

**Executive summary:**

The MAPEER SME project aimed to support programme managers of regional, national and European level research, technology development and innovation (RTDI) programmes on how to redesign their programmes in order to make them (more) attractive to SMEs. In order to be able to provide well balanced, and by the SMEs fully supported recommendations MAPEER partners implemented several activities in the 27 EU member states + in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

First of all, 28 national level analysis reports have been completed in the 28 targeted countries analysing the available national or regional level programmes supporting the SMEs' RTDI activities. In parallel 28 national level reports have been elaborated on the SMEs' needs and barriers dealing with the SMEs' experienced problems and positive cases, as well as their needs and future expectations regarding RTDI programmes.

Based on the national reports EU level analysis reports have been prepared. Three programme clusters have been identified and corresponding characteristics defined in the EU level programme report: sectoral cluster (64 programmes), SME-targeted cluster (57 programmes), open cluster (64 programmes).

The EU level analysis of the SMEs' needs and barriers provide an overview of the SMEs experiences and future expectations regarding national and regional level RTDI programmes. The reports have been presented to the national and EU level stakeholders and their feedback was requested.

A third EU level comparative analysis report has been also elaborated that compares the results of the previous two EU level analysis and converts the results into recommendations.

One of the projects most important activities was the establishment and continuous operation of the European Experts' Panel on Research by SMEs. This panel consisting mostly of SMEs and SME stakeholders was supporting the project partners in the elaboration of the above mentioned 16 recommendations. Some of the preliminary conclusions have been presented before 20 May 2011 to the FP8 open consultation while the final ones have been handed over to European Commission, European Parliament and SME stakeholders. Particular hand over has been made to Dr. Paul Rübig (Austrian MEP), who is member of the SME Global that raises the awareness of SME issues within the European Parliament.

The elaborated reports, the recommendations as well as further corresponding document are available at the project's website (see <http://www.mapeer-sme.eu> onlin) where a special service has been developed to support the interested parties. Due to the so called Back office the visitor can browse among 200 national or regional level RTDI programmes and learn good practises from other countries, he can find all elaborated reports as well as can find contact information to programmes managers in 28 countries. Through the offline service interested stakeholder can ask questions from the experts (consortium) and MAPEER ensures that their questions will be answered within a short period.

Due to the characteristic of the project several communication activities have been carried out among others national workshops and 2 annual conferences were organised and emphasis has been put also on the on-line communication as well.

## **Project Context and Objectives:**

It is a well-known fact that SMEs play a key role in the European economy since SMEs are the majority of the European enterprises (99,8%) and they give the European economic contribution which counts for about 60% of the European employment. There are many initiatives and programmes designed for SMEs that are supporting their activities in different fields and in different parts of their life cycle.

There are currently hundreds of Research, Technology Development and Innovation (RTDI) supporting programmes open for SMEs in Europe. Each and every country has its own set of programmes at national and regional level that are facilitating the SMEs' RTDI activities and they use different methods in order to reach their final objectives.

Despite the wide range of programmes the SMEs' participation does not reach the expected level and therefore it does not fulfil the final objective namely to boost the European economy. Why don't more SMEs take part in the RTDI programmes? What are the main characteristics of those programmes where the SME participation is significant? How could we increase the SMEs' participation? What are their motivations? What problems and good cases did they experience? What recommendations could be given to the programme managers and programme designers that would help them to create more SME friendly programmes that would attract more SMEs? These were the main questions that the MAPEER SME project wanted and did answer.

MAPEER SME aimed to acquire a comprehensive insight into the design, implementation and impact of existing SME research and innovation support programmes and initiatives in the whole EU27 Member States plus in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The scope of this objective was to create the Common Knowledge Base necessary and then establish appropriate scientific advice and sustainable support mechanisms to assist the EC and national, regional policy makers to better define a strategy for future research and innovation actions in favour of SMEs in the European Research Area (ERA).

### **More specifically, MAPEER SME project had the following five main objectives:**

1. Provide a comprehensive, in-depth, horizontal and cross-sectoral analysis on SME research programmes and initiatives in terms of their structure, implementation modalities, methodologies used and their impact.

More specifically, MAPEER SME has:

- a. Identified and map EU27 (both at national and regional level) SME cross-sectoral research programmes and initiatives.
- b. Developed a state-of-the art and up-to-date Data Warehouse (available on-line) to act as a reference back-up repository for research and support initiatives in favour of SMEs.
- c. Performed a comparative analysis of already-implemented initiatives, programs and networks.

2. Identify end-users' (SMEs and EU Stakeholders) needs, requirements and feedback to overcome barriers for getting SMEs into research and innovation activities.

MAPEER SME have performed the following at EU27 level:

- a. Identify the "main actors" described in WP3
- b. Conduct face-to-face in-depth interviews and organize national roundtables to gather and assess inputs and worries.
- c. Running SWOT analysis to better identify weaknesses and threats as well as to improve understanding of strengths and opportunities SMEs face.

3. Organise synergies and initiate structured policy dialogue between the various players at EU and national, regional levels through the European Experts Panel on SMEs.

MAPEER SME organised a series of policy-related activities to communicate its interim results (Comparative Analysis 1st Version, SMEs needs, SME innovation strategies, and barriers to innovation, etc). The main goal was to communicate the created Common Knowledge Base on EU27 RTD SME programmes, and to initiate a policy dialogue on the related issues among the EC, national and regional policy makers and programme managers as well as SME Stakeholders towards a better strategy for the future RTD and innovation actions in favour of SMEs (at European and Member State level).

The European Experts Panel on SMEs actively contributed to this objective (check WP4 for further details). The scope of this objective were to collect feedback on stakeholders' views and set up initial recommendations for redefined future RTD / innovation support measures.

4. Provide a comprehensive, comparative analysis and recommendations for a new strategy and support measures that better address the needs of SMEs Based on the outcomes of the policy dialogue and the feedback collected, MAPEER concluded its analysis by elaborating a comprehensive final comparative analysis including specific recommendations for a new strategy and support measures which better address the needs of SMEs by fully exploiting the synergies between various policy measures at EU, national and regional levels. There are vast differences within SMEs community especially when it comes to innovation and taking part in research projects to innovate. SME profiling/characterization (based on e.g. size, age, R&D capability, industry/service, sector, etc.) which are described in point B 1.3.2.

5. Set-up and establish appropriate and sustainable mechanisms to identify new ideas and measures of interest for the EC, the national and regional (EU27) policy makers and SME research programme managers (from S&T related Ministries, national and regional research agencies and intermediaries) as well as SME Stakeholders

The final objective of the project was to create appropriate and sustainable mechanisms of rules, procedures, perspectives which can be considered by EC and national / regional policy makers as well as SME Stakeholders (from sectoral industrial groupings and organizations, such as chambers of commerce or professional organizations).

For this scope MAPEER SME includes the establishment of two main mechanisms:

- a. The 'European Expert Panel on SMEs' (described in WP4).
- b. The 'European BackOffice Service' (described in WP5). MAPEER SME has set up and run a permanent mechanism with up-to-date information on SME RTD policies / programmes at EC and EU27 level and to provide permanent

and comprehensive support services to EC policy makers and SME RTD programme managers, intermediaries and SME stakeholders.

## **Project Results:**

All activities of the MAPEER SME project have been performed keeping in mind the achievement of the following objectives:

- Provide a comprehensive, in-depth, horizontal and cross-sectoral analysis on SME research programmes and initiatives in terms of their structure, implementation modalities, methodologies used and their impact.
- Identify end-users' (SMEs and EU Stakeholders) needs, requirements and feedback to overcome barriers for getting SMEs into research and innovation activities.
- Organise synergies and initiate structured policy dialogue between the various players at EU and national, regional levels through the European Experts Panel on SMEs.
- Provide a comprehensive, comparative analysis and recommendations for a new strategy and support measures that better address the needs of SMEs
- Set-up and establish appropriate and sustainable mechanisms to provide advice to the EC, the national and regional (EU27+ BiH) policy makers and SME research programme managers (from S&T related Ministries, national and regional research agencies and intermediaries) as well as SME Stakeholders

In order to achieve the above mentioned objectives a well balanced consortium has been built (covering 14 countries as well as additional country responsibilities have been assigned to the consortium members so that the partners finally cover the whole European Union + Bosnia and Herzegovina). The additional country responsibilities were mainly solved by hiring subcontractors who were responsible for supporting the MAPEER consortium partners in the local activities. The project's duration was 26 months, starting on 1 November 2009 and finishing on 31 December 2011. During these 26 months the project reached all its main objectives mentioned above.

During the first year of the project, MAPEER SME's main focus was to analyse national and regional research support programmes that are either currently open or already finished serving this way a good basis for analysis and conclusion drawing as well as to collect the views and experience of SMEs regarding their participation in, benefits from and potential barriers hindering their participation in regional or national research, technology development and innovation (RTDI) programmes.

As first steps, MAPEER partners have defined the methodology of how to gather information at regional and national level on RTDI programmes and initiatives as well as how to collect information from the SMEs and SME representative organisations on the SMEs' needs and barriers in relationship with RTDI programmes. The methodology guided each partner in the collection of data, provided templates for this activity as well as for the reports to be prepared, it described how to prepare the reports, that ensured that the 28 national reports are comparable with each other and contain high added value information. The methodology dealt also with the feedback provision activity which has been carried out in the second half of the project by each partner in each country in order to verify the data and the analysis as well as to disseminate the results.

During the second year of the project MAPEER partners were focusing on the finalisation of the national reports, elaborating the EU level compendium reports and comparative analysis reports as well as to design and finalise the recommendations of the European Experts' Panel on

Research by SMEs. All the above mentioned activities have been complemented by communication and dissemination activities.

The following sections describe the main activities and results that the MAPEER SME consortium has achieved.

### **1.1 Analysis of the RTDI programmes in the 28 countries**

According to the methodology and the project's plans in the bigger European member states like Germany or Spain 12 RTDI programmes while in the smaller member states and in BiH 6 programmes have been analysed.

As a first step the respective programmes had to be identified in each country. Partners had to ensure the balance between national and regional level programmes in each country (this was a critical point in the bigger countries where many potential programmes have been identified) when selecting the programmes to be analysed.

In order to ensure that the most up-to-date information is used for the programme analysis MAPEER partners established contact with the programme managers in the respective countries, collected qualitative, quantitative and SME specific information through interviews and round table discussions. Based on the available and collected data 28 national level programme reports have been elaborated that summarises the findings in each country.

The single reports include national key-data and information as regards the following:

- a) the national research and innovation policy, system and performance including an overview of the programme profiles. This section also includes, among others, the national strengths and weaknesses when it comes to research and innovation and SMEs
- b) main industrial sectors and data on their R&D performance
- c) main structure of SMEs landscape including SME profiles, size, sectors, research and innovation barriers, etc. taking into account the results of the surveys and interviews carried out under WP3.

The national reports address:

- a) the approach of regional and national policies/programmes towards SMEs and research and innovation,
- b) SME innovation process and relevant needs, barriers and interests,
- c) key strengths and weaknesses of country and its SMEs as regards research and innovation,
- d) barriers, key success and failure factors of SME supporting research programmes in general within the specific national context,
- e) key-drivers and opportunities for the development of such programmes and initiatives.

The above listed information is structured under three main sections in each national report as follows. To start off, chapter two (of each national report) aims at providing an overview of the national institutional environment and policy in this context, while chapter three gives an impression of the respective country's SME landscape. Finally, in the fourth section of the report, a selection of typical programmes is presented and analyzed on their impact on the local economy. This way, a realistic, bottom-up picture of the national practice of R&D&I promotion has been drawn.

The national level reports' publishable versions are available for downloading at the project's website <http://www.mapeer-sme.eu> as part of the so called Back office service (further information on the Back office service will be provided in section 1.5). The analysed almost 200 programmes' data are available also at the project website's dedicated area where the visitor can browse between the programmes and see their most important characteristics.

Based on the national level reports on the available RTDI programmes for SMEs an EU level analysis report has been elaborated. The final compendium consolidates and integrates findings from 28 national reports with the objective to provide an in-depth comparative analysis of approximately 200 RTD SME supporting programmes and initiatives throughout Europe. A two-fold approach has been followed for conducting the comparative programme analysis:

- 1) Drawing on the analysis of key relevant R&D, innovation and SME data per country from 28 national reports, an overall R&D and innovation performance as well as the SME landscape throughout Europe has been presented.
- 2) In order to make sense out of a broad range of RTD SME supporting programmes in the EU-27 and Bosnia and Herzegovina a cluster analysis have been conducted. Basically all programmes have been grouped based on the similarity of programme managers' responses to several variables. The final cluster analysis identified relevant commonalities and differences as well as best practice measures among 185 RTD SME-related programmes.

The identified clusters are as follows:

- 1) sectoral cluster (64 programmes)
- 2) SME-targeted cluster (57 programmes)
- 3) open cluster (64 programmes).

These three programme clusters show not only a well-balanced structure, but also peculiar, distinguishing and clear-cut characteristics.

The programmes in the 'SME - targeted cluster', presenting the highest SME participation (85%) and success rates (77%) do not usually have any specific thematic focus. This cluster of programmes seems to focus more on innovation related support targeting the development of new products, services and processes, enabling not only cooperation and technology/knowledge transfer, but also creation of start-ups or spin-offs.

Programme features of the SME-targeted cluster include:

- higher funding rates to SMEs (around 80%);
- short time-to-contract (shorter than 3 months for the highest share of programmes);
- simple administrative and reporting procedures;
- full ownership of research results by SMEs; and
- relatively small projects (such as Innovation Vouchers).

The SME-targeted cluster is often composed of technology-transfer programmes, which are open to SME in any sector and aim at transferring technology and knowledge into practice by fostering collaborative projects between industry and academia. Small-scale, but SME-friendly initiatives, like Innovation Voucher Programmes can be named as illustrative examples for this type of programmes.

The two other clusters present lower SME participation rates (50% for the 'sectoral' and 61% for the 'open' cluster) and success rates, respectively (38% and 54%), respectively. The 'sectoral' cluster programmes support SMEs in specific sectors such as ICT, manufacturing, biotechnology and environmental technology.

The programmes in the sectoral cluster are usually characterised by:

- relatively high funding rates (68%); but
- rather long time-to-contract (shorter than 3 months for only 17% of the programmes); and
- simple administrative requirements and procedures.

The 'open' cluster includes programmes neither targeted by size, nor sector. Most of these programmes are designed to enhance the establishment of innovation networks and clusters among companies and S&T organisations. The 'open cluster' features include

- low funding rates to SMEs (ca. 10%);
- rather long time-to-contract (with 50% of the programmes taking longer than 6 months); and
- full ownership of research results by SMEs;
- requirement for the market research to be linked to the proposal (62%).

### **Key Objectives of the Three Programme Clusters**

#### **Sectoral Cluster**

- Support research-intensive SME in specific industries
- Improve the competitiveness of firms in specific sectors
- Promote co-operation projects in key industries (i.e. within clusters)
- Increase the share of innovative and R&D performing SME in specific sectors
- Support research and product development in certain fields

#### **SME- targeted cluster**

- Improve cooperation between research organizations and SME through technology transfer
- Enhance R&D capabilities of SME
- Facilitate innovation of SME
- Support high-tech start-ups
- Support technology-oriented SME

#### **Open Cluster**

- Enhance innovation capabilities and support SME to get involved in R&D
- Increase the share of SME with R&D capacities in strategic sectors
- Support the development of highly innovative prototypes
- Encourage export-oriented development of products/services
- Enhance networking and clustering of SME

Summing up, programmes pertaining to the SME-targeted and open clusters had been identified as containing most SME-friendly measures, as reflected by high SME participation and success rates, speedy and simple administrative, reporting and evaluation procedures as well as the SME's full ownership of research results generated within the projects. However, in case of open cluster programmes, fairly low funding rates for SME (10%) diminish this overall positive assessment. In order to see the best practise elements identified in the Programme Clusters please check the Best Practice Element as identified among Programme Clusters attachment.

Given that data is not available in all cases, some of the results of the study had been based on only parts of the programmes and hence have a limited broader validity. However, since missing data are more often than not an inevitable issue in economic evaluations the project tried to maximise the usage of available data by using certain missing data techniques. Furthermore, according to the editors views the compendium should be regarded as a source of inspiration and reflection, rather than an integral blue print for SME policymakers. In this sense, it provides some valuable indications and pinpoints some trends for designing SME-friendly technology-oriented programmes.

Moreover, following measures had been ranked as being the most SME-friendly across the EU-27 and Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- 1) focusing on the SMEs' needs of concrete and short-term R&D results in the programme design, including the close-to-the-market phase (i.e. following a demand-driven approach),
- 2) providing personal counselling, mentoring and mediation to SMEs before and during the project by a key contact person (most often project officer),
- 3) cutting red tape in terms of simplifying overall reporting and administrative requirements and adopting speedy assessment procedures.

The EU level compendium of RTDI programmes for SMEs is also available for downloading at the project's website.

## **1.2 SMEs' needs and barriers reports**

In parallel with the elaboration of the national reports on the available RTDI funding programmes the SMEs' involvement in regional/national or European RTDI programmes have been also analysed. It has been defined in the methodology how many RTD programme active and inactive SMEs have to be contacted and interviewed in order to receive a picture of their thoughts, experiences and expectations regarding RTDI programmes. In the bigger countries, like Spain or Germany 40 RTD programme active and 20 RTD programme inactive SMEs have been set as target, while in the smaller countries 20 RTD programme active and 10 RTD programme inactive SMEs. Beside the SMEs partners were contacting also SME representative organisations like associations and clusters that could provide the views of their members in regard of more general issues (like what are the general problems of SMEs when planning participation in RTDI programmes or what programmes have been widely mentioned and favoured by the membership and why).

As a first step relevant SMEs and SME stakeholders have been identified in each country. MAPEER partners conducted interviews with RTD programme active and inactive SMEs, organised round table discussion in order to collect the views of SMEs on their experiences in regard of these programmes, more specifically on the gained or expected benefits from the RTDI programmes and their barriers hindering them to apply for projects. The results and conclusions of the responses are summarized in the 28 national reports on the needs and barriers of SMEs in regard of RTDI programmes. As in case of the programme reports, mentioned above, 28 reports have been elaborated on the SMEs' experiences and expectations as well.

The national level reports aim to provide detailed information on the respective national SME landscape and structure, provide the detailed analysis of the MAPEER SME survey results, identify SMEs'

characteristics, needs and barriers to research and innovation, provide national level recommendations thus contribute to the findings that would enable introduction of more effective and efficient SME R&D programmes.

An EU level analysis report has been elaborated on the SMEs' needs, experiences and expectations regarding RTDI programmes that consolidates and presents the results of the SME survey (carried out throughout Europe) which are based on the answers collected from a questionnaire and face-to-face interviews with SMEs and SME's representatives by 27 European Member States plus Bosnia Herzegovina.

**The EU-level analysis presents findings with respect to:**

- Benefits and problems regarding national/regional RTD programmes at cross-sectoral level
- Reasons for not participating in national/regional and EU RTD programmes
- General needs and barriers/obstacles to RTD and innovation activities at cross-sectoral level
- Key success factors based on MAPEER SME survey results
- Recommendations on how to overcome barriers to RTD and innovation from the different points of view (SMEs and SME stakeholders)

It produced 764 complete interviews with SMEs distributed by EU Member States. It was targeted to the population of small and medium-sized enterprises with less than 250 full-time employees and an annual turnover of less than 50 million Euros (EU Definition). The sectors targeted include the Health & Social work sector, the ICT sector, the Transport, Storage and Communication sector, the Environmental Technology sector, the Service sector and the Manufacturing sector.

Profiles of all surveyed SMEs (n=764)

**Some characteristics of the surveyed SMEs at the time of the survey:**

- All companies corresponded to the EU criteria of an SME
- Majority were RTD programme active (56% participated in at least one RTD programme in the last 5 years)
- Majority were micro-sized SMEs (48% had less than 10 full-time employees and an annual turnover of less than 2 million Euros)
- Majority (51%) of SMEs were 10-29 years old (55% of the RTD programme active and 45% of the RTD programme inactive SMEs)
- Majority were from New Member States (42%)
- Majority of answers were received from SMEs in manufacturing sector (41%) and ICT sector (32%)
- Majority belonged to the low RTD capacity group (44%)
- Only 27% of SMEs were located in a Technology park and 23% were integrated in a cluster/technology platform

**SME groups**

In order to better assess and compare the differences and commonalities between the SMEs specific SME groups in form of RTD capacity groups have been set up based upon the share of full-time employees dedicated to RTD, the annual RTD income and expenditures, and the job positions created or sustained as a result of introducing new or substantially improved products or processes. For the EU level analysis only two RTD capacity

groups were taken into consideration in order to undertake a deeper analysis.

- Low RTD capacity group
- High RTD capacity group

These two RTD capacity groups were analysed taking different regions, sizes and RTD programme activities of SMEs into account.

In order to see the RTD capacity groups' chart please check the RTD capacity groups attachment.

### **Main problems faced during project participation**

The main problems faced during participation in R&I programmes were related to the project itself but also to external problems. The major problem was 'complex reporting requirements' which was mostly marked by low as well as high R&D capacity firms coming from the new Member States (NMS) followed by those in Southern Europe (SE). Indeed, in most of the new MS and Southern Europe countries the administrative requirements as well as the procedures until contract signatures for the programmes recorded were usually considered as time-consuming and complex.

The next major problems had to do with the guidance provided by the project officers during the project as well as at the exploitation phase. This was mainly marked by low as well as high R&D firms coming from Southern Europe. 'Low technical understanding of project officers' was also noted as a problem by low and high R&D firms in South Europe and high R&D firms in North Europe. This may reflect a possible drawback in terms of human resources available by programme managing authorities in the respective countries. From the external problems, inappropriate general economic conditions were marked by all types of SMEs (low as well as high R&D capacity) from new MS as well as Southern and Northern Europe reflecting the problems caused by the recent financial crises.

### **Main reasons for not participating in R&D programmes**

The major reasons for not participating in R&D programmes reflect the main problems faced during participation as mentioned above. Thus, they are of financial and administrative nature. Financial barriers are more pronounced for firms from SE (inability to get loans, provide bank guarantees, unavailability of add sources and low funding rates) and also micro - sized low R&D capacity firms as also noted above.

In relation to administrative barriers, complex reporting is mostly marked by high R&D firms from Northern Europe (NE) and not transparent evaluation procedures for high R&D firms from NE and new MS. Long times (evaluation periods, time-to-funding, time-to-contract) is mostly noted by high R&D firms from SE. Long time to funding is also marked by high as well as low R&D firms from new MS who also marked bureaucratic application procedure. Bureaucratic application procedures were noted also by low R&D firms in all regions but less so in NE. Indeed most programmes in these countries (SE and new MS) suffer from complex administrative requirements and procedures as well as long time-to-contract and funding.

The reasons for not participating in EU programmes are relatively similar to those in national / regional programmes. However, the EU programmes

present additional reasons of non-participation reflecting the limited ability especially of low R&D firms from SE to cover the special requirements of EU programmes in relation to project management and networks with potential partners. Naturally, the limited marketing of programmes is more marked for EU than national programmes.

### **General barriers in undertaking research and innovation activities**

The MaPEER study puts forth some additional elements in terms of general barriers that SME face in undertaking research and innovation activities. In line with the current literature the types of barriers that stand out are the financial barriers, marked the most by high R&D micro SMEs reflecting the importance of access to funds for micro high R&D firms as well as the overall shortage of for instance venture capital funds or seed capital in the national contexts. Programme-related barriers in relation to procedures and requirements were also marked. At the same time 'lack of access to information about programmes', 'lack of access to external knowledge', 'limited knowledge of the advantages of R&D and innovation', and 'lack of information on technologies and markets' were also noted by low R&D firms. This may reflect the lack of linkages between research and innovation as well as the limited demand for innovation in the local markets, and thus the limited acknowledgement of the related benefits.

The national level reports as well as the EU level compendium on the SMEs' needs, expectations and experiences regarding RTDI funding programmes are available for downloading at the project website.

### **1.3 EU level Comparative Analysis report**

Combining and further elaborating the previously described reports the Comparative Analysis serves three main purposes, i.e. to understand commonalities and differences in relation to the features of existing national/regional programmes supporting SMEs as well as in SME behaviour and perceptions about the main needs and barriers in participating in research and innovation activities; secondly, to identify good practice elements and programmes and thirdly, to suggest specific ways forward.

The MAPEER study contributed significantly to the existing knowledge base of SME support programmes by gathering information about a number of national / regional programmes supporting research and innovation (187 in total of EU27 plus BiH). By examining their differences and commonalities a typology was created based on the share of programme budget going to SMEs, the funding rates to SMEs and the thematic focus of the programmes. (In section 1.1 you can find more information on the identified programme clusters)

MAPEER also revealed differences across different R&D capacity groups of SMEs in relation to their problems, needs and barriers in engaging in research and innovation activities. These differences reflect the weaknesses and strengths of the national / regional programmes in their home countries but also different awareness levels about innovation and its requirements and benefits and different levels of programme participation. (In section 1.2 you can find more information on the SMEs' needs, barriers and expectations regarding RTDI programmes)

More specifically, the main problems faced during participation in R&I programmes were related to 'complex reporting requirements'. This was

mostly marked by low as well as high R&D capacity firms coming from the new Member States (NMS ) followed by those in Southern Europe (SE ). Long times (evaluation periods, time-to-funding, time-to-contract) were also noted mostly by high R&D firms from SE while long time to funding was marked by low as well as high R&D firms from NMS. These differences are verified by the features of the respective national programmes. Indeed most programmes in the SE and NMS countries suffer from complex administrative requirements and procedures as well as long time-to-contract and time-to-funding as recorded in the MaPEer National Programme Reports.

The other type of problems noted was of financial nature. In particular, it was the 'unavailability of additional sources of finance'. This was marked by both low and high R&D capacity firms in NMS and SE but also by high R&D firms in Northern Europe (NE ). This reflects a general absence of multiple financial sources in the specific national contexts which was also verified as one of the major reasons for not participating in R&I programmes. In addition, the general inability to get loans and risk guarantees was marked as a major reason for not participating especially by SMEs in SE and NMS. 'Inadequacy of complementary support measures' was also highlighted as another problem during programme participation especially by SME in SE but also high R&D capacity SMEs in NE. The noted 'inadequacy' possibly indicates a gap of measures to support research and innovation closer to the market thus covering the whole innovation chain, which was indeed acknowledged in most of the MaPEer National Programme Reports.

Overall, administrative burdens and financial problems were the major problems both while participating in projects as well as reasons for not participating. The different nature of these problems before and during participation calls for a multiple-perspective and integrated approach in dealing with them.

A call for higher funding rates was also expressed by SMEs when asked to identify the most important needs for participating in research and innovation programmes. This was noted as a need by SMEs in all R&D capacity groups, across all regions and sizes. However, the need for higher funding rates has to be treated with caution. Given the context - specificities of funding rates (they can be different between different actions in the same programme, let alone across different programmes and countries) it deserves careful examination as 'higher' may have different meanings in different contexts.

Issues of financial and administrative nature were also stressed as the main overall barriers for undertaking research and innovation activities. In the case of SMEs from SE however, it was awareness and knowledge-related barriers that followed the financial barriers in rank, reflecting lack of linkages between research and innovation, limited demand for innovation in the local markets, and limited awareness of innovation and its related benefits.

In line with the barriers and needs identified, SMEs noted certain good practice elements that would contribute to making a programme successful in attracting SMEs. These include:

- Administration elements: simple administrative requirements and procedures, short times-to-contract and funding;
- Financing elements: high funding rates, and improved access to finance;

- Awareness and counselling elements: provision of personal counselling, mentoring and mediation to SMEs before and during the project, and improved publicity and marketing of the programmes.

Certain programmes were identified to present most of these elements. It is interesting that good practice programmes were identified across all the three programme clusters, and not mainly from the SME-targeted cluster as one might expect.

Concluding, SMEs, SME stakeholders and programme managers made several recommendations reflecting the specific problems, needs and barriers noted above. These can be grouped under four main categories:

- Recommendations related to programme design: improve the accessibility of programmes to SMEs by covering all sectors and sizes of SMEs, apply a demand-driven approach by focusing more on SME needs, develop measures to support access to market and faster commercialisation of R&D results;
- Recommendations related to programme administration and funding: cutting red tape, simplifying reporting and administrative requirements, ensure transparent evaluation procedures, shorten time-to-contract and time-to-funding, and increase funding rates;
- Recommendations related to broader financial issues: improve access to risk finance, lower barriers on access to external funds / financing, increase tax incentives;
- Recommendations related to knowledge and networks: increase promotion and marketing of programmes; provide counselling, mentoring and assistance to SMEs before and during the project, create networks between industry and knowledge institutions.

The European Experts' Panel on SMEs and Research created under MaPEer addressed the total of the above recommendations with very concrete suggestions. The Panel also made more generic recommendations dealing with the overall barriers to SMEs in undertaking research and innovation activities. These included, among others, adopting 'open innovation' practices to foster better inter-firm collaboration, fostering pre-commercial procurement to stimulate innovation, or intensifying the dissemination of good practices between the EU and national levels. It is imperative that these recommendations are taken up at national and EU level. (In the next section you can read more on the activities of the European Experts' Panel)

**The comparative analysis report is accessible at the project's website.**

#### **1.4 Recommendations of the European Experts' Panel on Research by SMEs**

The knowledge gained due to the above mentioned activities is one of the most important input sources of the European Experts' Panel on Research by SMEs that have been established in order to support the MAPEER SME consortium in defining recommendations to policy makers and programme managers/designers on how to create more SME friendly RTDI programmes in the future.

The Panel, established by the MAPEER SME project, is a think tank consisting of European SMEs, SME representative organisations, like chambers, associations or other networks that have been appointed by the MAPEER partners. In order to see the constitution charts of the Panel at the end of the project please open the corresponding attached charts (Number of accepted members).

The recommendations/measures document has been continuously developed during the project and finalised in the last months of the project with the active contributions of the European Experts Panel's members. Some of its preliminary conclusions have already been presented before 20 May 2011 to the EC consultation while the one of the biggest potential of the document is that it has been presented and handed over to Dr. Paul Rübig (Austrian MEP), who is member of the SME Circle that raises the awareness of SME issues within the European Parliament. With the help of Dr. Rübig the recommendations can reach many policy makers dealing with SME issues and can influence the local policy making to implement the recommendations at national or regional level in the Member States of the EU and in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

The coordinator received appreciative words from the office of Mr Rübig and also promising engagements that they might be taken into consideration during different topic related arguments.

The recommendations of the EEP-SME have been included in the NEM European Technology Platform's Consistency and 2012-2013 Programme too.

The Panel members met physically three times.

The Panel members met physically three times:

- first in Brussels on 16 November 2010 where a in the frame of small working groups both the barriers of SMEs and possible "solutions" have been identified by the members allowing this way the further development of the measures document,
- on 24 February 2011 in Budapest, in the frame of the first annual MAPEER conference and finally
- on 5 October 2011 in Brussels. Beside the personal meetings the panel members communicated via e-mail with the Panel's secretariat and presented their contributions to the documents.

The consultations were coordinated by the Panel's secretariat and it was supported by the MAPEER partners.

Although the EEP-SME has elaborated about 27 independent recommendations on very specific topics; subsequently, these overall set of recommendations have been grouped into common concepts and topics for the sake of clarity, communication and better understanding, resulting in total of 16 Recommendations.

The following groups of recommendations have been identified:

- Recommendations related to programme design (P.DESIGN): improve the accessibility of programmes to SMEs by covering all sectors and sizes of SMEs, apply a demand-driven approach by focusing more on SME needs, develop measures to support access to market and faster commercialisation of R&D results;
- Recommendations related to programme implementation (P.IMPLEMENT) covering aspects as administration and funding: cutting red tape, simplifying reporting and administrative requirements, ensure transparent evaluation procedures, shorten time-to-contract and time-to-funding, and increase funding rates;
- Recommendations related to broader Exploitation and pre-commercialization of research results (P.EXPLOITATION), covering aspects as financial issues, improve access to risk finance, lower barriers on access to external funds / financing, increase tax incentives;

- Recommendations related to knowledge sharing and networking (P.NET): increase promotion and marketing of programmes; provide counselling, mentoring and assistance to SMEs before and during the project, create networks between industry and knowledge institutions.

Here is provided a summary list of all recommendations which have been raised by the European Experts Panel on SME and Research.

Recommendation P.DESIGN 1. Adapt the Research Programmes to the context of the SME and evaluate the impact of the results of the project consistently with the SMEs abilities and their benefits. Focus the impact criterion to the expectations of the SMEs. The evaluation process has to be consistent with the overall purpose of the Calls; if the Calls move from "pure excellence" towards "excellence and exploitability of results-benefits for the community", the evaluation and review procedures of any R&D programme would be closer to the market and exploitation phase of the research; as many SMEs do work in the area of closer/immediate applicability of research results, the programmes would be more attractive to the SMEs. Provide SME direct work-programme influencing mechanism beyond the large players. EU Supra-projects should not be the main target since invariably they exclude/limit SME engagement at least to later stages whereas innovation. Apply the successful experiences based on the Small Business Innovation Research. Do not motivate large consortium unnecessarily.

Recommendation P.DESIGN 2. Target a minimum participation of SMEs in relevant research and innovation programmes, including large initiatives like European Technology Platforms (ETP), Join Technology Initiatives (JTI) or Private-Public-Partnerships (PPP). Inspect running projects and if no reached the minimum share of SME participation, require open calls to add SMEs in the projects. The political target of 30 % participation of SMEs in any research and innovation programme should be adopted in a similar way as the 3% investment on R&D&I with respect to overall GDP have become an accepted target all over Europe, irrespective of the difficulties to achieve this figure by some countries and sectors. SME should play their role in the RTD programmes and not restricted to carry out their innovation activity in other programmes (Cohesion Funds).

Recommendation P.DESIGN 3. Implement good practices based on Open Innovation, facilitating the adoption of open innovation practices to foster better inter-firm collaboration (ie. SME-SME and SME-Large firms to create new business models). Accept, encourage and facilitate co-operation among firms including their suppliers, customers and stakeholders recognizing also that SME play double function: as outsourced firms to carry out research (Subcontracted specialized research entities) and also as users of R&D results instead of being sources of R&D.

Recommendation P.DESIGN 4. Redefine the SMEs categorization in several groups: Micro, Small and Medium size Enterprises with different participating rules and intensity of the state aid. Launch very small research projects concept where SMEs can be important players, similarly as some good practices as those based on the Eurostars programme.

Recommendation P.DESIGN 5. Focus, transparency and Rationalization. Calls for submission of project proposals to R&D&i programmes should be better focused, clearly identifying the roles and possibilities for SMEs. Selected proposals or proposals having met the minimum requirements or

proposals having exceeded the threshold should have some reimbursement due to the proposal preparation costs. Make proposal submissions anonymous (or at least anonymous in two step) particularly for small projects such as STREPs. Set up mechanism for two step process to directly minimise efforts of submission, restrict the number of proposals one party can be in to reduce proposal manufacturing and restrict the number of projects one party can be in to encourage openness to others

Recommendation P.DESIGN 6. Funding levels. Ensure that funding to SME is allocated to its maximum allowed by the programme. Create incentives for tax deductions due to investment on R&D&I projects. The possibility to complement grants with loans should be explored. SMEs may benefit from having access to the 100% of the overall cost of their investment in the R&D projects (for example: 75% may be direct grants and 25% loans on advantage conditions).

Recommendation P.IMPLEMENT 7. Simplify the rules and all associated administrative burden. Follow similar principles as those applied by the Tax authorities: a posteriori, checks. In particular, simplify the procedures and remove the need to submit the financial guarantees by the SMEs when getting involved in the research projects.

Recommendation P.IMPLEMENT 8. Reasonable Consortia. Allow the ideas and the projects to flow to research and technology development. Creation of large consortia at the early stages of research is not necessary. "Think Small First" principle should be applied during the evaluation process of any research proposal, to avoid the current disincentive and de-encourage of SME participation in proposals preparation as the SMEs impact uses to be limited. However the organization of large and ambitious consortia may be necessary when preliminary encouraging technological results are got. Change the current concept from "powerful research" to "powerful exploitation". Fragmentation at the research stage is not a threat, but a power. Fragmentation is a risk at the later stages of exploiting results. Critical masses are certainly needed at the final stage of the innovation cycle, but are not strictly necessary for all research ventures in the early research stages of the innovation cycle; revert the current pyramid.

Recommendation P.IMPLEMENT 9. The Fair Evaluation, Reviewing and Auditing processes of R&D applications and project reviews should include mandatory an SME component. The views from industrial SMEs and SMEs in the market should be considered. SMEs participating in Consortium would feel at home if review is conducted by peer SMEs, rather than by scientists from Universities (with the temptation of too much theoretical approach of a project, far from the day to day market perspective) or from large Entities (who have completely different minds, time to market expectations, etc.). Significantly diminish the role of academic evaluators especially in impact related programs and replace with business orientated evaluators (SMEs, Large industry, venture capitalists). Make the evaluation score over a 100 point range with many more categories. Train evaluators and reviewers and ensure they do understand the business life of SMEs.

Recommendation P.IMPLEMENT 10. External Assistance. Integration of professional, external consultants during the application process and the project implementation can be very positive for many SMEs. Assistance of the appropriate ways to manage Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs).

Facilitate the regular practices of Virtual Extended Enterprise, as part of the Open Innovation model.

Recommendation P.EXPLOITATION 11. Support for the Pre-commercialization approach: the "Push" support towards exploitation of research results. Close the gap between the research activity and the potential exploitation of its results. Assist the consortia or individual partners having conducted research activities to approach to their potential customers. Programme Managers should organize meetings between R&D Consortia and users/buyers of technology throughout the life of the project and after having concluded. Promotion of contacts with Venture Capital and other needs regarding the exploitation of results, which SMEs would face after a research activity is carried out, should be promoted as a priority.

Recommendation P.EXPLOITATION 12. Pre-Commercial Procurement. The "Pull" support towards exploitation of research results by organizing Pre-commercial Procurement procedures oriented to facilitate the involvement of SMEs. Small innovative companies have trouble finding a first potential customer in Europe that wants to test their first prototype solutions. Creating stronger links between supply and demand sides, measures to stimulate innovation - R&D subsidy programs to firms and government acting as early adopter of new solutions under development - can help to reduce delocalization of high growth firms towards other regions of the world where the public sector is more receptive to act as first buyer of new innovations.

Recommendation P. LINK 13. European Network of SME Programmes. Enhance and extend the specific programmes designed for SMEs at National, Regional and European level. Enhance and extend the support to SMEs by the European Framework Programmes, in addition to support at National and Regional level. Do not leave the support to SMEs only by National and Regional programmes. The successful examples of the current FP7 Research for SMEs and SME Associations and the excellent SME participations in several Regional and National R&D programmes should be further extended and enhanced in the following Common Strategic Framework programme for R&D&Innovation. Research for SMEs programme is strictly required at European level. The support given to SMEs by Regional and National programmes, although useful and efficient, is not enough to build an European wide network of researchers where SME can contribute.

Recommendation P.LINK 14. Improve cooperation SME-University. Current practices of promoting the cooperation between SMEs and Universities should include emphasis on the mission-ing of students and Professors at SMEs research teams. This way, both University and SME can win in the process, as Universities can have additional direct channels to accommodate licensees into new jobs, as well as SMEs can benefit from the knowledge available at Universities. Many times, the language, justifications, reasoning of the R&D programmes is inspired on the traditional scientific and research projects carried out by Universities, thus, creating a gap on the way of thinking, reasoning capabilities, of the SMEs. Facilitate Professors and students involvement in SMEs; also, empower the intramuros trainee.

Recommendation P.LINK 15. Dissemination. Elaborate Reports on successful SMEs participation in research programmes, in order to stimulate the attraction from other currently non-participating SMEs. Organize dissemination events especially oriented to report to SMEs on benefits

from participating in the R&D&i programmes. Funding to exhibits should be promoted. The show of technology results, within Europe and overseas, should become a priority of the Research programmes to aid the whole process of research till the end of the research chain. Make extended use of schemes like the Eureka-EUROSTARS programme.

Recommendation P.LINK 16. IT Support. Online tools to facilitate the dissemination stages and facilitate linkage among researchers, researchers and potential customers, researchers and potential investors.

In an attached chart you can see the relative relevance of each Recommendation within the corresponding R&D&I phase.

### **1.5 My Peer SME Back Office Service**

The "My Peer SME BackOffice" service has been set-up in order to share the knowledge acquired through the consortium analysis and consult/advice key actors (i.e. policy makers, programme managers, SME stakeholders, etc) at both EU and national level. More specifically, the services targets those involved in the formulation of strategies and programmes/initiatives that support the research and innovation activities of SMEs (either as direct beneficiaries or in collaboration with the research organisations) as well as the actual beneficiaries of such programmes, namely the European SMEs.

The service is utilised through the respective web tool, which is accessible through the project web portal (see <http://www.mapeer-sme.eu> online) and includes both on-line (on-line e-library with all project findings) and off-line (asynchronous consulting with the consortium partners) services.

In order to see where the Back office tool is located on the website please check the attached Print screen of the website's back office service Picture.

The "My Peer SME BackOffice" web tool acts as a Single Point of Access to the project target groups with respect to project's latest outcomes and reports (i.e. programmes mapping, national reports, SMEs survey analysis, compendiums, comparative analysis, best practices, programme search facilities, etc).

#### **What information do I find under the different menu points?**

Aggregate reports - On this site you can access three aggregated reports in relationship with the SMEs' needs and barriers, RTDI programmes at European level. A third special comparative analysis is also available on this webpage that summarizes and compares the results of the previous two EU level analysis converting the results into recommendations

Programme reports - through this site you can easily access 28 national reports on the analysed RTDI programmes available at regional or national level in the given countries, the EU level analysis of the RTDI programmes as well as the profile of each analysed programmes.

SME needs reports - through this site you can easily access 28 national reports on the SMEs' needs and barriers regarding the execution of RTDI activities or participation in RTDI programmes in the given countries, as

well as the EU level report on the SMEs' needs, expectations and experiences regarding RTDI programmes

Countries - Through this page you can access 28 country pages where you can find information on the separate countries' SME landscape from the point of view of RTDI activities (special focus on the SMEs' needs and barriers towards RTDI activities) as well as on the available RTDI programmes in these countries. Beside these two interesting country reports you can learn more about the identified RTDI programmes as well as on the managing authorities.

Documents - From this page you are able to download interesting and useful documents and presentations that have been issued either by MAPEER SME or by other entities. At the SME corner menu point and at the useful links part of the website you find direct links to the most important SME stakeholders and to webpages that might be interesting to SMEs.

Question - if you had any specific question in connection with the reports or with the MAPEER activities than you can post your question through this page

## **Potential Impact:**

### **Potential impact and target groups**

The potential impact of the project and of its results is that in the future the responsible programme managers will develop more suitable RTDI programmes for the SMEs at regional, national or international level and this will attract more SMEs to apply for the available funding. In the short term we might expect that due to the more favourable programmes the SMEs' participation will increase. As a long term potential impact their increased participation may create new jobs, might boost the local and also the European economy.

The MAPEER SME results have a wide target group. The final beneficiaries are the SMEs that will have better and more favourable RTDI programmes in the future where they can apply for funding. However the direct beneficiaries of the project are currently the policy makers and programme managers/designers who can learn from the reports (both from the national and European level reports) as well from the recommendations that have been designed based on the reports especially for them and with the support of SMEs and SME stakeholders.

Our beneficiaries can access all documents through the Back office service that is available at the project's website. On the Home page the visitor finds useful information where to find what kind of information. The following lines provide detailed information what kind of documents and interesting information the different target groups can access through the website.

### **Are you a policy maker or manager/designer of national or regional RTDI programmes?**

Our website offers you information on RTDI programmes of the EU member states + BiH. You can browse between 200 national or regional level RTDI programmes and can learn good practises of other countries. The national reports on the available RTDI programmes provide you with an overview of the available funding schemes in the given countries while from the EU level analysis you can learn what programme clusters could be created and what characteristics they had. Based on this information you might design better programmes for the local SMEs.

You might gather also important information on the SMEs' needs and barriers, why do they take part in programmes (their reasons, expected benefits or gained benefits) or what hinders them to take part in such programmes. You can browse in the national reports on the SMEs' needs and barriers as well as in the EU level report that summarises the responses of around 800 European SMEs and provide therefore an overall picture on the SMEs' expectations.

### **Are you an SME or SME stakeholder?**

Our website offers you information on RTDI programmes that are or were available in the different EU member states + BiH. You can learn on different SME supporting initiatives, on news and events where you could take part as well as you can browse in interesting documents.

## **Exploitable results**

The project's two main future exploitable results are on the one hand the operation of the European Experts' Panel on Research by SMEs and the Back office service.

The "My Peer SME BackOffice" service has been set-up in order to share the knowledge acquired through the consortium analysis and consult/advice key actors (i.e. policy makers, programme managers, SME stakeholders, etc) at both EU and national level. More specifically, the services targets those involved in the formulation of strategies and programmes/initiatives that support the research and innovation activities of SMEs (either as direct beneficiaries or in collaboration with the research organisations) as well as the actual beneficiaries of such programmes, namely the European SMEs.

The service is utilised through the respective web tool, which is accessible through the project web portal (see <http://www.mapeer-sme.eu> online) and includes both on-line (on-line e-library with all project findings) and off-line (asynchronous consulting with the consortium partners) services. The online e-library includes 60 reports developed by the project as well as further documents that are accompanying documents. Responsible MAPEER partners have agreed that the full service will be ensured for further 2 years also without any further additional funding, however the operation after two years cannot be ensured due to many reasons.

The Panel, established by the MAPEER SME project, is a think tank consisting of European SMEs, SME representative organisations, like chambers, associations or other networks that have been appointed by the MAPEER partners. The Panel was established in order to support the MAPEER SME consortium in defining recommendations to policy makers and programme managers/designers on how to create more SME friendly RTDI programmes in the future.

At the end of the project the Panel had 131 members from 22 countries (+ EU).

The operation of the European Experts' Panel on Research by SMEs needs definitely financial sources, without that the operation is highly risky. The operation requires first of all a secretariat that manages the panel and its activities. However the Panel members have been working on a volunteer basis in the last 2 years this is a risky basis that should be avoided in the future and a minimal fee could be paid for them.

Taking into account the experience and success of the European Experts' Panel on Research by SMEs and its activities held during last two years, a number of options have been considered as main scope for future dialogue and identification of synergies among programmes and actions aimed at enhancing SMEs participation in research programmes. Also, the views expressed by the SMEs who have been consulted during this process (close to 1,000 SMEs) are taken into account. Special attention is given to the cooperation with the European Enterprise Network (EEN). Since the EEN Network put the SMEs in the centre of its activities the EEP-SME could be incorporated in the activities of the EEN in the future.

The EC just awarded funding to a 2 partners consortium in the frame of the SMART 2011/0041 tender that aims to investigate the Non FP

Participation of Innovative SMEs and the potential steps forward. IVSZ one of the leading partners of MAPEER SME is member of this small consortium and intends to use the results of the Panel, the already established structure and well working contacts in the frame of this new project in order to avoid the losing of contact, efforts and energies. The new tender does not foresee any funding for the operation of the Panel but might keep it alive until a funding source will be found (as expected one of the above mentioned ones).

### **Communication and dissemination activities**

It is important to mention that in parallel with all the above mentioned activities each MAPEER partner performed national level communication and dissemination activities, like website or newspaper appearances and TV interviews, organised national round table meetings where SMEs, SME representative organisations and programme managers have been invited in order to jointly think on the existing problems and potential solutions and conducted interviews with the SME stakeholders in order to gain more deep knowledge in the topic.

Beside the national communication activities MAPEER SME ensured also the EU level communication activities by publishing several articles in EU level media (like CORDIS Wire, SME Update), participating in bigger conferences like WIRE 2010 in Granada, eChallenges 2010 and 2011 in Warsaw or the European Conference on Innovation and Entrepreneurship that took place in Athens.

MAPEER SME was organizing several national workshops, since a warm-up workshop was planned for ensuring that the SME stakeholders and programme managers learn about the objectives and targets of the project and provide their views and first contributions to the start of the project while a second feedback provision workshop was foreseen also in each country where the same target groups could learn the final results of the project. The attached table MAPEER events during the 26 months lists the major events that the MAPEER partners have organized during the 26 months:

As it is listed in the attached event lists two annual conferences were organised in during the period. The first annual conference of MAPEER SME entitled Attractive and convergent R&D programmes for SMEs – the future or utopia? was organised by the main organiser IVSZ, with the support of each project partner on 24 February in Budapest. The event attracted around 70 programme managers, SME stakeholders and SMEs from 18 European countries.

The objective of the event was to provide a forum for discussion where SMEs and the managers and designers of RTDI programmes could add their voice to influence the design of more SME-friendly RTDI programmes in Europe. During the event, experiences of implementing the RTDI programmes have been presented by five national programme managers from Germany, Austria, Ireland, Denmark and The Netherlands.

In the frame of the presentations the programme managers introduced the best practise programme of their country that is/was supporting the best and was the most beneficial for the SMEs. The objective of this session was to point out to those characteristics of the selected national RTDI programmes made them really successful and that could/should be adopted

by other countries and could this way design better fitting SME programmes for the SMEs in their countries.

In the third part of the event SMEs were invited (both RTD programme active and inactive ones) to present their experiences related to participation in RTD programmes. The presentation of the RTD programme active SMEs pointed out to the benefits deriving from such projects while the presentation of the Polish RTD programme inactive SME provided valuable input why do SMEs not participate in these programmes and that are their corresponding considerations. The reasons of both sides served as important input to the Measures document that the European Expert Panel on SMEs was elaborating in the afternoon.

The second annual conference was part of the final MAPEER SME events that were organised in Brussels on 5-6 October 2011. On the first day the last meeting of the European Experts' Panel on Research by SMEs was organised where the measures document has been further developed and prepared for finalisation, while on 6 October 2011 the second annual conference of MAPEER was organised with high number of stakeholders from different EU countries.

In addition, the Panel members discussed alternatives for the promotion of the EEP-SME panel as well as sustainability options for its operation after the MAPEER SME project has ended. Each expert contributed to the discussion on policies which should be developed to assist in the development and enhancement of SMEs' advanced research and on how these policies should be communicated to relevant national and EU entities and SME policy-makers at regional, national and European levels.

In the evening the meeting was hosted by the European Parliament where the group of experts was welcomed for a working dinner by Dr. Paul Rübig, MEP and President of SME-Global and by Dr. Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines, MEP.

The second annual conference of MAPEER SME entitled Making Progress and Economic Enhancement a Reality for SMEs: New Approaches Towards RTDI Programmes was organised on 6 October 2011 in Brussels. The event attracted around 120 programme managers, SME stakeholders and SMEs from different European countries.

During the Conference the main findings and conclusions of studies on more than 200 national and regional RTDI programmes from across Europe and the related views of over 800 SMEs were presented. An opportunity was provided for European SME programme managers, policy-makers, representatives and other SME stakeholders to discuss how to improve the participation of SMEs in the RTDI arena and how to enhance the regional, national and European RTDI programmes which specifically target SMEs in order to make those programmes more attractive to potential participants.

The audience was encouraged to participate in the debate and, during the three sessions, the speakers gave their opinions about the state of the art of current RTDI programmes. Session I, presented the lessons learned as a result of the MAPEER SME studies as well as challenges for the future participation of SMEs in RTDI programmes and projects. The presentation of good practices, by programme managers from Germany, Italy, Sweden and Hungary, enabled the participants to understand the value of the Europe-wide research and analysis carried out on the RTDI programmes. Session II introduced the innovation and research experience

of SMEs in the Open Living Labs initiative. This was followed by a presentation of the results of two other EU-funded projects on SMEs in traditional industries and of the knowledge needed for business innovation in SMEs.

In the afternoon a round table discussion was held on The Way Ahead with the participation by the major European networks active in the RTDI arena.

MAPEER SME put emphasis on the collaboration with parallel running initiatives and projects since the impact of the activities can be maximized this way. MAPEER SME closely collaborated with GPIX and RAPPORT (the other two projects funded by the same call where MAPEER is funded as well) but useful connections have been built also to other European projects. The level of cooperation differs from country to country (from joint events until the sharing of information and results).

The project has developed several communication materials. It had a well designed leaflet that has been translated into several languages, issued four electronic newsletters (they are downloadable from the website too). The project's website (see <http://www.mapeer-sme.eu> online) serves as a central communication tool where beside the regular communication activities (important information, links and news), the back office service is also hosted (mentioned before) as well as it was supporting the organisation of the two annual conferences with registration facility as well as useful information for the participants. Booklets and posters have been developed also for the MAPEER events (both centrally by IVSZ and locally by the partners).

In order to promote the projects main results a two-page leaflets have been developed on the four main results of the project, namely: the RTDI programmes' analysis, the SMEs' needs, barriers and expectations analysis, comparative analysis and the Panel's activities and recommendations. (please check the attached leaflets - both year 1 and year 2 leaflets).

In order to have a common first page for the EU level analysis reports and final recommendations a front page have been developed and adopted to each document. Please check the attached document MAPEER\_book\_4cover\_2011-4.

MAPEER partners were continuously preparing announcements and communicating their local events or the project level results to their contacts.

The project partners finally listed 355 communication and dissemination activities that reached all beneficiary groups in the target countries as well as the European Commission. The detailed list of the communication and dissemination activities (in a very similar form like requested below) has been provided to the EC as part of the D6.2 and 6.3 reports. According to the agreement reached with the Project Officer we will not repeat this list in the present report but will provide it as an attachment.

#### **List of Websites:**

<http://www.mapeer-sme.eu>