

About the South East Europe Programm (SEE)



SEE-IFA is a SEE project. The South East Europe programme (SEE) is an EU-financed instrument. It aims to improve integration and competitiveness in the SEE area. It is also contributing to the integration process of the non-EU member states. The general aim of transnational cooperation is to foster a balanced territorial development and territorial integration within the SEE cooperation area. This will be achieved by increasing cooperation across member states on matters of strategic importance. Transnational cooperation concentrates on the following priority areas: Innovation, Environment, Accessibility and Sustainable Urban Development (for further information see <http://www.southeast-europe.net/en>).



Project: »South-East European Co-Operation of Innovation & Finance Agencies« (SEE-IFA Network)

The SEE-IFA network is a European network of national and regional innovation & finance agencies, authorities and universities (from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia (FYROM), Romania, Serbia and Slovenia). Within its **mission of transferring innovation-boosting know-how to the south-east European countries** the overriding project goal is to strengthen the capacity of innovation systems in the partner countries by **furnishing a know-how platform (SEE-IFA Network) and establishing institutions and programmes** to promote innovation in micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The project is lead-managed by Vienna-based *austria wirtschaftsservice* (aws). It started in March 2009 and will run until December 2011. The budget amounts about EUR 2.7 million.

Strengthening Innovation Capacity in SEE Countries

The SEE-IFA Network **aims to strengthen the capacity of IFA project partners to effectively provide innovation and technology support to micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs)**. MSMEs in general are faced with structural deficits. The SEE-IFA Network **addresses the entire range of these deficits** from networking, access to relevant information, support of know-how transfer, training, development of feasibility studies, assessment of frameworks and needs and design of concrete instruments and agencies. The project approaches transnationality in the SEE area along three axes: addressing the geographical gap, the institutional gap and the capacity gap (for further information see www.see-ifa.eu).



The Project Background

- **Innovation is crucial for competitiveness and for future growth:** Innovation and development of technologies are of vital importance for the competitiveness of companies and regions, as it provides the basis for future growth.
- **Micro, small and medium enterprises are faced with structural deficits in the innovation system:** Innovation is a cumbersome and prolonged process that involves considerable costs. Over 95% of companies in SEE are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These companies are facing structural deficits such as limited access to information, low resources and inadequate funds for innovative entrepreneurship. They are also confronted with an uncertain operating framework for developing and implementing innovative products, procedures and technologies.
- **Micro, small and medium enterprises need support to improve their innovation capacity:** Accordingly, one of the most important challenges is stimulating innovative entrepreneurship for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through the use of an appropriate range of instruments, i.e. grants, guarantees, patent protection, etc., that enhance the framework conditions and strengthen an environment conducive to innovation.

The SEE-IFA Mission

The mission of the SEE-IFA project is to transfer innovation-boosting know-how to the South-East European countries. The overriding project goal is to strengthen the capacity of innovation systems in the partner countries by **furnishing a know-how platform (SEE-IFA Network) and establishing institutions and programmes** to promote innovation in micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

The aim is to foster the innovation capacity of MSMEs in South-East Europe and improve their access to funding. The project is designed to facilitate access to funds for innovative projects by MSMEs and to increase the service-provider quality of national agencies.

The specific missions of the project are to:

1. **Identify needs and gaps in all SEE-IFA partner countries** in the region with regard to their capacity to more effectively provide innovation and technology support to MSMEs.
2. **Improve the exchange and transfer of know-how** through assessing existing instruments as well as identifying and modifying transferable elements and through the implementation of new instruments.
3. Enhance the operating environment through identifying funding options and the **development of a patent and licence fund.**
4. Assist IFA partners and relevant bodies in setting up **new innovation & finance agencies** with adequate portfolios for innovation and technology support.
5. **Increase the capacity of local players** through mentoring, training, exchange schemes and visits.



The SEE-IFA Partners

The SEE-IFA network unites eleven partner organisations (European national and regional innovation & finance agencies, authorities and universities) from ten different countries. SEE-IFA participants are representatives from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia (FYROM), Romania, Serbia and Slovenia.

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| <p>01 AMCSIT
Management Agency for Scientific Research, Technology Transfer and Innovation – Politehnica Romania</p>  | <p>02 AWS
Austria Wirtschaftsservice Austria</p>  | <p>03 AZRA
Varazdin County Development Agency Croatia</p>  | <p>04 EPF
Euro Perspectives Foundation Bulgaria</p>  | <p>05 FINLOM
Finlombarda S.p.A. Italy</p>  | <p>RegVEN
Veneto Region – Industry Department Italy</p>  |
| <p>06 UKIM-FME
University Ss. Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Mechanical Engineering Macedonia (FYROM)</p>  | <p>07 GEORAMA
Greece</p>  | <p>08 RDA Banat
Regional Agency for Socio-Economic Development – Banat Serbia</p>  | <p>09 SID Bank
SID – Slovene Export and Development Bank Inc, Ljubljana Slovenia</p>  | <p>10 TETALAP
Hungarian Science and Technology Foundation Hungary</p>  | |



CONTACT
Andrea Waclik
austria wirtschaftsservice
Ungargasse 37 | 1030 Vienna
Phone +43 1 50175 – 530
Fax +43 1 50175 – 900
a.waclik@awsg.at

www.see-ifa.eu

SEE Innovation and Finance Agencies

