

# netWorth

News from the Enterprise Europe Network

Autumn 2010 / First Edition

## Helping small businesses hit the big time

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*Business Support on Your Doorstep*

# Helping small businesses hit the big time

Every day is different when you work for the Enterprise Europe Network. From helping a Swedish company export chocolates to China to finding the right Italian supplier for a Scottish wine tours firm, the Network's experts are on hand to help small businesses make the most of their opportunities in the EU. You could call them Europe's business partners.

The Enterprise Europe Network was launched with the aim of helping SMEs to go international, innovate and access European funding and finance. "All these objectives **supporting the growth of European SMEs** took on added significance and posed several new challenges amidst the current economic recovery," says Antonio Tajani, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Industry and Entrepreneurship.

Despite, or perhaps, because of the recession, the Network's expert staff have been able to make a real difference to European small businesses. The Network has generated more than 60 000 expressions of interest from companies wanting to do business. These led to **2 150 international partnership agreements in 24 months**, ranging from joint ventures to fully-fledged cooperation on research, technology and EU funding applications.

"Small businesses often lack the resources to find partners on their own, especially abroad. Or they may have an innovative idea but find it hard to turn it into a commercial success," explains Joanna Drake, Director and Deputy SME Envoy at the Commission's Enterprise and Industry Directorate-General. The Enterprise Europe Network is ideally placed to help SMEs find business partners, using one of the world's largest technology and business cooperation

databases. Once a Network partner enters a company's partnership request, other members across the Network can access it and pass along the information to local players.

One example that made waves in Denmark is a company that produced tanks and wrote software programmes to measure behaviour patterns in fish. "There isn't a big market for this type of software, but we connected them with a group who needed their application," says Simon Poulsen of Danish Network partner, Agro Park. "In the last few months every one of the seven companies that asked us to use our cutting-edge technology database has been teamed up successfully."

## Strong foundations

The idea behind the Enterprise Europe Network was simple: to combine and build on the strengths of the former Euro Info Centre (EIC) and Innovation Relay Centre (IRC) networks, established in 1987 and 1995 respectively, and steered by the Commission's Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry. Both networks complemented each other with the services they offered. The EIC network advised small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) on EU law and helped them enter new markets, while the IRC network sourced new technologies for them in other countries.

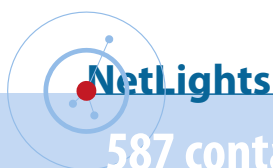
Detecting increasing overlaps in their client bases, it was natural for the Commission to

think about merging the networks and creating a unique one-stop service for entrepreneurs that would save them the hassle of dealing with different networks for different services. At the time of the launch Heinz Zourek, Director-General in charge of Enterprise and Industry, urged all entrepreneurs in the EU and beyond to use the Enterprise Europe Network "to the best of their needs". This includes turning to the Network for assistance in finding partners and filing applications for EU-funded projects, in particular those funded through the Seventh Research Framework Programme (FP7, 2007-13).

## Close to companies

With 587 contact points and 3 100 staff (or 1 300 full-time equivalents), the Enterprise Europe Network provides expertise and services to businesses free of charge in all 27 EU Member States plus 20 third countries, including candidate and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries as well as the US, China, Russia and Turkey, among others. Its members are respected business and technology organisations, well known and deeply rooted in their communities and in constant contact with local SMEs.

They are also well connected to each other. Take the case of Finnish jewellery company Kaipus, which produces scented jewellery based on nanotechnology. It found a French commercial partner thanks to its local Network



NetLights

587 contact points  
in the Network

47 countries  
are home to Network partners



### Antonio Tajani

European Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani has been working on the frontline of European politics for the past two decades. He was appointed to the Commission in 2008, starting with the Transport portfolio and then taking charge of Industry and Entrepreneurship in February this year.

For 14 years, from 1994 to 2008, he was a Member of the European Parliament. In 1999 he was chosen as the leader of the Forza Italia party in the European Parliament and elected to the Presidency of the European People's Party-European Democrats in 1999.

As a journalist, Mr Tajani has worked as a parliamentary reporter, head of RAI 1 radio news and chief editor of the Rome edition of 'Il Giornale', among others. He has a law degree from La Sapienza University in Rome.

Helping European SMEs to access financing and funding, and in particular to restart as green businesses, is a major priority for the Vice-President. "I want to help entrepreneurs tackle funding problems and red tape," he says. "The Enterprise Europe Network is on the ground to offer practical solutions to the problems businesses are facing every day."

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Antonio Tajani

branch in Turku, whose contacts from a brokerage event organised by its counterpart in the Paris Chamber of Commerce laid the foundation for a successful deal.

In the first 24 months of its existence, the Network got the word out to more than **two million SMEs**. Good ideas spread easily through the Network – like using Twitter, a micro-blogging service, to send out partnership requests, for example.

The partner organisations are backed up by the Commission's Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation (EACI), a Brussels-based agency that runs the Network for the Commission's Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry. It connects the Network to EU information, news and funding opportunities, and provides standard tools for communicating and helping clients. Each partner organisation can then choose and adapt what is most useful to its clients.

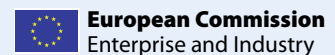
"We also train new and more experienced Network partners, manage their contracts and evaluate their performance," explains EACI Director, Patrick Lambert, highlighting the advantages of Network operations being run by a Commission Executive Agency. "Working closely with the Enterprise and

Industry Directorate-General, we help keep key knowledge within the Commission and create synergies by cross-promoting the Network and the other EU programmes we manage."

Guidance on which new policy initiatives the Enterprise Europe Network should explain to SMEs comes from the Enterprise and Industry Directorate-General. "The Network plays a key role in communicating the Small Business Act (SBA) for Europe and will do so for the Innovation Union communication," underlines Joanna Drake, Deputy SME Envoy. "It's also an invaluable tool for us to collect small companies' views on planned or existing EU law. Through it we ensure that draft legislation corresponds as much as possible to small companies' needs."

The Network is the Commission's most direct link to Europe's SMEs, and its experts know exactly what their clients need. For example, they are on hand to respond to questions on regulation that SMEs may not have time to research themselves – and indeed have so far answered at least 200 000 questions on EU law and other matters. These range from queries about export procedures to intellectual property rights and environmental and safety compliance. —

### How it works



The Enterprise Europe Network is a partnership between the European Commission's Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry, national governments and around 587 member organisations in 47 countries. Its day-to-day operations are managed by the Commission's Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation (EACI) in Brussels, which takes care of everything from contract management and performance evaluation to providing Network members with training, information, and communication tools. It also runs the unique matchmaking databases, which are key for the Network to source new technologies and business partners for its clients across all participating countries.

**99% of businesses in Europe are SMEs – the Network's main audience**

**About 3 000 experts work in the Network**



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Joanna Drake

### Joanna Drake

Joanna Drake's career has always centred around the European Union. Prior to becoming Director for SME Competitiveness in DG Enterprise & Industry last January, she spent nearly five years as head of the European Commission Representation in Malta.

She is a lawyer by profession and specialised in EU law, obtaining a post-graduate qualification from the College of Europe and teaching for five years as a full-time lecturer at the University of Malta.

Dr Drake was involved in the Malta-EU accession process right from the start while working as Legal Research Officer at the Embassy of Malta in Brussels in the late 1980s and as a professional officer with the EU Directorate within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in the early 1990s.

Between 2000 and 2005 she headed the Legal & Regulatory Department of Vodafone Malta Limited.

She is proud to be the first Maltese person to be appointed as Director within the European Commission.

### Let's see how innovative you are

Rather than just wait for entrepreneurs to come to the Network for help, experts take a pro-active approach in getting to know the players within their region, often starting with a personal visit. Since the Network was founded, there have been some **60 000 first company visits**. Network experts use these visits to help the company work out its needs and identify opportunities in the EU.

Small businesses that may initially fall outside the Network's radar often have their first contact with the Network at a local seminar, conference, training session or workshop organised by a member organisation. In its first 24 months of operation, the Network organised **12 000 local events attracting approximately 500 000 SMEs**.

At a gathering sponsored by the Cracow Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Polish dentist Małgorzata Włodarczyk first became

aware of available EU funding opportunities for her private practice. She eventually received a grant allowing her to upgrade her equipment and attract more patients.

On a much larger scale, the Network has so far organised **1 250 brokerage events that attracted 22 000 SMEs**, exploiting networking opportunities at large trade fairs. Cambridge-based entrepreneur Pascal Cintract had developed a handheld digital terminal. English Network partner Business Link East helped him to team up with Spanish medical software firm Hand Help Health. "The Network organised for me to attend a brokerage event at the GSMA Mobile World Congress in Barcelona," explains Cintract. The brokerage event was organised by Marc Gracia, who works for the Catalan Agency for Competitiveness, an Enterprise Europe Network member based in Barcelona. He helped Cintract to connect with a local entrepreneur, Hand Held Health's Frederico de Gispert.

## NetLights

Over 12 000  
local events organised

More than 500 000 clients  
have participated in local events



Business ideas are seeing the light with the help of the Network.

### The road ahead

Over the next three years, the Network will be busy. It plans to carry out approximately 50 000 technology and business reviews, and document annually 2 500 technology, business and research agreements. "The Network's Sector Groups will play an increasingly important role in this," estimates EACI Director Patrick Lambert. They bring together experts in 17 key industries. This ensures the Network stays abreast of the latest developments and allows it to convey the feeling of a 'common purpose' to clusters and other business organisations in those sectors.

The Director at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry, Directorate Promotion of SME Competitiveness and Deputy SME Envoy, Joanna Drake, sees the Network as a linchpin in the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) for helping SMEs to grow and create jobs. "We would like the Network to help SMEs tap

into the Structural Funds even more," she says. According to Drake, it will also be instrumental in getting feedback from SMEs on existing EU legislation and policy, giving the Commission ideas for possible areas for reform. Policy areas where feedback will be requested may include the environment and the green economy, sustainability, employment and social affairs, innovation support, access to finance, taxation and customs and, in more general terms, better regulation and simplification. —

### Financing the Network



The Enterprise Europe Network is co-funded from the EU budget under the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP). With a total budget of €3.6 billion for the period 2007-13, the CIP seeks to boost the competitiveness of Europe's enterprises by helping them to innovate and make the most of the EU Single Market. Network funding comes under the CIP's Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (EIP), with a budget of €320 million for the same period. For its partner organisations, being part of the Network is a unique opportunity to offer their clients a wide range of additional services and international contacts. That's why they bear at least 40% of their operational costs themselves.

<http://ec.europa.eu/cip>

Over 2 million  
SMEs approached

More than 1 250  
brokerage events co-organised

## FRANCE/SPAIN

### TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

## A place in the sun

**Solar SME finds new European technology partners to help it stay on top in the energy business.**

Conexia Energy is a Marseille-based firm that develops ground-based solar power farms.

Thanks to key contacts provided by the Enterprise Europe Network, the company has sealed several important technology transfer agreements with partners across Europe. The most noteworthy of these is a joint venture with Netenergy, a Spanish financier of high-potential renewable energy projects.

Netenergy was one of seven companies targeted as possible matches for Conexia by Bunh ng Hok of Os o Innovation, the Enterprise Europe Network's representative in Marseille.

Conexia President Thierry Vergnaud sought Hok's help in finding new business in Spain, which seemed to be an ideal market for Conexia's new photovoltaic technology: solar roofs incorporated into a building's construction as an alternative to rack-mounted panels.

Hok invited chairman Vergnaud to accompany him to Madrid for the Genera 2008 energy trade fair, where the entrepreneur met Netenergy Manager Oriol Vila and several others. Hok got the leads from the Enterprise Europe Network in Madrid, just one of the Network's 587 branches across the EU and beyond.



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Five months after their initial encounter, both entrepreneurs signed a technology and financial engineering cooperation agreement. Conexia also inked six additional deals with partners it met through the Enterprise Europe Network, including companies in Bulgaria, Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal.

"With the help of the Enterprise Europe Network, we have been able to realise a partnership for success," says

chairman Vergnaud. "Having the input and know-how from another country will help our business grow and stay ahead of the game."

#### Get in touch

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## GERMANY

### BUSINESS COOPERATION

## B2B matches made in heaven

**The annual Future Match brokerage event hosted by the Enterprise Europe Network at the CeBIT expo offers SMEs an unprecedented networking opportunity.**

Regardless of size, any business with an interest in information technology cannot afford to miss CeBIT, the world's largest computer expo held every March in Hannover, Germany.

Thanks to the Enterprise Europe Network, many entrepreneurs who might otherwise find CeBIT too costly or overwhelming can get in on the action through the Future Match business-to-business matchmaking forum.



  EC

Co-organisers Leibniz Universit t Hannover and the Wirtschaftsf rderung und Technologie-transfer Schleswig-Holstein (WTSH) GmbH in Kiel rely on more than 29 other Network partners to promote the event within their regions and recruit SMEs to attend.

Future Match 2010 attracted 447 participants from 46 countries, including several non-EU nations like Russia and Chile. For the second time, attendees could also rent inexpensive exhibition space on the Future Match stand to boost their visibility among potential international partners.

Professor Stephan Raimer, an executive board member of the Digital Business Cluster Schleswig-Holstein, says that by exhibiting at Future Match, "we had direct access to our target audience".

Profiles for all registered SMEs are included in an online catalogue available to all CeBIT participants, along with specific meeting requests. If the other party accepts the invitation, a rendezvous is arranged.

Although meetings are introductory they sometimes yield quick results, like a French-German software agreement inked three months after their first encounter. In other cases, business relationships are built and may result in signed deals years after meeting at Future Match.

Once Future Match ends, attendees keep getting support and feedback from their local Network partners, who help them nurture contacts made in Hannover. "For the companies it is a very personalised service, and the Network supports them for as long as they want," says Nancy Smith of WTSH.

#### Get in touch

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#### More information

[www.futurematch.cebit.de](http://www.futurematch.cebit.de)

## Netlights

**Around 2 600 partnership agreements concluded so far**

**Code of conduct drawn up by partners for the Network**

## GERMANY/ITALY/AUSTRIA

### BUSINESS COOPERATION

# A little advice goes a long way



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**German solar wholesaler extends its reach into Italy and Austria after networking at key industry events.**

Josef Mittermeier, founder and executive director of JMS Solar Handel GmbH, is grateful to the Enterprise Europe Network for helping his Grainau, Bavaria-based SME become truly international.

Mittermeier's company, a specialist wholesaler and installer of photovoltaic systems, was recruited by the Network to participate in Klimahouse 2008, an international trade fair on energy-efficient construction in Bolzano, Italy.

Once JMS Solar registered for the expo, Network expert Tamar Moscovici of Bayern Handwerk International GmbH personally contacted Mittermeier to inform him about a brokerage event being held around the same time by the Export Organisation Südtirol, part of the Bolzano Chamber of Commerce.

"The brokerage event covered the same sectors and subjects, so I asked all exhibitors on our stand if they would like to participate in the brokerage event as well," Moscovici explains.

As a result of networking at both events a company that had previously only been active in Germany was able to get new business in Italy.

The Enterprise Europe Network also helped JMS Solar Handel obtain a grant from the Bavarian authorities, which it used to create marketing material in Italian and to translate the company's website, now available in three languages.

The Enterprise Europe Network invites over 17 000 SMEs to brokerage events and company missions each year. Often held during major trade fairs, these events help businesses like JMS Solar Handel connect with potential partners in their sectors.

"We would definitely work with the Enterprise Europe Network again," says Mittermeier.

#### Get in touch

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## PORTUGAL/CZECH REPUBLIC

### TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

# Helping kids sleep at night

**A Portuguese SME and Czech surgeon collaborate on a medical breakthrough after linking up through the Enterprise Europe Network.**

Obstructive sleep apnea is a common but underdiagnosed condition in children, which can cause severe damage and even death if left untreated.

Until now, the condition has been diagnosed through a complex and expensive examination where the patient is monitored for a full night by a health professional.

Portuguese start-up ISA Healthcare Solutions recently pioneered a device that remotely monitors sleep apnea patients. It will soon bring the invention to market with a partner it found through the Enterprise Europe Network.

After identifying ISA Healthcare as one of the most innovative SMEs in its sector, the Portuguese Network partner Agência de Inovação in Porto offered to help the company boost its international profile.

"We tried to focus the company on which technologies would be most suitable to promote abroad," says Alexandre Ulisses, a Network expert with the Innovation Agency. After a company visit, Ulisses helped José Luis Malaquias and Catarina Pereira draft ISA Healthcare's profile, which resulted in adding two technology cooperation offers to the Enterprise Europe Network's database.

Some 2 000 km away in the Czech city of Plzeň, Network consultants Iva Meinschmidtova and Margarita Müllerrova of BIC Plzeň identified the offer and contacted sleep surgery specialist Dr Vaclav Pavelec of LENTE. Supported by the Network, ISA and Pavelec's company LENTE started talks and signed a cooperation accord to introduce the device to the Czech market.

"Our common goal is simple: to help ill children," says Pavelec.



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#### Get in touch

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47 countries represented at the 2010 annual conference

Over 240 000 questions on the EU answered

UK/LUXEMBOURG

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

## Chemical firm sniffs out new opportunities

**British nanotechnology specialist Owlstone will supply its chemical detection system to a Luxembourg company it found through the Enterprise Europe Network.**

In 2004, three Cambridge University students founded Owlstone, a nanotechnology company that developed a novel chemical detection system.

The sensor, which uses a chip 100 times smaller and 1000 times cheaper than existing technologies, can detect a broad range of substances at very low quantities and with high accuracy.

When Owlstone sought a partner with access to new markets for its innovation, it turned to a trusted friend in Cambridge: Dave Reynolds, European technology advisor with the Enterprise Europe Network at Business Link.

Reynolds had advised Owlstone's founders since their student days, and used the Network's resources to spread the word about the company and its new technology.

Through the Network, Owlstone was introduced to IEE, a Luxembourg-based global leader in safety sensors for the automotive industry. Nearly three years after meeting, the companies signed a technology transfer deal.



© Owlstone

"Good technology partnering needs long-term relationships, and we were glad to help Owlstone on its journey," says Reynolds, who continues to help Owlstone search for new partners.

Arnaud Duban, of the Enterprise Europe Network in Luxembourg, underscores that the accord "is testimony to the commitment and value-added role of the Network and partners".

**Get in touch**

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UK

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

## One giant leap for drug safety

**British medical device maker teams up with an Italian SME on a novel system for testing drug compounds in development.**

In the complex world of medical technology, companies can achieve great things by collaborating across borders, as Julian Demmon can attest. The CEO of British medical device maker VivoMedica plc turned to the Enterprise Europe Network for help in finding an international partner for a breakthrough technology.



© EEC

"When an idea such as ours is taken out of academia, building the right network is essential," says Demmon, who has a 20-year track record working for some of the world's leading contract research organisations.

Demmon had already forged several key industry contacts through his affiliation with the London Technology Network (LTN), part of the Enterprise Europe Network. Demmon joined LTN's Emerging Medical Technologies Special Interest Group in 2007 and is an active participant in LTN's innovation matchmaking services and networking events.

It was therefore only natural to call on the Network to help find an international partner for DrugPrint, a sophisticated and comprehensive system for testing the potential cardio-toxic side-effects of drug compounds. DrugPrint aims to identify potential problems early on in a drug's development, thereby ensuring patient safety and helping pharmaceutical companies avoid costly failures.

The Enterprise Europe Network is unique in terms of its wide geographic reach and range of services provided to SMEs. Some 3 000 experienced staff at 587 local Network organisations help companies to find business partners in 47 countries.

The Network put Demmon in touch with Antonio Novellino of e.t.t., an Italian provider of software services. The companies formed a partnership, with the Italian company helping with neuronal applications for DrugPrint.

The Enterprise Europe Network remains very much involved, with LTN offering continued assistance to the companies.

**Get in touch**

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NetLights

17 Sector Groups provide customised support

18 Associate members and affiliates provide specialist advice to the Network

## LATVIA

FUNDING/FINANCE/FP7

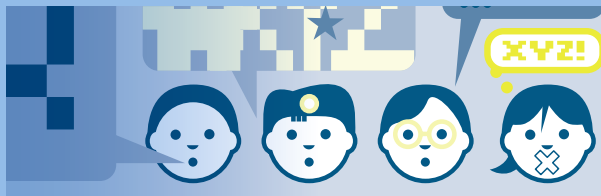
### Speaking the same language

**Translation software innovator Tilde used the Enterprise Europe Network to secure a research partner at short notice.**

Riga-based Tilde Ltd. is the market leader for Baltic-language software products, ranging from language support to localised fonts and electronic dictionaries.

The supplier to IBM and Sony Ericsson found itself in a bind when a partner backed out of a proposal for an FP7 research call weeks before the deadline.

Lacking the resources to find a new collaborator at such short notice, Tilde turned to the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia (LIAA), part of the Enterprise Europe Network. Tilde had first come into contact with LIAA at a seminar sponsored by the Network and had stayed in touch.



LIAA project manager Anete Vitola got straight to work, asking Tilde to prepare a one-page description of its activities and specific search query. Vitola disseminated the information and urgent request to the Network's 581 branches around Europe and beyond.

Within two weeks there were at least 10 replies from companies in several countries. "This high level of interest was not surprising given Tilde's expertise and market-leading position," says Vitola.

In the end, Tilde invited a Slovenian firm to join its consortium and provide an expert opinion on the potential market for translation technology developed specifically for blogs. Tilde won the tender, and will launch its cutting-edge research in 2010.

Having the Slovenian partner on board definitely "increased our project power", says Aivars Berzins, Tilde's EU project manager. "Enterprise Europe Network Latvia having a direct link to the Network partners in other countries was crucial, because they know which companies are best to approach for cooperation."

#### Get in touch

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## POLAND

FUNDING/FINANCING

### Polish dentist gets teeth into EU funding

**The Enterprise Europe Network helps a dentist secure the necessary financing to upgrade her Cracow-based practice.**

Dr Małgorzata Włodarczyk was looking for ways to improve her private dental practice in Cracow, Poland, but did not know where to turn.

Fortunately, the Enterprise Europe Network helped her secure EU funding to invest in modern equipment that would make drills and other tools more precise, safer and more comfortable for patients.

"Thanks to the Enterprise Europe Network I could get a better insight into the procedures and finally obtain significant financial support for my business," says Włodarczyk.

She had never even considered EU funding until attending a seminar organised by her local Network branch, the Cracow Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Network experts met with Włodarczyk and helped her apply for a grant through the European Regional Development Fund, set up to help stimulate economic development in the EU's less developed regions.

The Enterprise Europe Network helps businesses access European funding programmes and finance schemes, offering case-by-case advice and training sessions.

Włodarczyk received a grant of about €11 000, covering 40% of the cost of the new equipment – which is quieter and uses less energy than the old machinery.



Iwona Rokita-Kwietniak, director of the Enterprise Europe Network in Cracow, says the case shows the Network's value in searching for and using EU financing measures for enterprise development. Such funding can also motivate micro-

entrepreneurs by making them feel a key part of their regional economy.

Most importantly, Rokita-Kwietniak says, "The medical equipment bought by our client not only increased her competitiveness in the market, but also improved the quality of treatment."

#### Get in touch

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World's largest  
business cooperation database

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in the technology transfer and business  
cooperation databases

## UK

### ADVICE

## Smooth sailing for crab exporter



**A London-based SME clinches an export deal thanks to quick and accurate advice on documentation procedures from the Enterprise Europe Network.**

As part of the Enterprise Europe Network, the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) runs an enquiry service primarily for the benefit of local SMEs.

It recently got a call from a two-person company seeking information on the proper documentation for exporting live crabs to China. The company had received a large rush order from a customer in China and needed an answer as quickly as possible.

The exporter had initially already tried several local helplines and organisations, only to be repeatedly referred elsewhere. The search fortunately led to LCCI, which answered the query within a day.

Edward Ricketts, a business advice executive with LCCI and the Network, called the animal exports unit at the British Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) after failing to find the relevant information online.

Defra recommended contacting the Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), an internationally known aquatic scientific research and consultancy firm. CEFAS informed the company that it needed a health certificate for the specific type of crustacean. It then walked the company through all the steps for acquiring the necessary document.

Ricketts also provided the company with pages from a guide on exporting to China that was unavailable online. The export order was fulfilled, and the Enterprise Europe Network had another satisfied customer.

The Network has links with the EU institutions and direct contact with local organisations. It can act as an intermediary for businesses between the EU, big multinationals and local actors like regional authorities, tax authorities, or customs and excise.

"The added value in this case is that we actually called the relevant government department and did not just pass the company on to someone else," says Ricketts.

#### Get in touch

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## FRANCE

### ADVICE

## Unclogging a tax problem

**France drops a tax case against a family-owned sanitation firm, thanks to the Enterprise Europe Network.**

The Richard family has spent the past two decades building a small sanitation business in Mexy, a town near Metz in north-eastern France.

Earlier this year, the SME decided to take advantage of its border location and sell their sewer and septic-tank maintenance services in Luxembourg.

Expansion proved to be harder than expected. The Richards were caught off guard when French authorities demanded value-added tax on services provided in Luxembourg – even though the business was still based in France.



As is the case with many entrepreneurs, the Richards lacked the resources to hire a specialised accountant or tax lawyer. For help, they turned to Tiphaine Rocton of the Conseil Régional de Lorraine, part of the Enterprise Europe Network, at a conference about doing business in Luxembourg.

The Network's 3 000 experts help small businesses to interpret and apply EU and cross-border law. "This case turned out to be a misunderstanding about European legislation," says Rocton, a legal expert who informed the Richards that they were liable for VAT in Luxembourg rather than France. She explained the mistake in a letter to the French authorities, who promptly dropped the case. She and Network partners in Germany and Luxembourg often collaborate on collecting information for companies with cross-border activities.

"We had a very quick and clear-sighted answer from the Network," says Estelle Richard, who continues to rely on Rocton for advice.

Thanks in large part to the Enterprise Europe Network, the SME now does about a quarter of its business across the border, including in Belgium.

#### Get in touch

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## Netlights

13 regional consortia represent the Network in Germany

21 Swedish cities host the Network

## ITALY

### ACCESS TO EU FUNDING

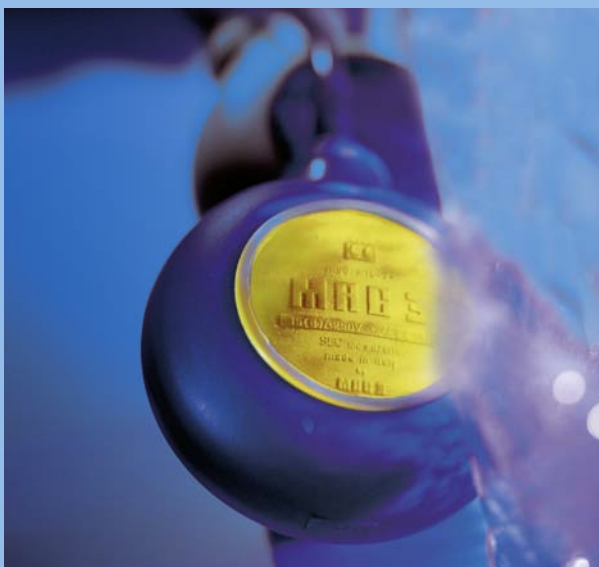
## EU funds give a lift into new markets

**Italian hydraulics company broadens its horizons with the Enterprise Europe Network.**

Hydraulic technology firm Mac3 has been a market leader in its native Italy since 1989. It's an innovative firm, with its own electronic lab. So when CEO Dr Mirian Ronchi contacted Promofirenze, the Enterprise Europe Network's branch in the Tuscan region, the potential for international expansion was clear.

Expanding into new markets demands a lot of resources, which can be hard to come by for a medium-sized firm like Mac3. That's why Michele Trizza and her colleagues, all Network experts from Promofirenze, suggested opting for public funding to help finance Mac3's expansion plans. They quickly found an opportunity in a regional funding programme supported by European Structural Funds and helped the company to file its application.

"Thanks to the Enterprise Europe Network, we have received over €18 000 to finance a feasibility study for entering new markets such as France, the UK and Mexico," said Dr Ronchi. "If it were not for the Network, we would not have been able to identify or track this great funding opportunity."



© www.mac3.it

### Get in touch

Margherita Lella

Network branches involved

Italy: Promofirenze - Azienda Speciale Della Camera Di Commercio Di Firenze

## CHILE

### INTERNATIONALISATION

## The Chilean platform



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EuroChile, the Network partner in Chile, is one example of how SMEs can benefit from the Enterprise Europe Network – they have helped around 340 European SMEs do business in Chile. Exports from the EU to Chile doubled between 2002 and 2008, thanks in part to EuroChile's work.

### Get in touch

Fundación Empresarial

Comunidad Europea-Chile

Manuela Caruz

Email: mcaruz@eurochile.cl

15 experts  
in Iceland

359 events  
organised by the Greek Network  
from January 2008 to June 2009

## Country profile

### FRANCE



## A bridge to a stronger future



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**Cooperation is the watchword of the Enterprise Europe Network in France. The Network partners work closely together to ensure the country's 2.3 million SMEs receive a top-quality service.**

The Network collaborates with the many regional and local clusters and with those chosen to be poles of competitiveness. These poles attract additional resources such as research and training to foster growth in their specific areas.

There are some 71 poles of competitiveness in France, about seven of which are known worldwide, such as Aerospace Valley in South West France. The Network concentrates on helping the more local groups.

"We offer them a springboard to meet other clusters to help them expand," explains Laurent Volle, head of the Dijon partner, Chambre Régionale de Commerce et d'Industrie de Bourgogne.

The Network has helped SMEs in the nutrition and health sector visit similar companies in Scandinavia, and many are now working together. "Our SMEs are increasingly open to international markets and to joint R&D projects. They could not achieve this without support from the Network," Volle adds.

While there are many structures to help SMEs export and others to help them innovate, Volle thinks that what is needed is a bridge between the two, and he believes the Network is creating that bridge.

According to Volle, SMEs need to adapt to the changing economic environment. Those who are more committed are more likely to survive, and, with the help of the Network, become stronger.

#### Get in touch

Chambre Régionale de Commerce et d'Industrie de Bourgogne  
[www.bourgogne.cci.fr/entreprise-europe](http://www.bourgogne.cci.fr/entreprise-europe)

### SPAIN



## Strength in numbers

**55 Network organisations serve Spain's SMEs, which employ 60% of the country's total workforce.**

Regardless of location or activity, entrepreneurs in Spain can always find a local Network member for advice. The Enterprise Europe Network is well represented in the Mediterranean nation, with more than 100 people employed.

Responsibilities are mainly divided along geographical lines, though partners also frequently work together as well as share costs.

"We offer a universal service, meaning that any type of company from any sector can ask for assistance," says Ignacio Hernández, Spain's network representative at the Instituto Tecnológico de Aragón (ITA), adding that companies from strong sectors can better exploit the Network's services.

Many Spanish SMEs approach the Network with queries about expansion elsewhere in Europe, especially France, Germany, Portugal, Italy and the United Kingdom.

Among the notable innovations by Spanish members is the L'Anella business, knowledge and networking platform developed by partner ACC1Ó. More than 18 000 registered users in Catalonia use L'Anella to access notices about business opportunities as well as general business guides and focused print and video reports on topics of interest to SMEs.



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The Spanish Network partners also regularly organise company missions and brokerage events to help SMEs make the most of networking opportunities. In Madrid, the Network arranged 185 bilateral meetings through a brokerage event related to the Genera '09 renewable-energy trade fair, and

186 bilaterals alongside the HomeSec 08 security industry trade fair.

Upcoming events promoted by the Spanish Network include the International Tourism Trade Fair (FITUR) in Madrid from 19 to 23 January 2011 and the Egética-Expoenergética brokerage event for the energy, water and wastes sectors in Valencia from 16 to 17 February 2011.

#### Get in touch

Ignacio Hernández - [actis@ita.es](mailto:actis@ita.es)

#### Consortium website

[http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/info/countries/spain\\_en.htm](http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/info/countries/spain_en.htm)

## NetLights

China, South Korea and Mexico now members

More than 100 people work for the Network in Spain

## HUNGARY



### Breeding ground for innovation

In Hungary, the Enterprise Europe Network focuses on promoting innovation, supported by strong State programmes that aim to make the country a centre of excellence in sectors such as biotechnology and pharmaceuticals.



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The Enterprise Europe Network in Hungary consists of nine partners including regional chambers, enterprise development agencies and innovation centres operating across the country.

Partners use seminars to develop the skills of companies. "One recent event presented the European Union's research funding programme, FP7, and illustrated how clusters of enterprises involved in the biotechnology sector can benefit," says Erzsébet Dobos, director of ITD, coordinator of the Enterprise Europe Network in Hungary.

This approach supports the Hungarian government's plan to make the country a major centre for biopharmaceuticals in the EU. Building on the French model they have created poles of excellence to strengthen research activity, innovation and corporate science collaboration.

These poles encourage the creation of spin-off organisations and involve innovative companies and universities in research and development. Currently they have 50 biotech enterprises, and four knowledge centres at four Hungarian life science universities.

Members of the Network also host seminars giving practical advice to companies on the best course of action to take when they develop new products and processes. This includes information on technology transfer and deals with the process of patenting innovations in Hungary, Europe and the US and the application of intellectual property protection in the exploitation of R&D results.

#### More information

ITD Hungary - [www.itd.hu](http://www.itd.hu)

## ESTONIA



### Bringing the entrepreneur to market

The Enterprise Europe Network in Estonia takes pride in the innovative start-ups it helps launch on the world market. The five partners that make up the Network in the small Baltic country put a lot of emphasis on developing entrepreneurship and on supporting research.

"We see a growing trend of young people interested in becoming entrepreneurs," says Annika Metsala, project manager with Network partner, the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Developing innovative products is a key area and one in which the Network provides assistance in locating suitable partners, managing research projects and supporting technology transfer.

Once budding entrepreneurs have a product, their next step is to find a market. The biggest challenge for SMEs is analysing the market, finding finance, marketing and understanding intellectual property issues.

"We arrange and offer services such as seminars on exports, advice on how to sell services or technology, and provide know-how about different sources of funding. We can also provide contacts, find partners in other markets and set out the legal requirements that need to be met when moving into new markets," explains Metsala.

Modesat Communications is among the Network's many successes. The company was advised by a Network partner, Invent Baltic, and won the Estonian 2009 Innovator award for its cutting-edge modem technology. Investors in Modesat include the Estonian engineers behind Skype, the technology that allows phone calls over the internet.



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The five Estonian Network partners cooperate extensively in their work, and this, says Metsala, is one of their major strengths when it comes to helping SMEs.

#### More information

Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
Coordinator of Estonian Consortia Estinno-Net

[www.koda.ee](http://www.koda.ee)

Lea Aasamaa (Network Coordinator), email [lea@koda.ee](mailto:lea@koda.ee)

About 30 Network experts serve SMEs in Slovenia

About 2 200 Network staff trained

# A web of opportunities

The Enterprise Europe Network uses two IT tools to ensure every SME is linked to a web of opportunities, whether they are looking for a partner for manufacturing, distribution, technology transfer or research.

The Business Cooperation Database (BCD) focuses on fostering business partnerships between enterprises across Europe and beyond by featuring offers and requests from clients. The Bulletin Board Service (BBS) seeks technological partnerships between companies with offers and requests from companies, universities, research centres and inventors.

Network partners write standard profiles of their client companies and their requests or offers that are then uploaded to the Network's databases.

The tools are client-orientated and can be personalised to alert SMEs to profiles that closely resemble their needs. The BBS uses a matching tool to locate technology transfer or know-how requests and offers that are then sent directly to companies. Robots on the BCD database make it possible for Network partners to select profiles in the database that could match with local clients who have inserted their request in the database.

In addition to robots, through the simple query system of the database users can select profiles using criteria such as key words and types of cooperation. The Turin Chamber of Commerce, Network partner of the ALPS Consortium, sends three sector-focused alerts each month to local companies active in the fields of design, environment and energy, and agrofood, says information officer, Monica May.

The BBS database has proved to be useful for clients in Finland. For Network partner and director Marjo Uotila it gives technology requests and offers their companies more visibility throughout

the EU. In just six months about 100 clients benefited from the database and the number is growing. The database is also linked to several Finnish technology centres' websites, to facilitate regional clients' access to it, she adds.

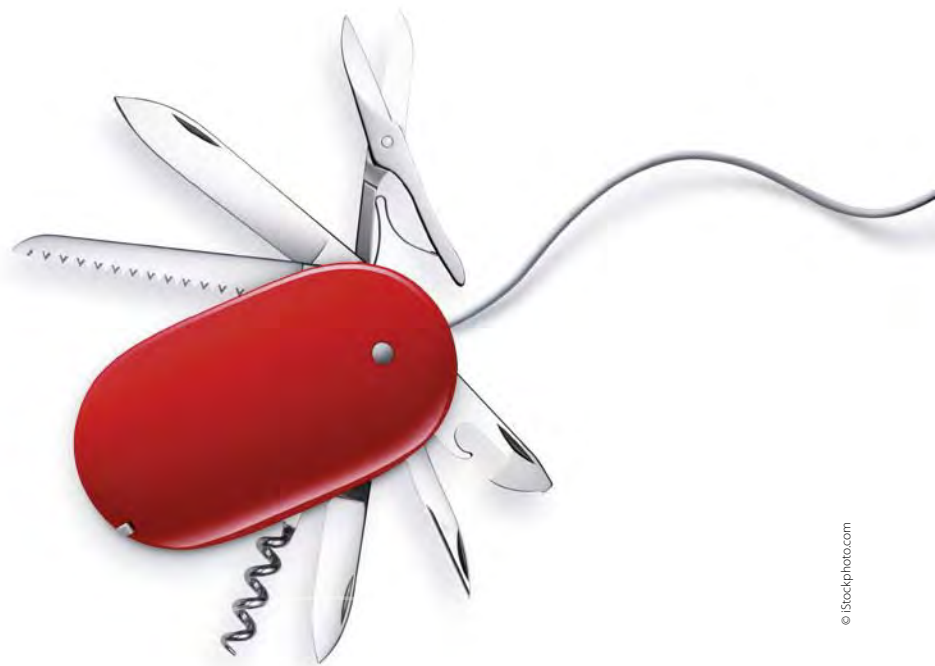
The Stara Zagora Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bulgaria recognises the potential of the BCD. "It is a very useful tool and the more colleagues in the Network who get acquainted with companies' needs, the more chances we have to match-make the perfect partners," says Denitsa Kalcheva.

Armenian partner, Fund Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center of Armenia, said it finds the databases are in demand from SMEs that want to expand their business abroad, establish franchises or find trade intermediaries or suppliers. "Using

these tools has helped us build a strong client base," says Gohar Gabrielyan, from the Yerevan-based partner.

SMEs in Brussels make good use of the technology offers and requests coming from abroad and add their own requests or offers to the BBS database, says Barbara Andreani, manager of Enterprise Europe Brussels at the Brussels Enterprise Agency, ABE. "About half our collaboration agreements were generated by the BBS. We find that it is user-friendly," she adds.

The rest of their agreements have been made at brokerage events that provide another opportunity for businesses to develop and expand. At these international fairs, Network partners can arrange meetings for their clients with potential business partners who are looking for a similar match. —



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**NetLights**

13 000 SMEs participated in international company missions

20 countries outside the EU host the Network

# Funding the future

The European Union has increased its emphasis on driving growth through innovation by spending more on research and development. SMEs are now an integral part of this strategy and the Enterprise Europe Network is helping them to achieve their potential by supporting efforts to secure R&D project funding from the EU's Seventh Research Framework Programme (FP7) and the Structural Funds.

More than €50 billion is available for research under FP7, which runs from 2007 to 2013. €6.2 billion has been set aside for SMEs over this period, €1.3 billion of which has been specifically allocated to the programme 'Research for the benefit of SMEs'.

There are two dedicated measures in the programme – Research for SMEs, which is designed to support groups of innovative companies solve their technological problems; and Research for SME associations, which helps groups of SMEs tackle problems common to a large number of enterprises in specific sectors.

## A platform for growth

One of the advantages for SMEs working within the Research for the benefit of SMEs programme is that they retain ownership of the research results and the intellectual property rights. This means that they can develop their concept further, explains Bernd Reichert, Head of Unit for Research and SMEs in the European Commission's DG Research.

SMEs can use the funding to subcontract research to independent research performers, such as universities. However, projects must be a collaboration between three SMEs, associations or groupings from three different EU countries or associated countries and two research performers that are independent from any other participant.

The rules of FP7 have been simplified to encourage SME participation and funding has been increased to 75% from the 50% available under FP6. There is also a guarantee fund to cover financial problems caused by defaulting project participants, which lowers the potential risks for partners.

But SMEs are not confined to one strand of funding from FP7, says Martine Diss from the Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation (EACI), the body that provides services to the Enterprise Europe Network.

"Almost all FP7 programmes are for SMEs – all the doors are open for them, and we are doing everything to encourage them to take part," insists Antonios Fysekidis, from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry.



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By June 2009, two and a half years into FP7, at least 60% of the 1 513 project contracts signed involved at least one SME. Participation was as high as 20% in Estonia and Ireland. Size is no obstacle to participation as evidenced by the fact that so far 30% of those involved are micro companies with fewer than 10 employees.

Network partners help SMEs to win research support from both FP7 and EU Structural Funds. Assistance ranges from providing general information about the programmes and the rules to finding suitable project partners, developing the project idea, helping

SMEs to identify their RTD needs and assisting SMEs in the preparation and coordination of project proposals.

## Closing the gap

The Structural Funds, designed to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion by reducing disparities in development among regions, also support research, innovation and enterprise.

Indeed the Structural Funds are increasingly emphasising the role of research and innovation as a crucial factor for regional development – something the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs has reinforced. EU investment under the Structural Funds for innovation and research in the period 2007-13 will be above €86 billion; but, unlike FP7, management of the Structural Funds is decentralised to regional or national bodies.

The Network partner in each region can help enterprises with information about the funding and rules specific to their area. Each Member State has developed one or more programmes that are tailored to their socio-economic challenges.

## More information

### SME Techweb

[ec.europa.eu/research/sme-techweb](http://ec.europa.eu/research/sme-techweb)  
[Seventh Framework Programme \(FP7\)](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/)

### The Structural Funds

[ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/atlas2007/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/atlas2007/index_en.htm)  
[ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/esf/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/index_en.htm)

65 Network partners serving SMEs in Italy

22 000 clients attending international brokerage events

# The Dutch experience

Network expert Jasper Hemmes has been advising SMEs on technology transfer for over sixteen years. A qualified engineer, he combines expertise and practical experience to help companies across the Netherlands.

**NAME:**  
JASPER HEMMES  
**JOB:**  
NETWORK EXPERT,  
SYNTENS  
**COUNTRY:**  
THE NETHERLANDS



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## **What does your work actually involve?**

Well, my main job is to visit companies and advise them on innovation management and new technology. I've also worked on technology transfer projects. I'm based in the north of the country, but Syntens has offices all over the Netherlands.

## **How does Syntens work? It seems to be a network within a network.**

Yes, it is really. It's a State-owned organisation with 12 regional offices and 250 consultants throughout the Netherlands. Basically we analyse how companies manage innovation and we draw up Innovation Action Plans for them. We are one of two Enterprise Europe Network partners in the country.

## **Just two? Does that complicate things?**

In fact, it's fine as we work closely together and all know each other. This means that it's easy to operate the Network's 'no wrong door' policy – if I can't answer a client's question I know who in the Network can.

## **So what kind of help are SMEs usually looking for?**

It normally breaks down into three areas – expertise, reliable partners and cultural advice. Most modern companies are so specialised that when they want to make a new product, they need outside expertise. We help them find the right people or a reliable partner. We also give advice on the difficult cultural aspects of doing business abroad.

## **Many SMEs are extremely busy just running their businesses, so is it hard to get them interested in new ventures?**

It can be, but we have found a method that is proving to be very successful. We ask clusters of clients to tell us what technology or business hot spots they would like to know more about and then organise missions based on their requests.

## **What kind of visits have you organised?**

Just recently clients in the construction and material industry chose to attend a Swedish project on sustainable building which included a visit to a green village. We had no problem finding takers for that trip, which we organised together with the Flanders consortium, and they came back with ideas and, in some cases, matches for their business.

## **How do you gauge whether the trips are actually useful?**

We are careful about this. We get the companies to give us feedback to let us know how satisfied they were and what impact the mission has had on their business. We then use this to provide more assistance and judge the quality of our service.

## **Your background is in advising SMEs on technology transfer – but it seems to me that the work of the Network involves more than technology transfer.**

It does, a lot more, largely because successful innovation is not just about finding and applying high tech, you have to create the right environment – we help SMEs do this.

## **That's a big undertaking. If you had to describe the Network in just two words, what would they be?**

We do all sorts of things, but if I had to pick just two words I'd say 'innovative matchmaking' – that's the core of what we do.

## **Innovation is a big concept, what do you think it means for business?**

Well, for a company to successfully innovate it must have access to knowledge networks, have the right ambition, find a good strategy, find the right people to work with and install a culture that allows new things to happen. The Network can help with all of this.

## **You cover a lot and must get some interesting requests; can you share one with us?**

Sure, I have an example that shows how useful the Network can be even with the most specific requests. We had a small Dutch-based company that needed to measure particles in liquid that are smaller than the wavelength of light that is normally used to measure them. Our technology request was picked up by a Network colleague in London who referred them to a professor in Southampton working on a similar project. He couldn't help, but he knew of another professor in Kiev who is now working with our client.

## **That worked out well. Do you always get good results?**

Of course, we encounter problems sometimes. One of the difficulties I come across is companies that are looking for partners but then can't deliver what they promised. This can be because they are too small, too ambitious or their technology is poor. The Network is planning to develop the innovative capacities of such businesses – so this should be less of a problem. —●

### **Get in touch**

Jasper Hemmes

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## Events



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The Enterprise Europe Network partners host, co-organise or participate in a variety of events to promote their activities and help SMEs find business partners at regional, national or European level. This calendar gives you a taste of some of the upcoming events organised by the Network.

You can check them out online and get further information at:

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/public/calendar/home.cfm>

	EVENTS	
NOVEMBER 2010	02/11/2010	MIDEST, Paris, France
	04/11/2010	Extremadura Agrofood Marketplace 2010, brokerage event, Don Benito (Badajoz), Spain
	12/11/2010	ITN – Infrastructure, Telematics & Navigation, Torino, Italy
	17/11/2010	Matchmaking event at Sicurezza 2010, Milan, Italy
	18/11/2010	Healthcare brokerage event at Medica 2010, Düsseldorf, Germany
	24/11/2010	Technology and Business brokerage event within Renexpo South-East Europe 2010, Bucharest, Romania
DECEMBER 2010	01/12/2010	AgroMatch – Matchmaking at Agromek 2010, Herning, Denmark
	08/12/2010	Pro'Energy on Energaia: Technological Business meeting on renewable energies, Montpellier, France
JANUARY 2011	25/01/2011	Be2Ween@Terratect/Enertec 2011, Leipzig, Germany
	19-23/01/2011	International Tourism Trade Fair (FITUR), Madrid, Spain
FEBRUARY 2011	16/02/2011	Egética-Expoenergética: II Technology and Business cooperation event – Energy, Water and Wastes brokerage event, Valencia, Spain
MARCH 2011	18/03/2011	BUD-GRYF & ENERGIA brokerage event for construction and energy sector, Szczecin, Poland
	25/03/2011	WOOD Meetings 2011, Namur, Belgium
NOVEMBER 2011	07/11/2011	BATIMAT - Sustainable Construction matchmaking event, Paris, France