



**Project no. ASA3-CT-2004-511045**

**AeroSME V**

**Support for European Aeronautical SMEs – Phase V**

Instrument: Specific Support Action

Thematic Priority: Aeronautics and Space

**FINAL ACTIVITY REPORT**

Period covered: 01.10.2004 to 30.11.2006

Date of preparation: 13.04.2007

Start date of project: 01.10.2004

Duration: 26 months

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Project coordinator organisation name: Aerospace and Defence  
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This document has 5 pages

## AeroSME V

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 addresses 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 was started to address this issue. AeroSME informs and supports 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

The current phase of the AeroSME project started on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004, and run for 26 months (24 months originally planned plus a 2-month extension). The project life span covered therefore the 3<sup>rd</sup> and last call of FP6 and the preparation for the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme and its 1<sup>st</sup> call.

A wide awareness campaign across Europe was implemented before each call covered by the project, namely the FP6 3<sup>rd</sup> call (issued in April 2005 with deadline on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2005) and then the FP7 1<sup>st</sup> call (issued in December 2006). In total 38 workshops were organised and/or attended, to present the FP6 rules of participation and then 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 17 Newsletters, informing on funding opportunities, deadlines for submission, events, partner searches and so on.

AeroSME facilitated and encouraged the access of SMEs, and other aeronautical organisations, to the Integrated Project (IP) proposals prepared by the larger aerospace companies for the 3<sup>rd</sup> call. IP abstracts were issued on the AeroSME website in December 2004, along with an updated and reviewed version of the SME Capability Form. This was designed to assist SMEs in making an initial assessment of their suitability as a potential partner in research projects and proposing their technical contribution. The international workshop held in Brussels in January 2005, where the IP coordinators presented publicly their proposals, offered the opportunity to the SME participants to present their contributions as potential partners. Individual consulting activities were carried out until the submission deadline to facilitate the contacts between the proposal coordinators and interested companies.

While the preparation of the IPs is quite structured and the co-ordinators are known, there is a lack of early information on the Specific Targeted Research Project (STREP) proposals. Therefore, on a case-by-case basis, AeroSME provided guidance to SMEs to set up their own STREP proposals or to join existing consortia. In total 17 project ideas and proposals were assisted.

In the second year the activities were somewhat affected by the uncertainty related to the elaboration and launch of FP7. Monitoring of the changing situation, in order to be ready as soon as possible once that the FP7 would have been launched, has been an underlying activity after the closing of the last FP6 call.

The preparation for the 1<sup>st</sup> call of FP7 followed along the lines of the successfully established procedure for the previous calls. Hands-on support was resumed fully in September 2006 and ranged from providing general information on the new FP7 structure, to the issue of the Level 2 proposal abstracts and the organisation of an international workshop for their public presentations (held in January 2007 in Brussels).

A Study on the participation of SMEs in FP6 took full swing in 2006. It focused on the Aeronautics thematic priority of FP6 and covered the SMEs participating in the IPs and the STREPs funded under the first and second call for proposals. The study provides both an analysis of the role of SMEs in the funded projects and lessons learnt, inputs and recommendations on how to support SMEs in the starting FP7.

The Study was complemented by a brief statistical overview - SME Facts and Figures - which aimed to better profile aeronautical SMEs and understand possible factors affecting their participation in EU Research Framework Programmes.

The internet SME database, which is freely accessible at [www.aerosme.com](http://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 900.

The services of AeroSME were provided to the SMEs of all the countries associated to FP6. 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 FP6 project proposals.

Since very little information was available, a document presenting information on aeronautics, space and defence sectors and related topics of the new Member States and Candidate Countries was set up. This document was widely circulated to various sectorial and interest groups in view of the FP6 3<sup>rd</sup> call. It was also made available for download on the AeroSME website

Figure 1: Screenshot of the AeroSME public database entry page

## Results achieved

Thanks to the established network of contacts, which include large companies (represented in the Industrial Management Groups – 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 33 countries associated with FP6, 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 (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 both the 3<sup>rd</sup> call of FP6 and the 1<sup>st</sup> call of FP7. Along with the other EC supporting actions, AeroSME contributed to increase the percentage participation of SMEs in FP6.

Via the workshops and the mapping document, AeroSME stepped up the visibility of the aerospace sectors of the new Member States and Candidate Countries and encouraged their integration into the existing networks and international co-operation activities.

The following was delivered:

- An established contact network including industry, national and regional associations, universities, research centres and other aeronautics related organisations and the other EC supporting actions.
- 28 national points of contact, of which 9 in the new Member States and Candidate Countries.
- An awareness campaign including 38 national workshops organised and/or attended in over 18 countries, and complemented by 17 newsletters, of which 2 R&D Project Flash (which focuses on partner searches for specific project proposals).
- A full support to facilitate the access of SMEs in the IP proposals submitted in the FP6 3<sup>rd</sup> call. It ranged from the publication of the research proposals to the delivery of a list of potential SME partners to the coordinators.
- The organisation of an international workshop in Brussels in January 2005 to present publicly the IP proposals.
- Assistance to access STREP proposals and direct guidance to 17 project ideas and proposals.
- Information and services to support the access of SMEs in the Level 2 proposals to be submitted in the 1<sup>st</sup> call of FP7. They ranged from the provision of general information on FP7 to the publication of the research proposal abstracts.
- A Study on the participation of SMEs in the Aeronautics priority of FP6. The study provides both an analysis of the role of SMEs in the funded projects and lessons learnt, inputs and recommendations on how to support SMEs in the starting FP7.
- The document "SME Facts and Figures" provides a brief statistical overview to better profile aeronautical SMEs and understand possible factors affecting their participation in EU Research Framework Programmes.
- A Guide to EU Funded Research to be used as a quick reference to basic information on FP7.
- The mapping of the capabilities in the aeronautics, space and defence sectors and related topics of the new Member States and Candidate Countries.
- Fully operational helpdesk, website, and internet SME database.

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