Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Network:
Milestones and Outcomes

2nd Global Forum on Business Incubation:
Empowering Economies through ICT-enabled Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Hyderabad, India, November 6-10, 2006
Cooperative initiatives in ECA region supported by InfoDev

• **September 2003** - The first meeting of InfoDev grantees from ECA region within the International event "20 years of business incubators in Germany", Berlin, Germany

• **April 2004** - Discussions on the ways of collaboration in ECA region, 5th International UBICA Conference Kiev, Ukraine

• **September 2004** - Training Centers Network was initiated by the participants from Central Asia and Eastern Europe countries during International Conference in Shymkent, Kazakhstan
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**October 2004** - The Global Forum on Business Incubation in New Delhi, India. During the Forum, the East Europe/Central Asia group determined key issues that are the first priority for regional networking:
- support of conducting of national/regional/global conferences with more active involvement of politicians/national and local government authorities;
- support of sub-regional networks (shared language);
- sharing existing training materials/adapting to local languages;
- creation of information-based interactive web-site (e.g. describing existing training programs) as information gathering and dissemination tool;

**December 2004** - collaborative preparation of the proposal to InfoDev "Creation of Favorable Business Incubation Environment through the Establishment of Effective Networking in the Region of East Europe/Central Asia Countries".
Activity plan included series of regional meetings and workshops, feasibility study, study tours for local/national government and incubator representatives, exchange programs/on-site visits for BI managers, etc.

**June 2005** - Regional Innovation and Incubation Capacity Building Workshop Eastern Europe – Central Asia, Kiev, Ukraine
The main goals of the workshop were to capture and synthesize lessons and knowledge and identify regional commonality or differences, with:

- Sharing experience and lessons learned in the projects of infoDev grantees and other innovation and entrepreneurship development projects, particularly those involving ICT
- Thematic sessions on the role of government and the enabling environment, financing gaps and support policies, entrepreneurship and innovation, ICT and business development and successful business incubation practices
- Training and professional development.
- Agreements on concrete steps for network development and assignment of (voluntary) activities to network partners
- Site visits
- Next steps to develop activities in the Regional Network
Participants

Sixty one participants from 18 countries:

• managers and staff of incubators and other innovation and entrepreneurship organizations,

• policy makers from Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Russia.
Thematic Sessions

1. Policy Framework for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support
2. Development of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Highlighted issues:
- Recognition of the need for better transparency and openness to reduce corruption
- Better economic policies to improve the enabling environment
- The importance of raising awareness of stakeholders
- Poor ICT infrastructure and awareness, high Internet costs and poor use of ICT by SMEs
- Low ICT literacy among specialists and entrepreneurs alike
- The potential importance of distance learning for SMEs in rural areas
- How portals and virtual incubation are delivering information and support
- Lack of market knowledge by SMEs
- Low levels of cooperation amongst SMEs
- Development of innovation cultures and national innovations systems
- The importance of public private partnerships and links with universities and the requirement for more entrepreneurial academics
- Problems of raising capital for SMEs
- Differing approaches to sustainability
3. Monitoring Evaluation and Impact Assessment (MEIA)
4. ICT and Outreach

There was identified that ICT would facilitate interactions between three sets of players:
1. Business Incubator to Business Incubator
2. Business Incubator to Client
3. Business Incubator to Stakeholder

Each of these interactions could be managed through a portal:

- means of communication,
- reducing duplication,
- allowing incubators to share systems that each had developed
- intelligent search functions and a common FAQ section
Actions that would strengthen network cooperation

1. Portal for Network
   1.1. Technology
   1.2. Content
   1.3. Participation
   1.4. System and Services Audit
   1.5. Search Engine
   1.6 FAQs
   1.7. Forums
      - manager to manager
      - manager to client

2. Incubator staff e-learning

3. Knowledge Management

4. Technology Brokerage

5. Network Promotion
Network Structure and Organization.
How to organize network?

Main discussed topics:
1. Formal or Informal Network?
2. Sub-networks
3. Internal structure
4. Project acquisition
5. Brand
6. Certification
7. Competition
MEMORANDUM

accepted by the participants of the Regional Innovation and Incubation Capacity Building Workshop.

The Eastern Europe – Central Asia Network for Business Incubation (ECANBI) was established as an international and regional partnership of organizations supporting innovation and entrepreneurship – independent on any political or institutional interest.
ECANBI is aimed at adding value to its members by fostering and strengthening:

- Innovation and entrepreneurship support and business incubation
- Exchanges of information and knowledge.
- International cooperation, where relevant, between innovation and entrepreneurship support organizations.
- Knowledge dissemination about national policies and programs to support innovation, technology development, enterprise creation and local development.
- Creation and implementation of business incubation “good practices”.
- Supporting ICT-enabled business incubation by leveraging existing regional networks and by participating in the Global Network for Business Incubation (GNBI).
- Development of common definitions, terminology and quality measures for innovation, technology transfer, and business incubation services.
Approved Areas of Cooperation:

Education and training activities.
  Coordinators: Tatyana Shpuling (Kazakhstan), Olena Bulba (Ukraine)

Information resources and ICT.
  Coordinators: Sergiy Faty (Ukraine), Eugeniy Merkushev (Kazakhstan)

Technology transfer.
  Coordinators: Domnica Cotet (Romania), Inna Gagauz (Ukraine)

Network financing.
  Coordinator: Zamira Akbagyheva (Kyrgyz Republic)

Network synergy.
  Coordinator: Tatyana Shpuling (Kazakhstan)
Barriers for sustainable development of the ECA region network:

- Limited resources (human, information, financial)
- Different level of capabilities of innovation and SME support structures in ECA countries
- Different level of potential and skills in ICT-enabled networking in ECA region countries
- Language barriers
- Resource integration barriers
Post-workshop activities.

1. International meetings and conferences in ECA region
   - Slovak Republic
   - Armenia
   - Uzbekistan
2. Current network projects in ECA region supported by InfoDEV.

- "Strengthening impact and outreach of SODBI business incubator in Shymkent by building ICT-enabled national and international business incubation and innovation cooperation“, 
  *SODBI Business Incubator in Shymkent, Kazakhstan*

- "Information and Collaboration Tools for Strengthening Business Incubator's Networking in ECA Region“, 
  *TBI "Kharkov Technologies", Ukraine*
3. The project eca-network.org

The project eca-network.org is the first step in information and resource exchange among all organizations and individuals of Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECA) countries on the development of efficient cooperation in the sphere of innovation; SMEs support programs, business incubation and technology transfer.
QUESTIONS?
THANK YOU!

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