



INNOVATION & SMEs PROGRAMME

CONSTRINNONET

PROJECT

FINAL REPORT: ANNEX 6

(Project Deliverable D3-1)

Country Seminar Reports

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INNOVATION & SMEs PROGRAMME

CONSTRINNONET Project “Promoting Innovation in Construction Industry SMEs”

Work Package 3 Report – Deliverable D3-1 COUNTRY SEMINAR REPORTS

1. Overview of Country Seminars

During the entire CONSTRINNONET project, all members have organised at least one country seminar. Administrative reports have been prepared for each of these regional events, in the context of work package 3. The table below gives an overview of the seminars included in this Deliverable D3-1 Report.

Partner	On what?
VTT	- CRAFT Roadshow (multiple events) - Eco-Efficiency event (11/12/2003)
CSTB	Bordeaux Event (17/06/2003)
USAL	NW England Seminar (27/01/2004)
VG TU	Vilnius Event (30/04/2003)
CARSA	Innovation scope in the Construction Sector (20/04/2004)
PARAGON	CONSTRINNONET Hellas (31/03/2004)
BBRI	Belgian Information Day (05/06/2002)

2. Content of individual reports

An individual report has been prepared for all national seminars. These reports can be found in the following chapters of this overall deliverable report. Each of the reports contain the following elements:

- Date and place of the event
- Invited number of people and final number of participants
- Participants list
- Overview of the program of the seminar
- Presentation/text of the contribution of the different speakers
- Summary of discussions held at the seminar
- Conclusions of the event
- Short evaluation on the course of the seminar (from practical viewpoint)

Details on the seminars can be found on the attached CD of the annex material to which this report refers.

3. Country Seminar Reports

3.1 Finland – VTT

3.1.1 CRAFT Roadshow

The CRAFT Roadshow in Finland consisted of eight (8) half-day long *CRAFT Roadshow* events, where general information about above measures are presented and interview clinics are held to evaluate innovative ideas of SMEs.

The CRAFT Roadshow was arranged by

- National Technology Agency (TEKES),
- VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland and
- Federation of Finnish Metal, Engineering and Electrotechnical Industries (MET)

The CONSTRINNONET project participated in these events and discussed with construction related SMEs.

For the dates and places of the events, reference is made to the information brochure in Annex 1 on the attached CD.

Invited number of people and final number of participants

This overall objective was met by arranging half day long *CRAFT Roadshow* regional events in eight (8) locations around Finland. In addition to general information about supporting schemes, Roadshow events are incorporated with interviews for representatives of SMEs, where their business and product innovations are evaluated to find out suitability as CRAFT projects. Potential project ideas are transferred to experts at VTT for further evaluation.

Table 1. CRAFT RoadShow in numbers

2003	Location	Attendees	Interviews
16.1.	Jyväskylä	20	4
17.1.	Oulu	56	10
23.1.	Lappeenranta	31	5
27.1.	Vaasa	29	4
28.1.	Tampere	36	7
30.1.	Turku	51	10
3.2.	Espoo	59	15
12.2.	Kuopio	55	13
	TOTAL	337	68

From the total of 68 SME interviews seven (7) could be considered construction related.

Overview of the program of the events

The programme of the Roadshow event was as follows:

- Opening of the event
- SME participation in FP6
- CRAFT project: From idea to business
- Possibilities with collective research project
- CASE presentation: experiences of SME that has been involved in CRAFT project
- SME Interviews

Conclusions of the event

In addition to event interviews this Roadshow was used as a platform to contact known SMEs that were assumed interested and capable on such projects. These contacts would not have been made without this brokerage initiative.

In the construction sector the key issue is to find SMEs that are capable to enter the European market. Such companies are most likely from the building product manufacturing industry - not from the actual construction industry.

Altogether, 51 ideas were evaluated within the CRAFT Roadshow. Five of them were construction related. One proposal was submitted in the first CRAFT project call.

Some other items of interest

Objective

The objective of the *CRAFT Roadshow* is to activate the participation of SMEs in the sixth framework programme and especially those having innovative ideas which have economical potential in a European network of SMEs.

There are two specific schemes for SMEs with a capacity to innovate but with limited research capacity are foreseen. Within these schemes - Collective Research and Co-operative Research ("CRAFT") - SMEs or groupings dominated by SMEs may entrust research work to solve their particular problems to research performers. VTT aimed at CRAFT projects and MET focused more on collective research projects.

Proposal preparation

VTT is providing full turn key service on the proposal preparation for SMEs having innovative ideas where R&D work is needed to transfer the innovation in the practice. Around innovation idea having economical potential and meeting other requirements set in the call, the project consortium is gathered, the actual proposal is written and assistance is given in making consortium contract and agreement negotiations.

In addition to participation in the *CRAFT Roadshow*, TEKES is giving financial support for the preparation of proposals to obtain international R&D funding. The amount of the support depends on the role of partner in the consortium and influence and nature of obtained results.

Resources

Several experts from TEKES, VTT and MET participate in the Roadshow events giving presentation and making interviews. The events were usually located in facilities of VTT but sometimes required external locations.

Indirect impacts

- Activate SMEs in participation of national and European networks
- The sixth framework programme and its instruments are becoming more known

In Annex 1 to this report are some pictures that were found quite useful in describing the two alternative project types for SMEs.

3.1.2 Case Study – Eco-Efficiency event in Kuopio

Eco Efficiency in housing supports sustainable development in construction. The aim is to minimise harmful impact on the environment. Efforts are focused to saving energy and use of fresh water, minimising waste production and useful and sustainable use of construction material.

As thematic focus and vision it forms common goal for SMEs to develop networks and new innovative products and service for customer needs. Therefore this concept has been presented in event arranged in Kuopio.

The framework of the event was based on rural housing project in Tuusniemi near Kuopio. New community is built in Tuusniemi where these eco efficient principles are following and applied in practise.

The event took place at North Savo Polytechnic, Kuopio, on 11 December 2003. Invitations were sent to about 200 people. In the event about 40 people were present: designers, students, people from industry and researchers from VTT. The programme consisted of several presentations of researchers from VTT. A copy of the programme can be found in Annex 1 to this report

Eco efficiency was viewed from different angles. Presentations provided insight on benefit of eco efficiency from inhabitants, companies or communities point of view. Also impact and possibilities on regional development and innovation in general were covered.

Short evaluation on the course of the seminar

The actual event should have had more participants especially from companies. The SMEs in the region were not present. This seems to be lack time or interest in these types of general items which do not support the day to day business. How to reach SMEs seems to be an issue..

3.2 France – CSTB

This meeting was organized by the CENTREX (www.centrex-france.com) together with the CSTB (www.cstb.fr). This event was supported by the Regional representation of the Ministry of construction. The meeting took place in the Arpad building in Bordeaux on 17 June 2003.

The programme of the event was distributed directly by the CENTREX both by mail and by email to the construction professional of the Région Aquitaine. Other channels were also used: Réseau de Diffusion Technologique Aquitaine, Regional representation of the Ministry of construction, CSTB. A copy of the invitation flyer and the programme can be found in Annex 2 to this report.

Most of the regional construction companies which participated in the 2002 Innovation award were present as well as professional bodies (SMEs contractors federation, members of the Réseau de Diffusion Technologique Aquitaine (Anvar, Centrex), DRE Midi Pyrénées et Aquitaine. The meeting had been organised together with the distribution of awards by local authorities to 2002 regional awarded contractors.

The objectives were:

- to promote the CONSTRINNONET project as an example of European initiative to support innovation in construction,
- to promote the "2002 Palmarès de l'Innovation" (innovation award organized every two years by the ministry of construction and construction partners (federations, safety and quality bodies, ...), www.chantier.net)
- to present the Aquitaine region initiatives to support innovation projects in construction and to compare to similar initiatives in European countries,
- to identify future potential cooperation to improve existing mechanisms or to develop new services (follow up of CONSTRINNONET, other European projects, national or regional actions)

Further contacts were organised in Paris between the CENTREX and the CCI (Center for Construction Innovation, Manchester) in order to exchange on potential follow-up of the

CONSTRINNONET project: cooperation protocol, common data bases, exchange of methods, dissemination of case studies, ...

These projects were unfortunately stopped because of the regional decision to close the CENTREX in April 2004.

3.3 United Kingdom – USAL

Given the nature of this event, the participation of EC or national funding organisation staff was not required. The event was organised so that business support organisations could showcase their activities and discuss opportunities for collaboration. Testimonies of successful innovation projects were not supplied or requested. Finally, no reference was made to forthcoming calls, although possibility of getting funds for a BSO collaboration was discussed.

The USAL event took place on Tuesday 27th January 2004 at the Centre for Construction Innovation in Manchester. 31 Persons were invited to the event and 20 of them also participated. The introduction letter is annexed to this report.

The programme consisted of three sessions. The first session introduced the project and key BSO and SME issues. The second session showcased regional business support for innovation in construction SMEs. The third session comprised a discussion of possible ways forward. A copy of the programme can be found in Annex 3 to this report.

The programme was successful in both developing the basic case for a network and allowing BSOs to exchange information about their activities. Each speaker had been given the same brief, and they did generally adhere to it. The final session was shorter than expected, and its timing did not encourage productive discussion, since most participants were too tired at the end of the day to give much thought to future actions.

Plans are being made to discuss issues arising and other matters in a specially convened parallel session on the second day of the final event.

3.4 Lithuania – VGTU

The local interaction event was organised by VGTU on the 30 of April 2003 in which other participants from the project took part. The audience of the event was 22 people.

Eleven presentations had been made during the event. The complete presentations can be found in Annex 4 to this report. The presentations were made by the representatives of the companies as follow: Lithuanian Innovation Centre, Lithuanian Development Agency, Eurostadija Ltd. (Lithuania), Contractors Association of Lithuania, Lithuanian Association of Civil Engineers, UAB „Valymo paslaugos“ (Lithuania), State enterprise „Registru centras“ (Lithuania), IRE Network (UK), VGTU, USAL and BBRI.

The event carried the particular weight for SMEs as well as other participants from Lithuania. The usefulness of such event was emphasised, because the participants had the possibility to obtain needful information. Majority of the persons who took part at the event expressed their will to receive information about the further progress of the project and similar events in the future.

3.5 Spain – CARSA

CARSA organised a one-day regional event “Innovation scope in the Construction Sector” on 20 April 2004 in the Conference Centre and Concert Hall ‘Euskalduna Jauregia’ in Bilbao. Invitations were sent to approximately 200 construction professionals. Finally, the event was attended by 31 participants. A copy of the invitation flyer and the list of participants can be found in Annex 5 to this report.

The programme of the event consisted of a morning sessions with presentations and a round table on construction, SMEs and business opportunities. In the afternoon session, a brokerage event was set up where technology offers were presented. A copy of the programme and the presentations can be found in Annex 5.

Summary of discussions held at the seminar

Some key questions and difficulties for the promotion of innovation activities in the construction sector were addressed in the event.

In addition, some commonalities were identified between different regions and different sectors and this issue was discussed extensively. The promotion of synergies and the establishment of links with some ongoing innovation networks and initiatives related to the construction & Civil Engineering were addressed.

The cycle of blames (by Mr. Pierre Bourgoigne) was discussed as well as some possibilities to break this vicious cycle.

Once the seminar concluded, a set of sequential presentations of technology offers was held in the second stage of the event. Afterwards some interested entities drawn some business & tech. agreements.

Conclusions of the event

A change in the culture of most traditional enterprises (with especial focus on SMEs was addressed) is needed to foster the innovation cycle in the construction sector and other considered “traditional” sectors.

There is a wide set of opportunities for cooperation and technology development but the lack of information and the low awareness level result in missed opportunities for competitive improvement.

Awareness campaigns and some support services for knowledge and technology transfer would be of great interest to promote a change in this “traditional culture” and to mobilise resources both at regional and EU level.

Involvement of regional stakeholders is essential for mobilisation of resources and promotion of interactions between potential partners for cooperation activities.

SMEs are interested in innovation activities as a way to solve some day to day problems, being more efficient and as a way to get some business opportunities for their development.

Agreements made between SMEs after the event have demonstrated the opportunity and interest of this kind of activities to mobilise resources and promote collaboration relationships between entities pertaining the construction sector.

Short evaluation on the course of the seminar

The event was divided in two stages. The first one was a seminar and a set of presentations related to innovation activities in the construction Sector was exposed. These presentations

allowed us to have a view of some innovative activities that are being carried out at regional and EU level and their purpose.

Some presentations from public organisations (IRC of the Basque Country), Technology Centres (Labein Foundation) and other SMEs (interested in business and tech. opportunities) exposed their interests, activities and points of view. Their interventions were of interest to get information for the characterisation of different profiles in the Construction ecosystem and identify potential synergies and relationships to foster innovation activities in the construction sector.

In addition, there was a presentation more focused on business opportunities in less developed countries that got attention of SMEs.

A round table took place after the interventions and some common obstacles and regional difficulties to foster the innovation process was analysed. Some commonalities were identified between the Lorraine and other Spanish regions like the Basque country and Canary Islands.

Once this round table finished, the brokerage activities started with sequential presentations of technology offers. As a consequence a preliminary expressions of interest to cooperation occurred between some entities (ATLAND GLOBAL, REPAIR SYSTEMS AND LABEIN FOUNDATION). As a result one business agreement and one technology cooperation initiative is one the way to be materialized.

The confidentiality of the information was overcome by the opportunity to get advantage of potential opportunities for tech& business cooperation inside and outside their respective regions.

As a conclusion, it has been demonstrated that the establishment of a frame for information& knowledge interchange as well as the opportunity to establish a preliminary contact between entities

From the regional institution point of view the sharing of experiences and results are of interest for the incorporation of additional considerations and views to regional policies for the support of innovation activities.

It was identified some commonalities of the Construction Sector in different EU regions with very similar obstacles and opportunities for innovation activities and the improvement of the Sector's excellence. We realised that It would be of interest the existence of a Construction specific support area at EU level for the promotion of innovation& RTD activities to overcome some similar challenges in several EU regions.

3.6 Greece – PARAGON

PARAGON organised a one-day regional seminar, “CONSTRINNONET Hellas”, on the 31st March 2004 in the Park Hotel in Athens. Copies of the event Invitation, Participants list, Poster, Program, link to purpose-developed regional project dissemination web-site, Presentations, and Summary Proceedings are annexed to this report.

Announcements/Invitations to “CONSTRINNONET Hellas” were sent to more than 600 Greek SMEs of the construction sector, (construction and construction-related).

Number of participants secured prior to the event			Number of participants at the event		
Organizer & Host:	PARAGON LTD	3 persons	Organizer & Host:	PARAGON LTD	3 persons
Speakers:	- CIB - IRC Help-Forward PRAXI Network - CARSA - CCIR - Hellenic Agroforest Enterprises - PARAGON - LFME	7 persons	Speakers:	- CIB - IRC Help-Forward PRAXI Network - CARSA - CCIR - Hellenic Agroforest Enterprises* - PARAGON - LFME	6 persons
Participants:	22 SMEs + 2 Government Institutions	32 persons	Participants:	9 SMEs + 2 Government Institutions	15 persons
GRAND TOTAL		42 participants	GRAND TOTAL		24 participants

Table: Number of confirmed participants & actual number of participants.

**Entities names and Participants list is annexed to this report. This list is based on the filled-in registration forms that accompanied the event invitations and were returned by the interested parties to Paragon via fax.*

Overview of the program of CONSTRINNONET HELLAS

The main objectives of CONSTRINNONET HELLAS for the participants/stakeholders, in summary, were the following:

- increase awareness level
- stimulation of contact and potential collaboration with regards to Innovation in the construction sector (entities, research, services, expertise), the CONSTRINNONET project, the Pilot Action Single-Entry-Point.

The envisaged outcomes of CONSTRINNONET HELLAS would be the dissemination of knowledge, building-up of new links/collaborations for the future (for all those concerned) and the possible generation of future projects (private ventures and/or RTD in Europe via proposal submission).

The programme of the event consisted of presentations, as also several purpose inserted breaks (coffee breaks, working lunch and dinner, round-table discussion) to facilitate contacts and interaction between the participants. The event programme is annexed to this report. In summary, the presentations made by invited speakers (excluding PARAGON which presented the CONSTRINNONET project, the Single-Entry-Point Pilot Action, and the FP5 CRAFT project AG-COAT), were as follows:

- **"Innovation in Building: The International Perspective"**, CIB-International Council for Research and Innovation.
- **"Innovation & SMEs: The Innovation Relay Centre Network"**, IRC Help-Forward PRAXI Network.
- **"Exploitation within own Business Activity vs. Exploitation through Spin-Outs"**, CARSA-Consultores De Automatizacion Y Robotica.

- **”The Agile Construction Site: Integrated & Visualisation Technologies to Manage the Construction Site”**, CCIR-Centre for Construction Innovation and Research/University of Teeside.
- **”A European Level of Co-operation for Innovation: The Greek Side/ (a) INNOCONS (FP5 project)/ (b) From INNOCONS to NANOCONEX (FP5 project)/ (c) From NANOCONEX to EXINAC (FP6 proposal)**, LFME-Laboratory of Fluid Mechanics and Energy/University of Patras.

Conclusions of the event:

- Despite the obstacles, scope of event, and the industry addressed, based on the number of secured and attended participants, it can be said that the issue of innovation in this sector has started to have a presence (for the SMEs). The SMEs are becoming increasingly aware of the shape of things to come, and that innovation is an integral need for securing increased presence in this future. Although the concept of innovation is not understood by the different actors in the same manner (no universal comprehension-needs based), it is recognised that it is the key for differentiation and enhancement of competitive position.
- Based upon the cumulative time allocated for interaction and the extra time provided, it is apparent that the SMEs of the sector need and want well structured opportunities to get to know each other and to share their ideas and concerns. SMEs want to broaden their circle of contacts (community) and there are not many opportunities available for this under a substantial and respectable aegis, e.g., CONSTRINNONET as a European project of international cooperation between established and multi-character partners.
- The whole scope of innovation, collaboration, and especially Europe and EU-RTD, must be promoted and disseminated in a more rigorous manner. Entities (community), Services, RTD, Europe, and collaboration ”culture” are not conceived or comprehended in a holistic manner (the whole picture so to speak).
- Probably the most primary result of the event was the identification of the need of SMEs to be given efficient access to a wide-range of data and information regarding the above mentioned topics via central locations (their value, their location, and their procurement at reasonable prices or even cost-free, with the least amount of bureaucracy). *A substantial example includes the announcement of the speaker of the CIB that the CIB will launch a free access database for all CIB publications and journals (over 1000), which was of definite interest to the participants.*

Short Evaluation on the course of the seminar

1. The final number of participants was lower than expected, due to external circumstances:
 - National Workers Strike on 31/3/2004. The Athens Workers Unions planned a demonstration for 11.00 a.m. on 31/3/2004 across from PARK Hotel. The final date and time of this was made publicly known the weekend prior to the event; hence the event date and change of speaker travel schedules could not be changed.
 - Due to the strike, all forms of Public Transport., e.g., buses, trains, trolleys or metro, were not available; this created traffic congestions that hindered with the arrival of the participants that were secured but could not come.
2. One of the invited and confirmed speakers, from Hellenic Agroforest Enterprises, pulled-out of CONSTRINNONET HELLAS at the last minute, without prior notice to the organizer. PARAGON was notified of this situation at the beginning of the event via a third party. This absence did result in a re-distribution of the programme series.
3. Despite the previously mentioned incidences and obstacles, the event was a success. What was observed however, and will be taken into account in the future for similar events, was

that although participants were interested in the presentations given, the participants were especially interested with the personal contact and conversation amongst themselves and the invited speakers, because such events (scope) rarely take place. For this reason the majority of the breaks were extended, time-wise. In addition, for maximum impact, such events (in the case that they are not carried out on a frequent basis) must exceed the 1 day mark and if possible to include demonstrations and media, e.g., video footage, etc.

3.7 Belgium – BBRI

On 5 June 2002, BBRI organized a national event on “Opportunities for SMEs in the 6th Framework Program for European Research” at the BBRI Offices in Brussels. The event was aimed at the Belgian Federations related to construction and about 35 representatives from regional, Belgian and even European federations participated in the event, after an invitation sent out to about 50 contacts. The morning session was devoted to presentations about the responsibilities of the different funding organisms in Belgium. A copy of the invitation and the programme of the event can be found in Annex 7 to this report. In addition, a copy of the presentations given at the event is annexed.

Mr. Marc Van Achter from the SME unit in the European Commission, gave a general presentation about the possibilities for SME’s to participate in European research programs. He highlighted both the existing and the new instruments, which will be used in the 6th Framework Program.

Mr. Alain Deleener from the IWT – Flemish Institute for the Stimulation of Science and Technology – presented the role of the Flemish contact point for the Framework Program. He explained that the main tasks of the NCP are to sensitize and inform potential partners in RTD projects about the opportunities for submitting project proposals on a European level. In addition, they provide assistance to the submitters of a proposal to find partners, identify the best key action in which to submit the proposal, etc.

Mrs. Claire Demain from DGTRE – General Directorate for Technologies, Research and Energy – presented the role of the Walloon Region in the regional guidance regarding research and development. She gave an overview of FP6 from the Belgian viewpoint and explained how DGTRE facilitates and stimulates research and innovation through funding programs.

Mr. Johan Van Dessel (BBRI) presented a case study of a successful CRAFT project, as an example of how innovation is possible, even for SME’s. However, he also highlighted certain limitations and barriers, which sometimes impede a successful outcome for such projects.

The presentations were followed by a round table discussion about innovation and research in Belgium. Issues such as time restraints, intellectual property rights and the characteristics of Belgian SME’s (very small firms with less than 10 employees) were raised as the main factors which inhibit innovation.

The conclusion of the day was that this information day about research and innovation in Belgium and Europe was a very good idea, most of the people present learned new things. More similar events should be organized in the future, also informing about specific topic such as patents etc.

4. Overall Review of the Country Seminars

All country seminars were seen as a key opportunity to inform the national construction SMEs as well as the innovation support providers about the CONSTRINNONET project. Information transfer from support organisations to the SMEs was also an important starting point.

Participation in the regional events was on average between 25 and 50 people. This is an excellent number for this kind of events, as such a group opens up possibilities for interactive discussions.

In some of the events, other CONSTRINNONET partners than the organising partner have participated. This has improved the transnational character of these events and contributed to the quality of the programmes.

In conclusion, the country seminars have resulted in advantages on two levels:

- ▶ On the one hand, the seminars were an opportunity to inform a wider public about the CONSTRINNONET activities
- ▶ On the other hand, it was an opportunity for the local construction industry to learn about innovation opportunities and the existing support measures.

5. Overview of Annexes (Presented on CD media - attached)

Annex 1: Finland

Annex 2: France

Annex 3: United Kingdom

Annex 4: Lithuania

Annex 5: Spain

Annex 6: Greece

Annex 7: Belgium