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Eco-Innovation – Turning ideas into marketable results

**Key Success Factors of SMEs for exploiting and
disseminating EU RTD results in Eco-Innovation**

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Introduction

Within the EU's Framework Programme for Research and Development, projects for the benefit of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) are of great importance due to their high impact on Europe's competitiveness and economic growth. At least 15 % of the EUR 32 billion budget of the 10 thematic areas in the specific programme "Cooperation" (approximately EUR 4.8 billion) is dedicated to SMEs. Moreover, within the specific programme "Capacities" in the 7th Framework Programme (FP7)¹ of the EC² EUR 1.336 billion will be available for the "Research for the Benefit of SMEs" instrument from 2007-2013. This signifies an increase of more than 67 % in comparison to EUR 430 million in the 6th Framework Programme (FP6).

SMEs³ are the backbone of the EU's economy since they represent 99 % of the total number of enterprises, they account the 2/3 of employment and around 2/3 of the EU GDP.⁴ Their role is of crucial importance for strengthening Europe's performance and achieving the Lisbon target (task for RTD⁵ intensity of 3 % by 2010)⁶ of creating the world's most competitive economy.

At the same time, in an environment characterised by global competitive pressures and fast pace of scientific advancements, one of the main factors that influences the success or failure of enterprises is how they convert their research activities into market products. Therefore innovative enterprises play a crucial role, but the EU still lacks behind the US or Japan in terms of innovation.⁷ Moreover only approx. 9 % of innovative enterprises in the EU received public funding in 2006.⁸

1 7th Framework Programme with duration 2007–2013

2 EC = European Commission

3 According to the latest EC definition (active from January 2005): "The category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is made up of enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding 50 million EUR, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding 43 million EUR." [Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC as published in the Official Journal of the European Union L 124, p. 36 of 20 May 2003]

4 Work Programme 2007 – Research for the Benefit of SMEs, p. 3

5 RTD = Research and Technological Development

6 European Innovation Scoreboard 2007, p. 25

7 European Innovation Scoreboard 2007, p. 7 ff

8 Fourth Community Innovation Survey, European Commission, 2006