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AeroSME VI

Support for European Aeronautical SMEs – Phase VI

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Thematic Priority: Aeronautics and Space

FINAL PUBLISHABLE REPORT

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Aerospace and Defence
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AeroSME VI

AeroSME is a support action co-ordinated by ASD, the AeroSpace and Defence Industries Association of Europe, representing the aerospace industry in Europe in all matters of common interest.



The project addressed the needs of aeronautical SMEs, which showed a low participation in previous framework programmes. At the instigation of the industry and with the active support of the EC, the AeroSME project started to address this issue. AeroSME informed and supported SMEs interested in joining European technology projects.

Project Objectives

- To support aeronautical SMEs in advancing their technology base and their competitiveness through participation in European R&T projects to improve and maintain the competitiveness of the European aeronautical supply chain.
- To promote SME participation in the Framework Programmes' calls by providing the necessary supporting and information services.
- To stimulate international co-operation by supporting and co-ordinating a reliable network between SMEs, industry, research institutes, universities and other entities.
- To support the aerospace sector of the new Member States in joining the European aerospace community.
- To stimulate the exchange of information and views among the various tiers of the supply chain by providing a communication platform not only for SMEs but also for large enterprises and research organisations which usually have little direct access to the SME community.

Work performed

AeroSME Phase VI started on the 1st December 2006 and run for 14 months, which included the originally planned 12 months plus a 2-month extension. The project life span covered therefore the launch of the 7th Framework Programme and the preparation for the first two calls.

Thanks to the monitoring of the new FP7 instruments and funding schemes started already under the previous phase of the project, it was possible to provide both information and hands-on support to the SMEs immediately for the 1st call (issued in December 2006 with deadline in May 2007).

A wide awareness campaign across Europe was carried out for the launch of FP7 and in preparation of the first two calls (issued in December 2006 and November 2007). AeroSME VI was represented at 11 national and regional workshops, of which 3 in the new Member States and associated countries. The events aimed at present the new FP7 features, disseminate information on project proposals, provide individual consulting, matchmaking, etc. The workshops were organised in co-operation with the respective National or Regional Associations. In addition to the AeroSME staff, a representative from respectively the EC, the industry, the research establishments and the universities usually presented their view, their way of work and the specific support available from their side.

The awareness campaign was also complemented by the issue of 14 Newsletters, informing on funding opportunities, deadlines for submission, events, partner searches and so on. A Guide to EU Funded Research was set up, and updated for each call, to be used as a quick reference to basic information on FP7, to provide an overview of the major changes and a list of the relevant websites.

AeroSME facilitated and encouraged the access of SMEs, and other aeronautical organisations, to the Level 2 proposals prepared by the larger aerospace companies for the 1st and 2nd call. The Level 2 proposal abstracts were issued on the AeroSME website prior each call, along with an updated and reviewed version of the Technology Offer Form. This was designed to assist SMEs in proposing their technical contribution as a potential to the proposal coordinators. In January and December 2007 in preparation of the 1st and the 2nd call respectively, two international workshops were organised in Brussels, where the Level 2 coordinators presented publicly their proposals.

In order to ensure maximum SME participation in the research proposals, nearly 100 person-to-person meetings were arranged between proposal co-ordinators and individual SMEs, interested to participate in a Level 2 proposal, during the Brussels workshops.

Support to Level 1 proposals was also stepped up with the presentation at the Brussels workshop for the 2nd call of several proposals to be put forward by equipment companies (EqIMG).

In addition, guidance and assistance, ranging from a technical analysis of the proposal and its suitability for EU funded research, to the set up of internet partner searches, was provided to 9 proposal ideas.

The screenshot shows the AeroSME public database entry page. At the top, there is a blue header with the AeroSME logo on the left and navigation links (PRINT, SITEMAP, CONTACT US) and a search bar on the right. Below the header is a purple navigation bar with links: ABOUT US, SERVICES, EU FUNDING, DATABASE, NEWS, CONTACTS. The main content area is titled "Database / Search for partners" and "AeroSME Database". It features a yellow arrow sign pointing right and left, with the text: "The AeroSME database is set up as tool for the European Aeronautical industry to allow companies to search for partners for European technology projects and business opportunities in general. The database is operated by the AeroSpace and Defence Industries Association of Europe - ASD." Below this is a section "How To use the database search functions" with four green buttons: PRODUCT, TECHNOLOGY, KEY WORD(S), and COUNTRY. A note says: "Click here to view the map of all countries covered by the AeroSME Project and the number of companies/organisations available in the database for each country." Below that, it says: "4 options are offered: Search by: Product, Technology, Country, Key word(s) search." A "Note" states: "All searches enable you to narrow down your search by country." On the right side, there is a "HIGHLIGHTS" section with a blue header and a list of news items: "Clean Sky Joint Technology Initiative - Call for an Associate member for the Smart Fixed Wing Aircraft ITD This call closes on 16/06/2008", "Research for the benefit of SMEs The call FP7-SME-2008-1 will close on the 11th April 2008", "New proposals - Level 1 proposals under preparation looking for partners", and "Industry's Approach to the 2nd Aeronautics Call' Presentations are available for you to download".

Figure 1: Screenshot of the AeroSME public database entry page

The internet SME database, which is freely accessible at www.aerosme.com and contains the profiles of companies and other aeronautical organisations, provided an effective tool for partner searches for research projects. The number of registered European companies increased to nearly 1,000.

The services of AeroSME were provided to the SMEs of all the countries associated to FP7. However, a particular effort was dedicated to the new Member States and Candidate Countries, to support their integration in the European Aeronautics community and their access to the FP7 project proposals.

Results achieved

Thanks to the established network of contacts, which include large companies (represented in the Industrial Management Groups – ASD-IMG4), research establishments, Universities, National and Regional Associations, etc., AeroSME provided an effective communication platform for all players in the Aeronautics community and a single point of reference for all inquiries and networking in the Aerospace sector. The coverage of all 30+ countries associated with FP7, ensured a truly pan-European approach.

Through tailored services such as the Helpdesk, the website, the SME database and the Newsletters, the project provided a “one stop shop” for inquiries on both EU research and supply chain issues, ensuring also an impartial approach not linked to national or commercial interests.

AeroSME carried out specific actions, in co-operation with the large companies (ASD-IMG4) and other EC supporting initiatives, which facilitated the access of SMEs to information on research strategies and proposal preparation activities, which are not usually available to smaller companies, and thus encouraged the SME participation in the 1st and 2nd call of FP7.

The following was delivered:

- A support scheme for the whole FP7, including a Guide to EU Funded Research, updated for each FP7 call, to be used as a quick SME-friendly reference to basic information on FP7.
- A network of national points of contact in 28 countries, of which 9 in the new Member States and candidate countries.
- An awareness campaign including the organisation and/or participation in 11 national/regional workshops, of which 3 in the new Member States and associated countries, to inform SMEs on FP7 R&TD project opportunities and procedures.
- 14 newsletters, of which 6 R&D Project Flash (which focuses on partner searches for specific project proposals).
- Information and services to support the access of SMEs in the Level 2 proposals to be submitted in the 1st and 2nd call of FP7. It ranged from the publication of the research proposals to the delivery of a list of potential SME partners to the coordinators.
- Organisation of 2 international workshops to prepare respectively the 1st and the 2nd Aeronautics calls in FP7, including nearly one hundred 1-to-1 meetings between interested SMEs and project co-ordinators.
- Assistance to access Level 1 proposals and direct guidance to 9 project ideas.

- A Guide to EU Funded Research to be used as a quick reference to basic information on FP7.
- Fully operational helpdesk, website, and internet SME database.

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