



Project N°.
INCO-CT-2004-510555

Project acronym
E-CONSULTING SERVICE

Project title
E-CONSULTING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SERVICE ON FP6 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT FOR SMES
FROM ASSOCIATED CANDIDATE COUNTRIES

Instrument: SPECIFIC SUPPORT ACTIONS

Thematic Priority: SPECIFIC SUPPORT ACTIONS - ASSOCIATED CANDIDATE COUNTRIES -
GENERAL

Publishable final activity report

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Duration: 24 months

Project coordinator name: Gabor Bandi

Project coordinator organisation name: INNOSTART National Business and Innovation
Centre Foundation

Draft 1

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I. Project execution

1. Objectives

The project's general objective was to **directly support** SME participation in FP6 by means of new, innovative and highly cost-efficient supporting tools. The project targeted SMEs from all New Member States and Associate Candidate Countries focusing on all sectors, although IT, biotechnology, energy and environmental sectors were preferentially treated together with SMEs lead by women managers. In order to promote their participation in FP6 innovative **e-consultancy service** was established that directly assists SMEs in FP6 project development, proposal writing and project management.

The **overall objective** of the project can be defined as the development of a new approach for **SME counselling services** by taking full advantage of recent Internet technologies and e-training methods. The project had the following specific objectives:

- Providing practical information on the FP6 programme, related policies, actual FP6 calls and deadlines by means of categorising available information and the listing of existing links to pages dealing with related issues. **Direct assistance to SMEs** in identifying the thematic areas and instruments that are most relevant to their particular fields of activity.
- Providing **hands-on technical assistance** to proposal preparation. Special emphasis is given to SMEs willing to coordinate projects (particularly STREPs and SSAs) and to SMEs willing to take an active role in the development of IPs and NoEs (as contractor).
- Assisting SMEs in finding the most appropriate partners for their projects through taking full advantage of existing Commission services.
- **Pre-checking and pre-evaluating** potential projects proposals from SMEs in order to find their weaknesses.
- Assisting SMEs in contract negotiation procedures and various project management issues and activities such as structuring, reporting or auditing.

In order to achieve the above objectives, an interactive **e-consulting service was developed for SMEs**, addressing all fields of the FP6 programme that provides technical assistance to proposal preparation. The main goal was achieved by means of providing continuous hands-on support to the selected eligible SMEs during the preparation of FP6 proposals, rather than to prepare the proposals instead of them.

E-Consulting Service E-CONSULTING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SERVICE ON FP6 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT FOR SMES

E-CONSULTING E-LEARNING DATABASE FP6 NMS, ACC SMEs

The aim of the project is to facilitate and directly support the participation of SMEs in the Sixth Framework Program (FP6) of the European Union. The **project targets SMEs, irrespective of sector, of newly Associated Countries and Associated Candidate Countries**. Our intention is also to give support to SMEs lead by women managers. In order to promote the participation of these organisations in FP6 the project partners would like to provide through this website innovative e-consultancy service and assist directly SMEs in **FP6 project development and proposal writing**.

The project offers the following specific services:

- **Overview of the 6 Framework Programme**
All practical information is collected about FP6 (actual calls, deadlines, conditions, etc.).
- **Partner search functions**
Assisting SMEs in finding the most appropriate partners for their projects.
- **E-learning course**
A basic e-learning course demonstrating the preparation of an FP6 project proposal step by step.

• **E consulting services**
E-consulting services are deployed for the selected SMEs to assist to the preparation of their project proposals. The services offered include the pre-checking and pre-evaluating of projects proposals in order to find weaknesses.

The use of the Webtools and the related services will be available **free of charge during the period of FP6**, as a result of the 100% Community contribution.

Innostart and Geonardo would prefer proposers from New Member States and Associated Candidate Countries when selecting the SME proposals receiving assistance free of charge.

The assistance will focus on the preparation and submission of the proposal and will be provided via e-consulting services. Therefore, we are looking for individuals, institutions and companies willing to submit proposals under FP6 programmes and wishing to take advantage of this novel service

Visit <http://www.sme-consulting.net> and register!!

2. Contractors involved

In order to achieve the mentioned objectives and attain the required impacts a very small, but highly professional consortium, involving **2 members from Hungary**, had been set up, representing the relevant professional fields and expertise.

Coordinator: Innostart National Business and Innovation Center, Hungary

The Innostart foundation was established in 1994 on the model of Business and Innovation Centres (BICs), already present in the European Union for over 15 years. INNOSTART, as a public utility organisation, assumes a decisive role in the dissemination of BIC methodology and know-how countrywide for the development of business and its support structures.

The mission of INNOSTART is to identify promising innovative projects and to back the achievement and market exploitation of innovative enterprises by its services and expertise; to give advice and to provide a favourable infrastructure and a creative environment through the services of its innovation park. Its task is to build up and maintain an innovative culture and environment to stimulate and support the local and regional initiatives and international co-operations.

INNOSTART is part of a Hungarian and international business development institutional system. It supports innovative small and medium sized enterprises by exploiting its special expertise and network resources. It also seeks out and introduces promising projects to venture capital investors.

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Contractor: Geonardo Environmental Technologies Ltd., Hungary

GEONARDO Ltd is an environmental technology firm, and a technical consulting service established in 1999 specialised in natural resources management, Geographical Information Systems development and regional planning. Over the past years the company itself has competed successfully for a variety of European funding sources, laying down the ground rules for combining various types of project financing mechanisms, such as domestic and European grants, venture capital and bank loans.

Web: www.geonardo.hu

3. Work performed

The duration of the project was 24 months from which the first 8 months were spent on the development of the new e-consultancy and e-learning services. The final version of the website was set up and launched in March 2005. The real work and the provision of the e-consulting service started from that time. Thousands of e-mails and leaflets were sent to the potential clients partly through the different networks of the European Union like the IRC and BIC network.

The following services were provided to enquirers through the website:

1. General functions

- Partner search facilities
- Deadlines of open call for proposals
- Success stories
- Useful links and library
- FAQ

2. E-learning course

- Module 1: FP6 introduction (rules, priorities, instruments)
- Module 2: FP 6 procedures (conditions of the participation, financial aspects, evaluation and negotiation, project management)
- Module 3: Preparation of a STREP (administrative forms, B parts, tables)
- Preparation of a draft proposal by the participants

3. E-consulting

- Personalised e-consultancy
- E-newsletter

SMEs and other RTD players who wishing to take advantage of the e-consulting service had to complete the e-learning course on FP6. At the end of the course participants had to prepare a draft FP6 proposal based on their own idea. Those SME managers who have submitted an eligible draft proposal to the partners of the Consortium were selected so that they could exploit the e-consulting service. They were assigned to the special group that received assistance from the Consortium in the frame of the e-consulting service.

Pictures from the e-learning course

The screenshot shows a slide titled "FP6 introduction" with the page number "Page: 1 Of 4". The main heading is "1. Thematic priority". Below this, there are navigation arrows (back, refresh, forward) and a vertical sidebar with icons for home, search, help, and close. The content area is titled "1. Life sciences, genomics and biotechnology for health" and includes the instruction "Click on the numbers". There are two numbered items: "1: Genomic research" and "2: Serious diseases". To the right, there is a text block: "Fight against serious diseases: diabetes, Alzheimer disease, Parkinson-disease, Creutzfeldt Jacob-disease, heart- and vascular diseases, cancer, AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, etc." At the bottom right, there is a logo for "LifeSciHealth" featuring a molecular structure.

Administering and managing the budget



Cost statements contains

- declaration of resources,
- declaration of eligible costs (generally only actual costs),
- declaration of receipts,
- declaration of interest generated,
- request of financial contribution from FP6,
- audit certificates (see on the next page),
- conversion rates,
- contractor's certificate.

Form C - Model of Financial Statement per Activity for a Specific Support Action
to be completed by contractor

Type of contract	Specific Support Action	Year of start of contract	FP6
Project title (in English)	Contract No.		
Contract's signature			
Contract reference	Contract start date		
Contract start date (DD/MM/YYYY)	Contract end date (DD/MM/YYYY)	PARTIAL or TOTAL or OTHER contract?	
Contract start date (DD/MM/YYYY)			
Contract end date (DD/MM/YYYY)			
Contract's reference name			

1. Breakdown of the activity

Please provide a breakdown of the activity on the basis of a new agreement with the partner(s) and/or subcontractor(s). The contract's reference name is the same as the one in the contract.

Type No. 1 (1) - Other work	Contract start date	Contract end date
Type No. 2 (2) - Other work	Contract start date	Contract end date
Type No. 3 (3) - Other work	Contract start date	Contract end date
Type No. 4 (4) - Other work	Contract start date	Contract end date

2. Breakdown of eligible costs (in €)

Please provide only the activity amount for the relevant instrument and/or other initiatives at the start of the contract and during the contract's duration.

Please also provide a breakdown of the activity.

Please use the following table to indicate the amount of the eligible activity in which you are actually participating.

Please indicate the amount of the eligible activity in which you are actually participating.

Please indicate the amount of the eligible activity in which you are actually participating.

Please indicate the amount of the eligible activity in which you are actually participating.

Please indicate the amount of the eligible activity in which you are actually participating.

Enlarge this picture



Self assessment



Please insert the name of the countries to the relevant categories!!

Member States:

Netherlands
 France
 Spain Austria Germany
 Czech Republic
 Hungary

Candidate countries:

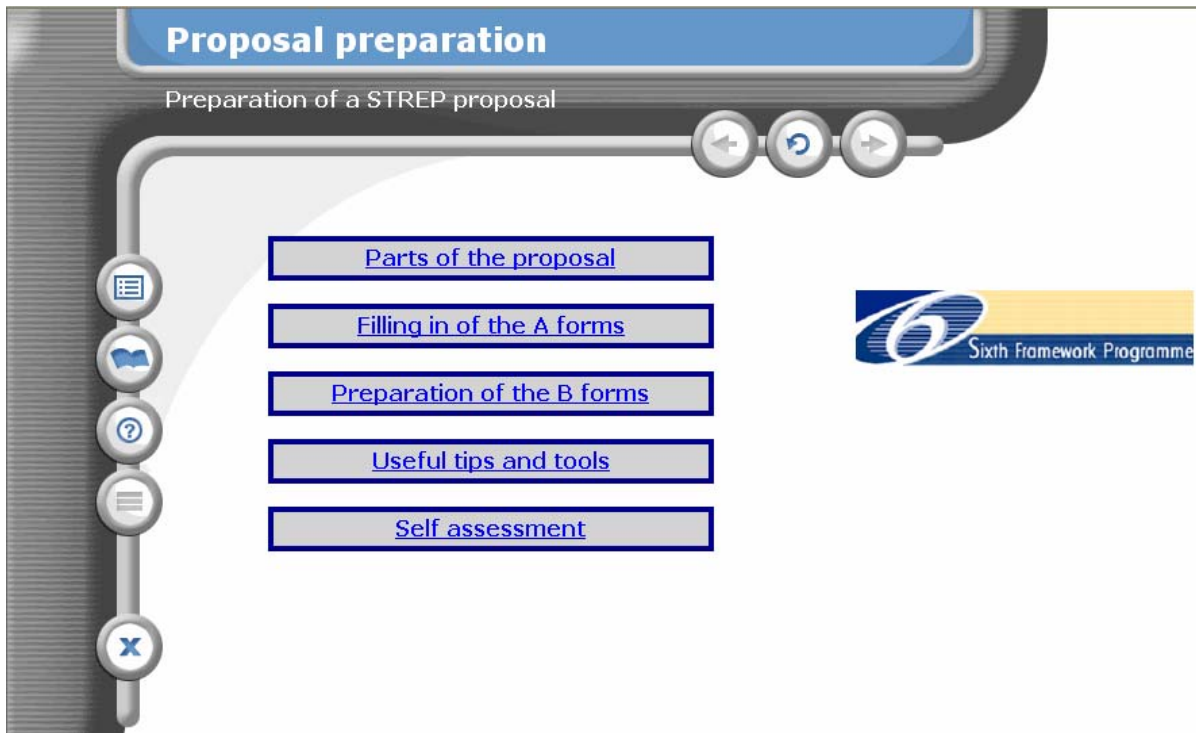
Croatia Romania Turkey

RTD Association:

Norway
 Israel Switzerland

Belgium Bulgaria Cyprus Denmark Estonia Finland
 Liechtenstein Lithuania Luxembourg Malta Iceland Ireland Italy Latvia
 Slovakia Slovenia Sweden Poland Portugal
 United Kingdom





The E-consulting service of the www.sme-consulting.net website offered professional, personalized assistance to potential project proposers for proposal preparation. This service was not available for all registered users, only for those who have successfully completed our e-learning course and gained access to the e-consulting services. The most important criterion was to present a potentially successful project idea that could be further developed with the technical assistance offered through the e-consulting services.

The selected project proposers received a private entry code to enter the e-consulting services menu. Registered users could enter their personal site with this private code and this personal site was not accessible to other clients. Only the responsible consultant has the right to enter the personal site of the user.

Under the e-consulting service, the clients received the following assistance:

- preliminary evaluation of the project idea, in light of the selected FP6 programme
- direct assistance to identify the thematic areas and instruments that are most relevant to their particular fields of activity
- continuous assistance in the various phases of the preparation of the proposal: completing the application forms, preparing the B parts, calculating the budget
- final revision before submission and pre-evaluation
- direct partner search assistance, evaluation of potential partners
- e-newsletter: up-to-date information about new developments, changes in FP6 programme.

Thanks to the massive dissemination campaign of the partners, the project website and the related services have become very popular with the clients. With the high attendance of the www.sme-consulting.net site the expected results of the project were successfully realised.

4. End results

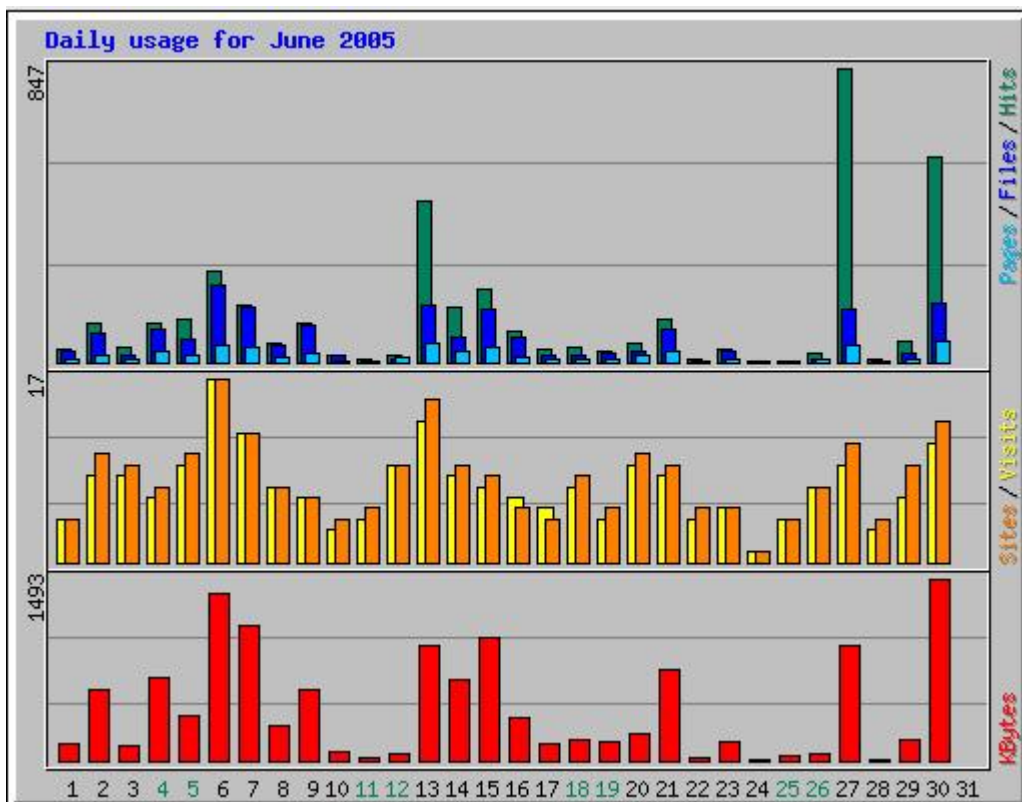
- 72 project managers from 12 countries were provided with e-consulting services
- more than half of them (37) were women managers
- 17 selected SMEs and 12 other RTD performers submitted FP6 proposals with the direct assistance of the project
- 2 SMEs are in the contracting period after the positive decision, 6 are waiting for the result of the evaluation
- 9 project initiatives are ready for submission or resubmission in FP7

The above mentioned results couldn't have been achieved without an effective dissemination campaign which was based on the dissemination strategy of the consortium. The dissemination strategy described the necessary steps to be done by the partners. During project implementation, the number of the target countries grew from 10 to 15 which resulted in the consortium undertaking some corrective actions in the strategy. The consortium achieved that SMEs and other interested parties from 12 different countries benefited from the advantages of the services.

Concrete results of the dissemination activities during the project implementation:

3 articles in weekly newspapers	around 40.000 readers
4 articles in e-newsletters	1.500 – 15.000 readers per newsletter
1 conference, 1 information day	90 participants
2 e-information days	44 active participants, 250 other visitors
20 presentations at conferences or seminars	850 participants
direct e-mailing	5.100
brochures, leaflets	1.500

Some charts and figures on the attendance of the project website:



Top 20 of 20 Total Countries							
#	Hits		Files		KBytes		Country
1	3232	41.63%	2060	24.91%	18236	47.93%	Unresolved/Unknown
2	1324	17.06%	1238	20.98%	5730	15.06%	Hungary
3	1322	17.04%	1291	21.89%	6607	17.37%	Czech Republic
4	496	6.39%	452	7.66%	2316	5.89%	Poland
5	404	5.21%	258	4.37%	1687	4.43%	Network
6	360	4.64%	217	3.68%	1070	2.81%	US Commercial
7	241	3.11%	143	2.42%	825	2.17%	Romania
8	64	0.83%	24	0.41%	122	0.32%	Italy
9	54	0.70%	40	0.68%	207	0.55%	Turkey
10	41	0.53%	41	0.65%	107	0.28%	Sweden
11	38	0.49%	36	0.61%	193	0.51%	Slovenia
12	38	0.49%	26	0.44%	195	0.51%	United Kingdom
13	30	0.39%	26	0.44%	186	0.49%	Slovak Republic
14	25	0.33%	23	0.35%	196	0.52%	Lithuania
15	19	0.24%	18	0.31%	87	0.23%	Estonia

In summary the project objectives were completely fulfilled by the consortium.

5. Main achievements concerning the state of the art

One of the main priorities of the Sixth Framework Programme is that a minimum of 15% of the budget should be allocated to SMEs. Only a few months before the end of the programme, it seems that this priority will be fulfilled; however the situation is unfavourable if we concentrate on the rate of SMEs involved from NMS and ACC.

What can be the reasons behind this low rate?

While there is a well developed structure of **European supporting networks** (IRCs, BICs), domestic support (NCPs, EICs), direct FP6 support services (InfoDesks, IGLO) and even a very few bottom-up initiatives, such as Gate2Growth project, there still are considerable problems with communicating FP6 mechanisms to the SME sector of these countries. The major issues are:

- Although NCPs and EICs assisting SMEs in their own countries perform their tasks very well when it comes to providing information about relevant programmes, they are not able to provide practical assistance to SMEs.
- InfoDesk services of FP6 do an excellent work in handling enquiries, but the nature of their work is by definition only reactive (reacting to specific questions) and thus they are not designed to provide proactive counselling assistance to SMEs.
- IRCs and BICs have been set up to support SMEs and technology transfer in Europe. The managing and administrative staff of these networks may have practical experience with developing FP6 projects, but they often lack the capacity to counsel SMEs on a face to face basis.

As a result of the activities of the various supporting networks and information events there is enough information to **raise SME interest** for participation in FP6, but practical assistance on project development is missing.

Considering the above facts it can be stated that the E-consulting project was **highly complementary to the ongoing efforts** of the European Commission and the relevant supporting networks and centres. The e-consultancy service on actual proposal development and management acted as a catalyst, converting the available FP6 information into practice (i.e. quality project proposals), which in-turn helped to maximise the impacts of the existing services.

6. Impacts

SMEs from NMS and ACCs taking advantage of the services of the project:

- learnt **how to prepare successful FP6 proposals** and receive EU funds for the implementation of innovations and development efforts;
- realised and **managed their own projects**, cooperating with international partners;
- got closer to the streamlines of European development, to European policies and strategies;
- got familiar with IT facilities, on-line solutions and the use of the internet in everyday activities;
- became more active and initiative in launching new projects.

It resulted in:

- **Increased participation of SMEs** of NMS and ACC in FP6 proposals and projects;
- **Increased cooperation** between SMEs and the other pole of the research-innovation interface;
- Improved **international cooperation** between the target countries and old Member States;
- Increased **use of IT technologies**, Internet and e-methods by SMEs

II. Dissemination and use

Publishable results of the Final plan for using and disseminating the knowledge:

D1 - Description of the system

The purpose of this report was to describe the technical background and the structure of the E-consulting services Web Site, the e-services provided in the project as well as the e-learning course.

D2 - Registered website (PP)

The www.sme-consulting.net domain name for the new website was registered on July 2004.

D3 - Description of services (Manual)

The description of the services was made for the users of the website to assist them with the use of the different functions of the website.

D4 - Prototype of the website in English (PU)

The prototype of the website was finished in January 2005. During the test period it was only available for the project partners and the involved SMEs.

D5 - Final version of the website

The final version of the website was set up and launched in March 2005. It was available for all interested parties from that date on. The webpage and the related services were useful for SMEs from NMS and ACC with no or less practical experiences in EU proposal preparation.

D6 - Declarations and evaluation sheets

Each of those SMEs which were provided with e-consultancy services and which submitted eligible FP6 proposals signed a declaration and sent a copy of the evaluation sheet of the submitted proposals. The declaration proves the assistance received through the E-consulting services project.

D7 - Leaflets and brochures

The brochure of the project was prepared on the second months. The brochures were disseminated at various seminars and conferences and were made available for download from the project website.

D8 - Advertising campaign on the Internet

All of the dissemination activities realised through the Internet or the project website (direct e-mailing, newsletter, etc.) were included in this deliverable

D9 - Virtual information days

2 virtual info days were organised with large number of participants out of which 44 persons discussed specific issues in the frame of the interaction session.

D10 - Interim and final reports as required by the EU rules (CO)

During the project implementation the following reports were prepared: two periodic reports at the end of the first and second year and the final reports at the end of the project

D11 - Internal reports on FP6 related issues and gender issues

The report identified the major problems that could occur during the preparation and management of an EU project, including the gender issue, and it also offered practical assistance - a step by step guide on project proposal development, consortium building, and solutions for a high number of potential problems.