



**European project MediaTrans –
Stimulating trans-national RTD co-operation between SMEs and research actors
in Europe and India in the media sector
by identifying future and emerging technology needs in SMEs**

Case Study for Innovation Workshops in Bulgaria

One of the innovation workshops carried out by ARC Fund, Bulgaria under the MediaTrans project involved a medium-size enterprise in the media sector, established in Sofia and operating on the local market.

The company had 51 employees and worked in a variety of media channels: publishing of a weekly newspaper and a monthly medical journal, producing a one-hour weekly TV and a one-hour weekly radio programme, maintaining a health information&news portal website and also managing several outdoor advertisement space locations - with a total audience of some 450,000 people.

During a preliminary contact by telephone, a key person in the company indicated readiness to listen to our offer for an innovation workshop and supplied some details about the scope of the company operations, which were not evident from the preparatory desk research done by ARC Fund in identifying the SME as a prospective project partner.

During the visit of Mediatrans consultants to the company's premises for carrying out the innovation workshop conversation with several managers and employees were held. The managers provided some very useful clarification of the company market share and general vision and mission but had little to offer in terms of current and prospective technology needs. Thus a further search for the appropriate tech-savvy person down the organizational ladder was carried out.

A younger employee, who took time to listen to the consultants' more detailed presentation of the aims of the MediaTrans project, proved to be more in tune with the consultants' expectations for a discussion on currently used technology in the company and its future (short-term and long-term) technology needs.

The majority of the technology needs identified in this discussion appeared to be largely unsuitable for further examination for a prospective R&D funding options, because the general level of technology currently in use in the company was not very high and a simple upgrade to newer (present-day) one in most of the cases was the only evident solution. The company, however, was at the moment only slowly catching-up and having a limited budget lacked the financial resources to fully accomplish even this obviously overdue

technology upgrade. How could such a company nurture any hope to participate in even more complex R&D activities, the opportunities for which lay in the instruments of the MediaTrans project?

After a detailed examination of the technology needs as stated by the tech-savvy employee, the MediaTrans consultants finally found a technology niche important for that specific SME company and at the same time relevant in the larger context of EU-funded R&D: an image-management and image-searching tool - a software application allowing to sort images by similarity. The employee described the need as an "image-defined search engine" for the local intra-company network (one searching for photos by "image similarity", not by "keyword") – a task that may draw the attention of a broader range of media companies and that may have been already addressed by previous EU-funded research, but is still in a process of initial development, e.g. currently in the framework of the THESEUS programme (<http://theseus-programm.de/>), among others. Such a tool would greatly enhance the productivity in 4 of the 5 media channels in which the company has operations: all the "visual" channels (the newspaper and the medical journal, the TV programme and the health news portal website).

During a later phase in the MediaTrans project, the consultants from ARC Fund identified through the "Search Expertise" feature in the Mediatrans website a SME in the United Kingdom with expertise for R&D in the field of "visualisation and display systems". The SME in the UK appeared to be currently on a comparable level of technological proficiency with the Bulgarian SME, which could make for a smooth communication and cooperation between the two SMEs. Some of the work already done by the UK SME proved to be very useful also for the TV production needs of the Bulgarian SME. Thus a solid ground for future cooperation between the two SMEs was found and the two companies were contacted and proposed a development of a joint project.