

CASE STUDY TITLE
HEI / ORGANISATION NAME
COUNTRY
DATE
NATURE OF INTERACTION WITH BUSINESS
NATURE OF GOOD PRACTISE/PROJECT

GIS TRANSFER CENTRE
 TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF SOFIA
 BULGARIA
 JULY 2011
 COMMERCIALISATION OF R&D RESULTS
 STRUCTURAL INSTRUMENT OR APPROACH

PROFILE

SHORT DESCRIPTION

*THE GIS TRANSFER CENTRE IN SOFIA,
 A KNOWLEDGE-INTENSIVE INDUSTRY HUB*

The GIS Transfer Centre is one of the pioneer organisations of technology transfer and research commercialisation that have been set up in Bulgaria. The main objective behind this successful initiative is to set up a network of transfer centres in Bulgaria. These centres are focused on transferring research output from universities, laboratories, institutes and various research teams to all interested partners. Support provided by GIS and other centres is concentrated on all aspects: financial, juridical, educational and those concerning IP and management.

BACKGROUND

The GIS Transfer Centre Foundation was established in December 2000 in Sofia by twelve founders, coming mostly from the Technical University of Sofia. GIS, acting as an independent Bulgarian corporate body, is governed by the General Assembly (composed of fourteen founders and co-founders) and Managing Board led by the President. The GIS-Transfer Centre has been working under a franchising contract with the Steinbeis Foundation in Stuttgart (Germany) since April 2003. GIS is a member of the Steinbeis Technology Transfer Network comprising more than 600 Transfer Centres in 55 countries around the world.

AIM AND TARGET

The main objective of GIS activities is to build an organisational and information infrastructure that allows effective management of projects of technology transfer. The offer of support is dedicated to partners from different professional, technological and scientific fields. The provision of information is one the largest fields of support. In particular, GIS provides interested parties with a register of innovation and technology resources; register including innovation developments classified by their stage of advance and sphere of applicability (technology offers) and register of mediators classified by their roles, interests and competence that are connected to the process of technological transfer (brokers). GIS supports also a register of technological requests referring to specific industry problems or problems/questions coming from other technological centres or networks (technology request).

Moreover, GIS facilitates the creation of virtual consortia of participants with the aim to effectively manage technology

transfer processes. The Centre provides the opportunity for discussion forums in order to stimulate new ideas and proposals for collaboration. An information system and database supported by GIS can be reached through the Internet and may be developed by adding new data online to enlarge the base of all active participants in the technology transfer processes. The provision of information is personalised according to particular needs of a certain user of a system.

FUNDING

There are 14 funders involved in the project. The three main funders are:

1. The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,
2. The Technical University of Sofia,
3. The Institute of Mechanics – BAS.

IMPLEMENTATION

STRATEGY AND ACTIONS

The various GIS activities include the establishment of transfer centres for specific scientific, research and technological problems and innovation competitive products. Activities include studies, consultations and recommendations regarding needs of SME, competitive products and modern technologies. Apart from these 'instrumental' activities, other ones refer to the identification of applied research results and support for transformation of research output into new technologies and competitive products (through organising workshops, seminars and other events).

GIS activities are focused on the improvement of SME's products. Importantly the GIS Centre can address appropriate governmental institutions requesting their help in solving any problems. It facilitates access to innovation funds and participation in working teams of governmental commissions that develop legal framework documents.

GIS maintains contacts and cooperates with similar Bulgarian and foreign organisations as well as scientists and specialists who deal with technology transfer. The centre also has contacts with governmental agencies and institutions supporting innovation activities in order to promote governmental policy and priorities in this field and propose solutions and norms. Apart from the coordination and realisation of technology transfer projects, GIS provides consultations and expertise for innovations and technology transfer.

The GIS Centre is responsible for the organisation and coordination of participation of Bulgarian scientists, teams and companies in projects sponsored by the EU Commission or other European institutions and programmes that are directly or indirectly linked with the GIS Foundation. GIS runs a database of research results of different Bulgarian institutions and monitors the needs of local SMEs looking for solutions in the field of new technologies.

The centre promotes the development of consultations and information exchange between representatives of companies and institutions interested in technology transfer processes. It is therefore easier for a company to find the right person who can handle specific technical issues or problems. Direct transfer

of technologies or information is the focus of the centre, optimising processes and systems that are part of already applied projects. The GIS strategy is to develop innovative pilot projects and prototypes or new market-oriented and competitive products.

GIS cooperates with national bodies including ASME (Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises) and Bulgarian Association of Agencies for Regional Development and Business Centres (BARDA). This cooperation covers activities leading to the development of national and international technological transfer services.

Other activities include the running of post-graduate studies, organisation of teaching courses, training activities focused on specialists and managers from all fields (especially hi-tech specialists) and elaboration of expertise and evaluation reports.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring activities of the GIS Transfer Centre refer to the evaluation of studies or consultations and recommendations for SMEs. Supports of transfer activities as well as implementation of new products and technologies are also subject to the monitoring process.

The development of evaluation activities should include the possibility of monitoring the interactions between technology 'givers' and technology 'receivers' – two parts of the technology transfer process. To find out the success rates of the transfer processes it is necessary to view how many solutions were implemented in the economic practise. This challenge, still to be introduced in the GIS activities, should help in the developmental process of this technology transfer centre.

SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of the GIS activities is linked with the growth of the number of institutions registered in the database run by the GIS Centre and also with the development of new initiatives with partners who have expressed a willingness to cooperate by making entries in the database system.

IMPACT | RESULTS | OUTCOMES

ACHIEVEMENTS

Whilst still in development, 23 profiles are published on the website of the GIS. They range from small companies to research institutes and universities. A sample profile includes the following information: profile type, date of publication, information about the institution or company including the contact person data and the contact details, the year of setting up the body, turnover and activities that the institution or company is performing.

In addition, there were 19 technology offers obtained including information such as the following: technology offer title, reference number, website, date of publication, contact details, abstract of the technology, detailed description of the technology, innovative aspects of the technology, main

advantages or special features of the technology, technology key-words, current stage of development, exploitation of R&D results, IPR, market application codes, collaboration type and comments.

There is one technical broker published on the platform and 22 technology source profiles published.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Success until now has been driven by proactive networking of business together with transfer centres, universities, laboratories, institutes and various research teams to all interested partners. The variety of programmes offered involving business and university personnel has also contributed to its success.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The database system mentioned before is actually an Internet-based client-server application (accessible by web-browser clients) and assembled by two basic functional modules. The first module is the exchange of technology and innovations. Gathering of supply and demand for the technology transfer is possible by proactive mediators (brokers). All of the three main groups of users ('providers', 'receivers' and 'brokers' of innovation and technology transfer) have particular tools to express their interest in a given idea, development or problem. Access level to different system functions depends on the category the user represents.

The second module is the system for coordinating and managing technological transfer projects. This sub-system is closely integrated with the exchange services and gives the opportunity to a special category of users to define, coordinate and manage projects that have been initiated as a result of declaring participation/interest by a certain group of exchange members.

TRANSFERABILITY

The GIS activities aim to create conditions for knowledge and technology transfer. It provides examples of how to initiate, organise and manage the processes.

THEMES

Technology transfer, Knowledge transfer, Innovativeness, Exchange platform, Cooperation

INFORMATION SOURCES

www.gis-tc.org/ (accessed 11th August 2011)

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RESOURCES

DOCUMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

www.vgtu.lt/leidiniai/leidykla/BUS_AND_MANA_2010/High_Education/571-577_Taneva_Dimov.pdf

DATABASES AND WEBSITES

www.university-directory.eu/Bulgaria/Technical-University-of-Sofia.html (accessed 11th August 2011)