



EUROPEAN  
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Community research

# Co-operative Research projects for SMEs – Volume 1



*“Our project will provide European SMEs with practical help, allowing them to see how other markets work and to find the information they need to operate internationally.”*

information before they commit themselves to selling their products or services to a new market in another country. Market analysis can cover a range of issues such as customer needs, potential competition, local laws and regulations, and details about patents. With good information to hand, SMEs can make informed choices about going into international markets, and improve their chances of devising successful marketing and selling strategies. A Co-operative Research project called AMI-SME intends to bring together useful data sources and create a web-based search tool to help these companies access the information they need to enter and operate in new markets successfully.

At the moment, the approach used by SMEs to collect and analyse market information can be rather ad hoc. Many firms simply rely on internet search engines to find out what they need to know. Sometimes business associations and consultants can help them with certain details but, more often than not, an SME's approach to intelligence gathering is not particularly comprehensive and may easily miss useful information. What is more, the average European SME simply cannot afford to conduct continuous and extensive market research.

To address these issues, AMI-SME (Analysis of Marketing Information for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises) will gather, analyse and process vital information for firms that want to break into international markets.

## New tools

AMI-SME, which brings together 13 partners from five European countries, aims to produce an organisational toolbox and a web-based information retrieval system. The tool kit will describe the steps and methods required for information gathering during internationalisation. It will help SMEs understand the type of information they need to make informed decisions about entering new markets. AMI-SME will also produce guidelines to help firms analyse and interpret the information they receive – this will be particularly useful to companies before they use the project's information retrieval system.

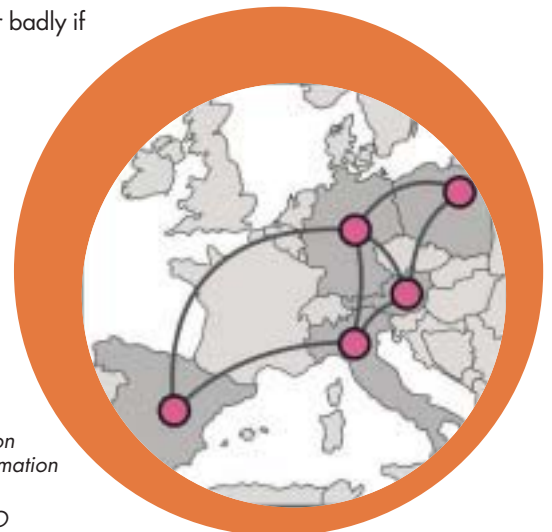
Essentially, this search tool will allow trained users from any SME or business association to gather intelligence about a particular market. Search parameters and even business ontologies can be entered allowing the user to tailor results to individual company needs. The data that can be accessed by the search tool will be drawn from a variety of sources including professional databases, company websites and government institutions.

## Searching for success

While the user interface of AMI-SME's search tool is designed for ease of use, it actually masks complex functionality that brings together a great deal of information culled from many sources. This reflects the challenges SMEs face as they struggle to make the right choices about going into new markets. The AMI-SME search tool will be suitable for all SMEs, whatever business they are pursuing. More industry-specific versions will be developed for biotechnology and simulation software, as and when such SME partners join the project. Business associations are invited to specify the search facilities for the benefit of the SMEs they work with. A number of consulting partners in the consortium are offering consultancy services for internationalising SMEs, which will be extended on the back of AMI-SME.

## Clearer thinking

AMI-SME should provide some transparency to the process of gathering and analysing information, allowing European companies to see how other markets work and what it will take to operate successfully in another economy. SMEs will be able to use the AMI-SME tools to make an informed choice about going into a market in the first place, as well as to plan their strategy if they do take the decision to move forward with international operations. Some firms still go into new markets on the strength of a hunch or a handshake with a contact. But that is not the best way to plan a business, and SMEs can suffer badly if



*Internationalisation is based on information and networks.*

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a new venture abroad does not work out. AMI-SME's outputs will reduce the risk of failure and boost the chances of SMEs forging lasting success, which should have positive benefits for the European economy in terms of creating exports and jobs.

## Project title

Analysis of Marketing Information for Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (AMI-SME)

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CT-2004-5875

## Duration

24 months

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€ 864 262

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## Project website

[www.ami-sme.org](http://www.ami-sme.org)

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