difficulties in accessing EU funding.

One consequence of the above situation is that the transfer of these new technologies and knowledge between research institutions and creative enterprises is delayed or does not happen at all. This prevents the integration of new technologies into next generation products and services. Therefore, the SMARD project aims at providing support and input on two of these main issues:
- to increase participation in EU-funded research programmes, especially from SMEs,
- to support technology commercialisation by providing best practices in technology transfer and commercialisation.

During the project lifetime, the consortium identified R&D needs and requirements of SMEs in the Digital Media Sector and provided guidelines for successful networked media commercialisation. Based on that and through validation interviews with stakeholders from the academia, business and policy level, the "Strategy for SME-driven research on networked media R&D" has been developed. The working process is described in the graph below.
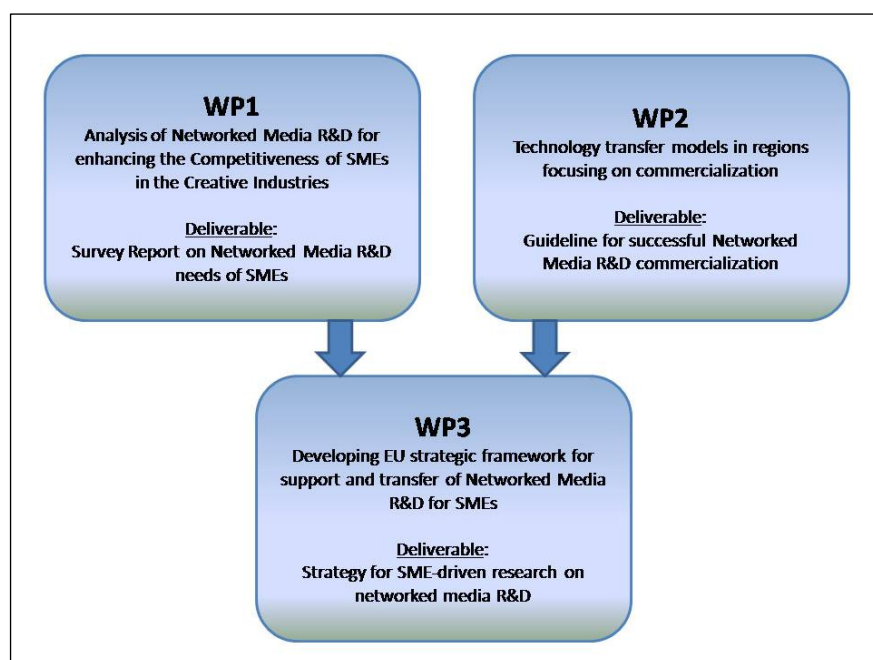

Figure 1: Dependency of work packages / Process of drafting the European Strategy on NM R&D

In WP 1 "Analysis of Networked Media (NM) R&D for enhancing the Competitiveness of SMEs in the Digital Media Industries", state-of-the-art in current business and research trends as well as relevant FP7 initiatives regarding their responsiveness to SME needs and requirements have been analysed in face-to-face interviews. These analyses served as a basis for developing the survey on NM R&D needs.

In the survey, SMEs of the digital media industries and the web economy were asked to quantify specific RDI (Research, Development & Innovation) needs in terms of a) the degree of their importance, as well as b) the degree to which these are currently satisfied. Using these two metrics enabled the consortium to identify those RDI needs that have the highest potential for action and

that should be especially taken into consideration by decision makers, i.e. those that were rated as highly important but being addressed in EU research projects only with low satisfaction. As a result, the survey allows the SMARD project to identify diverse categories of RDI needs in terms of technological needs, networking and learning needs, organisational or commercialisation needs (see graph below).
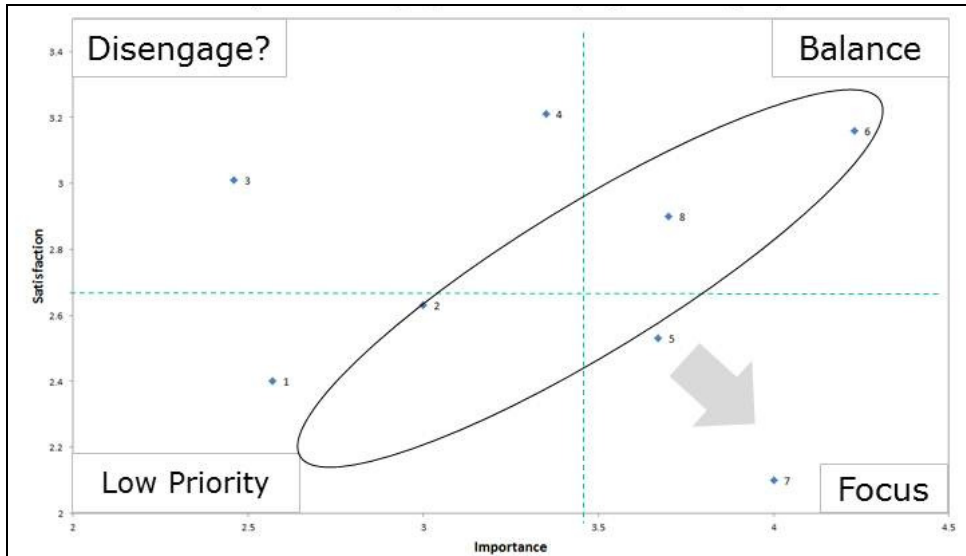

Figure 2: Importance Satisfaction Graph

The main finding of the survey was that technological needs are less important for the SMEs that responded to the survey (603 respondents) while organisational needs were evaluated most important. The three main needs identified were:

- Minimising the effort to apply for RDI funding
- Minimising the administrative effort to manage RDI projects
- Minimising the financial risks of participating in RDI projects

In parallel to the conducting of the survey, "Guidelines for successful Networked Media R&D commercialization" (WP 2) have been produced based on the best practices reported by each partner. The guidelines help researchers and SMEs involved in (EU funded) research projects in their efforts to translate their research results into economic and/or social value and applying the most appropriate technology transfer and commercialisation methods. This should result in an enhanced translation of new technologies and knowledge obtained through these research projects into new products and services commercialised by the projects partners or other (European) SMEs. The guidelines focus on the three most relevant and visible technology transfer and commercialisation mechanisms, which are (1) creating a new spin-off or start-up, (2) commercializing within an existing SME or existing organisation or (3) licensing towards a third party. The guidelines furthermore include one detailed case study of an FP7 funded project that has successfully commercialised its outcomes. The complete Guidelines can be downloaded on the SMARD Website (www.smard-project.eu).

Based on the results of the survey as well as on the guidelines, a European strategy for SME-driven research on networked media R&D (WP 3) has been developed including the "Research and Innovation Roadmap for Networked Media" (see graph below).
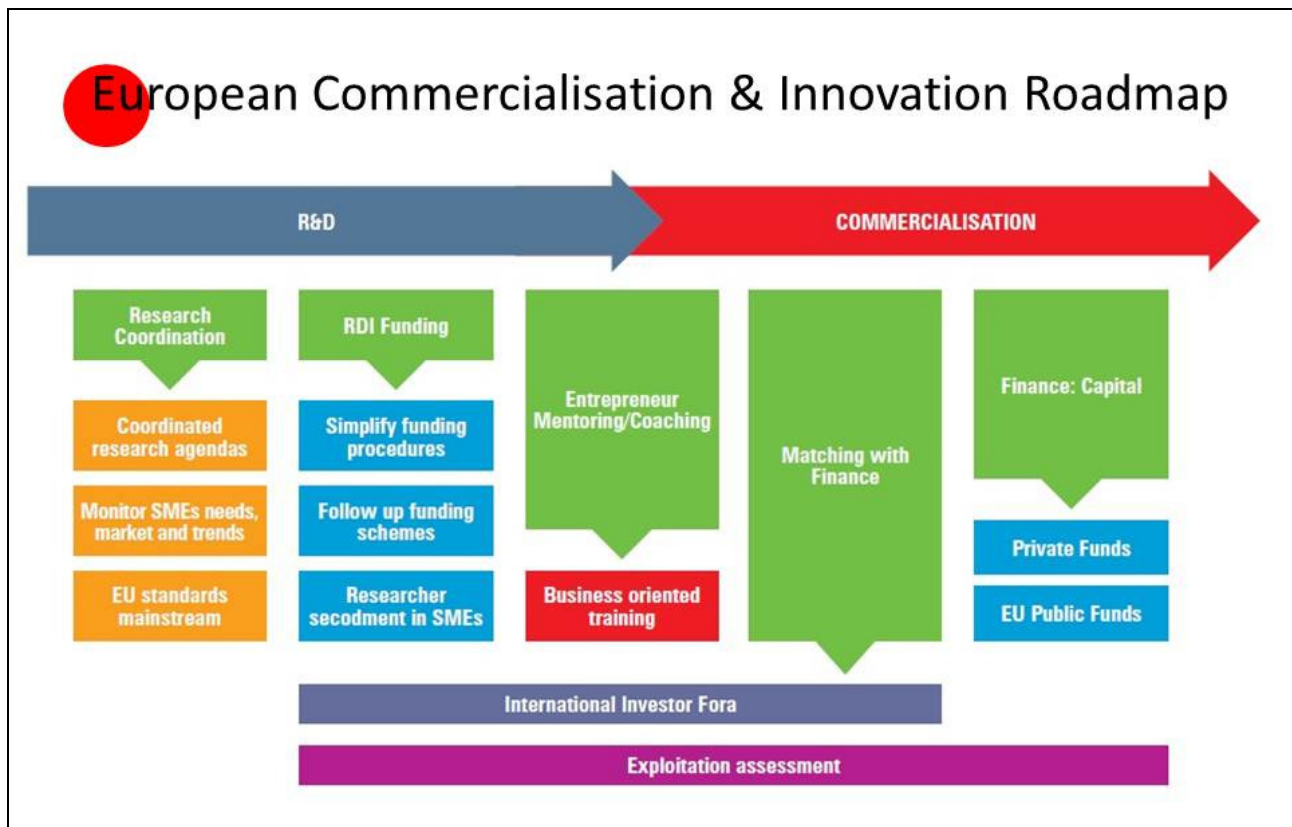
Figure 3: Research and Innovation Roadmap for Networked Media

The SMARD strategy (D3.5) suggests how to pursue SME-driven EU research, development and practice in order to close the gap between research challenges and SME needs on Networked Media, and to improve the innovation and technology transfer processes of Networked Media R&D, focusing on a commercial perspective regarding RDI products and services. The strategy consists of 9 recommendations, addressed to policy and decision makers at EU, national, local level, located along an ideal process, the "Research and Innovation Roadmap for Networked Media".

Last but not least, the SMARD consortium organised two events which aimed at increasing awareness on the project results as well as on commercialisation processes of European Networked Media research projects. Firstly, project partners detected and analyzed commercialisation routes and strategies for three Networked Media research projects during the Interactive Workshop on Networked Media R&D Commercialisation in the framework of the NEM Summit in Istanbul (October 2012). Secondly, the SMARD Final Conference in the framework of the established pitching platform Heidelberg Innovation Forum (www.heidelberger-innovationsforum.de) constituted the perfect platform for presenting project results to a wide audience from business, academia and the policy level.

SMARD - European Support Framework on Networked Media R&D for SMEs
www.smard-project.eu