Final Executive Summary *SMEs go Health*
Contract Nº LSSG-CT-2007-0037292

SMEs go Health was a European initiative designed to support small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and academic researchers interested in research cooperation and participation in the 7th EU Framework Programme (FP7), particularly in the "Health" area. The objective was to raise the number and quality of involvement of SMEs and SME groupings in "Health"-related projects of FP7.

SMEs go Health provided a European-wide pool of high quality SME profiles and partner searches in a well accepted and user-friendly online database, improving the visibility of SME know-how and the expertise of researchers among the European scientific community.

A well-rehearsed network of 29 institutions from 27 countries ensured Europe-wide implementation of the planned activities, addressing the low participation of SMEs in FP7, especially in New Member States and associated candidate countries, and thus contributing to the implementation of FP7.

The consortium supported both SMEs aiming to get involved in research projects and researchers looking for suitable SMEs as partners in their consortium. *SMEs go Health* thus focused on awareness building, information and training, as well as on consortium building and matchmaking of SMEs and researchers preparing EU project proposals in the "Health" area. The project addressed all types of researchers, from companies, universities or research organisations, whether they act as project coordinators or partners.

The 3-years initiative, co-financed by the European Commission, started in February 2007 and was coordinated by the Austrian Research Promotion Agency.

Assisting & supporting SMEs and Academia by improving the visibility of SMEs know-how and researches' expertise

Based on the outstanding effort of the *SMEs go Hea*lth consortium the **on-line database** consisting of expertise profiles of SMEs and academia gathered a remarkable amount of those profiles. Numerous SMEs and academia have taken the advantage by using this platform to present their expertise and know-how to the scientific community, thus increasing their visibility among Europe's research community in Life Sciences and maximising their chance to be identified as potential research partners for EU funded projects.

Profiles of SMEs and academia gathered within the project *SMEs go Life Sciences* and during the entire lifecycle of *SMEs go Health* were revised according to the topics of the respective "Health" Calls in FP7.

1,011 SME profiles (in total, 684 SME profiles were gathered within *SMEs go Hea*lth) and **1,168 academic profiles** (with 749 academic profiles inserted during the *SMEs go Health*) have been gathered during the 3-years-duration and published on the database.

Information and Training of SMEs and Academia

A **booklet**, representing the "Health" key actors in Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Turkey has been published on the *SMEs go Health* website.

First Aid Packages, providing tailor-made and hands-on information on FP7 issues such as funding possibilities, finding suitable project partners, financial & legal information as well as project proposal preparation have been prepared. More than **7,800 packages** have been distributed to SMEs and researchers at the occasion of consultations, training events or partnering days.

SMEs go Health acted as a **helpdesk** informing and training SMEs and researchers on FP7 issues. The *SMEs go Health* consortium assisted in total more than **8,000 times** (2,238 SMEs and 5,805 academia) in questions regarding legal and financial topics, IPR issues, proposal preparation and writing as well as financial requirements and the participation of SMEs in research projects.

During the run-up phases of the 1st - 4th "Health" Calls, **282 partner searches** have been supported by assisting coordinating SMEs and researchers in finding appropriate partners for collaborative projects. **1,783** SMEs and academics were instructed and guided by the network in preparing proposals as either project coordinators or partners.

Trans-regional information and training events were organised at the occasion of large Biotech-events or fairs, considering the coverage of diverse European regions, in particular New Member States and Acceding Candidate Countries. In total, about **380 SMEs and researchers** from European and international countries attended the training workshops in Riga (87), Berlin (100), Paris (120), Istanbul (40) and Stockholm (25).

Based on statistical analysis of feedback forms gathered from the participants, training content was modified after each training, taking into account the heterogeneity of participants, ranging from newcomers in the framework programme to experienced coordinators of research projects with long lasting experience. Therefore, concepts for tailor-made trainings were prepared, including hands-on training examples and practical exercises. The workshops provided extensive information on research areas in "Health" and Biotechnology, funding opportunities, preparation and submission of project proposals, consortium building, experience reports from successful coordinators and evaluators and offered a special section on financial aspects and cost planning.

Moreover, services from different related European initiatives or opportunities offered by European Technology platforms like IMI were presented.

Electronic matchmaking and e-management platform

An electronic online platform for the project was established and a set of electronic facilities targeted to pro-actively bring together SMEs and research organisations for submitting joint EU projects were developed.

An **interactive website structure** was developed based on the agreement of the consortium about e-management procedures, access levels, reporting structure and confidentiality rules. It was adapted and revisions and corrections were done on a regular basis. Questionnaires, user guides and trainings for the correct use with the e-management tool (Xtranet) were prepared in order to allow efficient work with the internal (Xtranet) and external (*SMEs go Health* website) databases. Efficient database use was established and updated regularly according to new matching facilities, the preparation of newsletters and articles, etc.

A new **electronic matchmaking tool and process** was established and an internal training of all partners for the virtual matchmaking arranged. This was a prerequisite for successful virtual matchmakings. The new tool was installed in the public database and allowed all new validated profiles/partner searches (PS) to immediately be matched with existing PS/profiles and matching possibilities are listed and presented to the SME/researcher. Each SME/researcher could therefore contact directly the profile holder he found interesting through the system and the system recorded these initial contacts.

SMEs go Health supports consortium building by matching SMEs and Academia

The direct matching of academic institutions with SMEs in an early stage of proposal submission for establishing RTD-cooperations and preparing research project proposals was one of the main goals of the project. Consortium building, proactive partnering and individual assistance in finding appropriate expertise have been offered by two different routes, the virtual brokerage events (VBEs) and the partnering days.

Virtual brokerage events were organised with the main focus in bringing together SMEs and academic institutions as potential "interest groups" gathering around specific topics of the "Health" work programme. This served to encourage contact and discussion between potential collaboration partners, aiming to pave the way to collaborative research projects.

In order to address a broad community of SMEs and researchers interested in "Health"-related research, promotion campaigns were initiated in the run-up phase of the two Virtual Brokerage Events. About **34,000 SMEs, academic institutions and intermediaries** were contacted all over Europe for those two events, to enable a most efficient and successful performance of the virtual brokerage events.

The first VBE has been organised in June 2007 in the run-up phase of the 2nd "Health" Call. And this resulted in the collection of 219 new profiles and the announcement of 30 new partner searches for the *SMEs go Health* database.

During the second VBE SMEs and researchers were assisted by the consortium in finding appropriate partners in the run-up phase of the 3rd "Health" Call. 159 new profiles were collected by all partners and 35 new partner searches announced in the database.

During the period of VBEs, also website consultations were counted over 4 to 5 times higher.

As a second measure, **Partnering Days** have been organised by the *SMEs go Health* consortium completing the efforts of the network to bring together SMEs and researchers paving the way to collaborative research projects. In contrast to the VBEs, Partnering Days offered the possibility to present personally expertise and needs to international partners in bilateral meetings. Partnering Days allowed participants thus to meet numerous prospective cooperation partners in a single day.

Two partnering days were organised in June 2008 in Krakow and in London in the run-up phase of the 3rd "Health" Call. Together, 76 organisations were involved in 139 bilateral meetings. As an example, an Italian SME found a German researcher as project partner during a bilateral meeting in Krakow for submitting a proposal in the 3rd "Health" Call. A third Partnering Day was organised in October 2009 in Vienna (120 clients participated in the event, delegates from 60 organizations attended more than 100 bilateral meetings), addressing topics of the 4th "Health" Call.

Together with the *Health-NCP-Net*, a big awareness raising campaign was started for the so called **Real Brokerage Event (RBE)** in Prague. During this partnering event, 120 SMEs and researchers were assisted by both European initiatives in finding appropriate partners also in the run-up phase of the 4th "Health" Call. 87 organisations were involved in 153 bilateral meetings, and one cooperation was fixed straight out of this event.

During the entire life cycle of *SMEs go Health*, the consortium delivered 800 dissemination activities, addressing about 6,500 SMEs and about 25,000 academic institutions.

Communicate *SMEs go Health* - Promoting the initiative and networking

In order to raise the awareness among the "Health" and biomedical research community in Europe active communication concerning services, support activities and events have been pursued. As main actors, life science and Health clusters, SMEs and SME-associations, members of medical universities or related initiatives and networks have been addressed.

The *SMEs go Health* project has been promoted using different PR-instruments, like the project website, promotion leaflets and press releases.

To start the marketing of the project, the *SMEs go LifeSciences* website was adapted and the new ***SMEs go Health*** **website** (www.smesgohealth.org) was build up. Contents like news, upcoming events, services and activities, useful links, partners' information etc. have been published on this project website. In total, **772 online publications** like guidelines, events and news have been made available online via the *SMEs go Health* public website or respective national websites to potential clients.

Advertisement of the project was supported by **promotion leaflets**, showing an overview about main services and activities offered by *SMEs go Health*. In total, about **8,000 leaflets** have been disseminated by all project partners at national and international level at the occasion of bilateral consultations, "Health"-related events, trainings and fairs.

Quarterly electronic newsletters provided a broad range of information like upcoming events, open calls and partner searches and information about other related projects. A spotlight on research profiles in different European regions (Latvia, Turkey, Estonia, Spain, Romania and Portugal) as well as tips and tricks to take part in FP7 have been published. Interviews with successful coordinators offering information about their experiences have been provided to the public. Additional electronic newsletters have been published announcing the opening of "Health" Calls.

Press releases have been disseminated on national (200) and international (10) level using different media like CORDIS, CORDIS Wire, the IPR Helpdesk, eHealthNews, SME Techweb and the Parliament Magazine.

Case studies of successful SME-academia collaboration in FP7 projects have been prepared. Successful coordinators who have been supported by the *SMEs go Health* initiative have been interviewed. They provided information about their experiences in proposal preparation or during negotiations, partner searches, impressions about the collaborative work of SMEs and academia, their expectations on the participation in such a project, and suggestions for other SMEs and academia who might be interested in taking part in the frame work programme.

In total, **10 success stories from 8 countries** (Germany, Slovakia, Austria (2), Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden (2) and Switzerland) have been edited and distributed during the entire duration of *SMEs go Health*. In addition, 5 Success Stories gathered during the project *SMEs go LifeSciences* from Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Israel and Turkey have been disseminated via the *SMEs go Health* website and during "Health" related events or at trainings workshops.

Cooperation opportunities between *SMEs go Health* and related initiatives have been identified. Networking with related projects, initiatives and networks in the area of biomedical research has been used in order to maximise the impact. Collaboration activities comprised mutual promotion of planned events, trainings and workshops, the attendance at Partnering Days, fairs on the respective websites and in particular issues of the electronic newsletter.

In addition, common organisation of different workshops or Partnering Days could maximise the impact of these events.

A training and coaching workshop has been organised jointly between **Match2BioSME**, an EU-project (ETI) in the area of white and green biotechnology and the *SMEs go Health* initiative at the occasion of the Baltic Dynamics'07 in Riga, Latvia.

Close cooperation in the area of partner searches with a common off-line form for partner searches and profiles has been established with the **HEALTH-NCP-NET**, representing the network of FP7 "Health" NCPs. Moreover, both initiatives were represented at the Partnering Day in Krakow, Poland in June 2008 and jointly organised a real Brokerage Event in Prague, Czech Republic in June 2009. Most importantly, an agreement on the maintenance of the *SMEs go Health* database via the *Health-NCP-Net* has been found.

Cooperation in terms of transfer from BIO- and "Health"-relevant SME-profiles from the **Detect-IT2** to the *SMEs go Health* database has been determined in 2008 due to the end of the *Detect-IT2* project.

A contribution of the coordinator of the **SM-BIO-Power** initiative has been given as a speaker at the *SMEs go Health* partnering day 2009 in Vienna, introducing this initiative to an international audience.

Main focus on mutual promotion activities was put on the related initiatives **EFBIC-RED**, **KAPPA-Health**, **SPIDERA for Life**, **USE and DIFFUSE**, **EECAlink** and on the JTI **IMI**.

Quality assurance for *SMEs go Health*

A carefully designed quality control plan comprising an impact assessment section has been set up and implemented, in order to ensure high quality of the project deliverables and well-founded evaluation of the project impact.

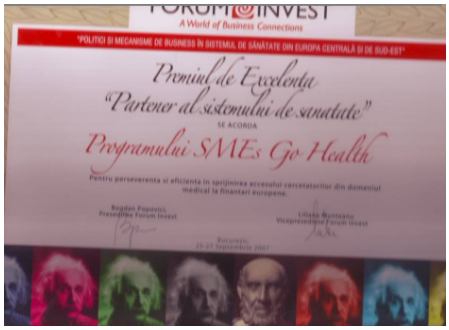
Via a broad spectrum of targeted activities, *SMEs go Health* successfully supported the participation of SMEs and researchers in Calls launched by the FP7 "Health" Theme. In particular, more than 6,000 registered users of the *SMEs go Health* website regularly received tailor-made information by the *SMEs go Health* newsletter.

More than 380 SMEs and researchers participated in 5 trans-regional training events, and around 370 SMEs and researchers participated in 4 brokerage events & partnering days, with nearly one third of participants representing SMEs. More than 390 bilateral meetings triggered at least 120 follow-up contacts between participants after the events. 18 participants, including 9 SMEs, were subsequently involved in 22 proposals submitted to the "Health" Theme.

In addition, more than 280 partner searches were supported by *SMEs go Health*. More than 65 partner searches were successful, and at least 24 organisations (including 11 SMEs) were involved in submitted "Health" proposals.

As a **conclusion out of this assessment**, *SMEs go Health* has clearly contributed in **mobilising SMEs** and researchers with respect to Calls launched by the FP7 "Health" Theme. Importantly, many of the cooperations initiated via *SMEs go Health* have to be considered as a **mid- and long-term rather than a short term perspective**, supporting future involvement of SMEs in the EU Framework Programme.

Excellent collaboration and networking with the European Commission, who supported the consortium not only by giving presentations at the occasion of training workshops and partnering days, but also by advice on administrative and content related questions on a regular basis was highly appreciated by *SMEs go Health*.



SMEs go Health was honoured with the **Excellency price** "Partners of Health system" at the policies and business mechanisms in the CEE healthcare industries in Romania.

For further information please visit www.smesgohealth.org,
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