

In this issue

- Highlights
- News from working groups
- News from *InfoDev*
- News from members
- News from the coordinating office
- Funding opportunities

Highlights

Kyrgyzstan: Global working group 'Women-focused business incubation' held workshop meeting

The global workshop on **Women-focused Business Incubation** was successfully held in the Kyrgyz Republic on April 9-16, 2009. The event organized by the Congress of Women of the Kyrgyz Republic was an important milestone in the cooperation among incubators across the globe within the *Global Working Group on Business Incubation and Women (IWWG)*. The goal of the meeting was to discuss findings on women business incubation across the different regions and to create a body of knowledge as a basis for decisions of future activities. ECAbit participants included **Ms. Zamira Akbagysheva**, the host and project leader and **Ms. Rositsa Djambazova** from the Gotse Delchev Incubator, Bulgaria. For more information on the event please visit the [iDisc highlight story](#) and for IWWG membership, please contact [Zamira Akbagysheva](#).

Fontainebleau, France: INSEAD hosted the eight Knowledge Economy Forum of the World Bank

[The eight Knowledge Economy Forum](#) of the World Bank was

organized in partnership with the [INSEAD Business School](#) from April 29 to May 1st, 2009. The main goal of the series of forums is to support ECA countries in their transition to becoming increasingly knowledge-based. The Forum discussed different policies and practices to improve national innovation systems. Particular focus was given on the restructuring of research institutes and higher education and approaches to take science to markets and the required infrastructure to do so. Mr. Stefan Schandera, ECA regional facilitator presented the experience of ECAbit network in building successful incubators as part of the overall innovation and business support infrastructure. Stefan's presentation "Incubating the incubators: lessons learnt from Eastern Europe and Central Asia" could be downloaded from [here](#) and short results of the survey conducted among ECAbit incubators are available at the [network's web-site](#). Mr. Bagrat Yengibaryan, Director of the Enterprise Incubator Foundation (EIF) Armenia and Mr. Todor Yalamov, ECAbit network coordinator, ARC Fund (Bulgaria) participated in the discussions and networking among ECA policy makers, donors, researchers and firms.

Tenant companies from Macedonia, Russia and Turkey selected as Global Innovators by InfoDev

InfoDev [announced](#) winners of the Global Innovators Contest 2009 on May 28. Among the 11 winners, three have been incubated by members of the ECABit network. Stories of these start-ups will be showcased at the 3rd Global Forum in Brasil in October 2009. Congratulations to AdvertSMS, KONUS and RotaSOFT and their incubators - YES Incubator, Tambov Business Incubator and METU Technopolis incubator! Looking forward to meet all of them at the Global Forum.

New members to ECABit from Azerbaijan, Serbia and Bulgaria

Three new members to the ECABit network have been accepted by the Steering Committee in May. Congratulations to "[Uluchay](#)" Social-Economic Innovation Center from Sheki, Azerbaijan, [Business Technology Incubator](#) (BTI) of Technical Faculties Belgrade, from Belgrade, Serbia and [High Tech Business Incubator](#) (HTBI) from Burgas, Bulgaria.

Uluchay is a community based NGO active in the areas of youth business incubation, social entrepreneurship and provides wide range of training services and policy support, while BTI and HTBI are academic incubators focusing on commercializing of existing R&D know-how and entrepreneurial spirit of students at the universities.

Economic crisis and business incubation: ECABit Blogathon on 'Impact of economic crisis on business incubation' to be continued

In December 2008, ECABit started a blogathon on the impact of the current economic crisis on business incubation in the region. The

blogathon started December 8th (the First Global Business Incubation Day) and continued until 12th. It discussed the challenges to incubation in the period of financial crisis and to focus on sector or country specific differences. The objective was to understand the strategic response of incubators and incubation stakeholders (in particular governments) to the numerous changes in the environment as global recession, disappearing of investment banks, reduced financing at higher risks and costs and even bankruptcy of states.

We would like to invite you to continue the discussion, and to post your comment on the [ECABit's website](#).

News from working groups

ECABit Y2I announced winners of the Youth to Innovation Contest

Y2I working group successfully completed the Youth to Innovation (Y2I) competition in March with the winners being Alexei Leontiev from Russian Union of Innovation and Technology Centers and MIET business incubator (member of the ECABit), Dean Krstevski from Broker Inc (tenant company of YES Incubator, Skopje, Macedonia, member of the ECABit) and Steliana Economu, Romanian entrepreneur. These three winners will participate at the [3rd Global Forum on Incubation](#) in Brasil on October 26-30, 2009. The working group is finalizing lessons learnt from the pilot competition and will draft recommendations for future editions of the competition. More information about the contest, winners and jury could be found [here](#). Should you have ideas to share with the group or want to join, please contact [Radu Big](#), the group leader.

ECAbit ECOTourism working group solicits feedback and commitments

ECOTourism working group solicits feedback, suggestions and commitments over a concept note for a pilot ECAbit project, which has been distributed among members by the working group leader, **Ms. Rositsa Djambazova** from Gotse Delchev business incubator, Bulgaria. The main objective of the pilot is enhancing incubation capabilities and skills for the eco-tourism development in ECA rural areas. This translates into three specific objectives:

- **To encourage** better cooperation and partnership, communication, exchange of knowledge and experiences among business incubators and start-up supporting organizations operating in the area of eco-tourism in ECA;
- **To identify good** practice and successful tools of incubation for sustainable eco-tourism development;
- **To identify and involve** stakeholders in the area of eco-tourism on local, national and regional level.

Planned activities include needs assessment, knowledge sharing and project development. Should you want to join the working group, contact [Rositsa](#).

Other ECAbit working groups

There are two more groups – **TCNET** and **Investment readiness** within ECAbit, which have been discussing work plans, milestones and tangible results within this year.

TCNET discusses what the network could and should do in the area of providing training services and strategic alternatives for development of [mYconsultant.ru](#). Should your incubator is interested in providing of specific training services, you look for particular expertise of consultants or would be ready to share your

experience, write to [Marina Gill](#) and [Tatyana Shpuling](#).

Investment readiness working group is the newest in ECAbit, which resulted from a training workshop during AIECA 2008 in Tambov. For more information, please consult the [protocol](#) of the workshop. The rationale behind the initiative is that presumably many tenant companies or other companies in ECA have little knowledge and preparedness to attract different financing to their companies, even if they need it. Also, there are perceived institutional and structural deficiencies in the financing system in ECA, which prevents higher level of investments in SME. The working group is trying to identify and meet gaps in investment readiness of the companies and institutional environment in ECA countries. If you are interested to contribute to the activity of this group, write to [Ljupco Despotovski](#) and [Sophia Muradyan](#).

Should you be interested to start a new working group, take the leadership and just do it! The ECAbit [coordinator](#) would be happy to assist you in this!

Global working groups

InfoDev supports three global [thematic workgroups](#) as an additional institutional mechanism for networking among business incubators: *Women focused business incubation*, *Youth focused business incubation* and *High-growth ICT enterprise business incubation*.

There are two planned online discussions for this month: “Youth innovation survey – results, feedback and what is next” scheduled for June 24, 2009 (Youth Working Group, leader: [Radu Big](#), CDIMM, Romania) and Interactive Forum (June 8th to 19th) and live discussion on June 19th of the High Growth Working Group (members from ECAbit could contact

[Sophia Muradyan](#) to join the group or obtain more information).

Working group on women focused business incubation is collecting hard and soft data on women entrepreneurship and factors for its development and is preparing a draft resolution to be presented for approval at the 3rd Global Forum.

News from InfoDev

In May *InfoDev* jointly with IFC initiated [online discussion](#) over a recent [publication](#) of IFC Technology Transfer Facility. The transfer of technologies, its institutional infrastructure, prerequisites and impact on innovation and incubation of new businesses are in the focus of activity of at least a few ECAbit members and have attracted interest of more of them. All incubators are invited to consult the report and provide their feedback.

In June *InfoDev* jointly with UNESCO supported the [edutechdebate.org](#) website, which seeks to promote a sustainable discussion of how educational technology initiatives in developing countries are relevant to the groups they serve. All incubators are invited to contribute to the discussions their views on what educational technology initiatives would more effectively support the entrepreneurship and human capital needed in their countries.

In late May, the Olafsen-Clinton family welcomed its newly born daughter Nora! ECAbit network extends its warmest congratulations to Ellen and Tim and wishes a bright entrepreneurial future to Nora!

News from you?

You are welcome to [send](#) suggestions for news and developments both about incubators from the ECAbit network and its tenants/clients to be included in the next newsletter before June 29.

News from members

[Polar Star](#) business incubator just celebrated its first year of operation as the first Norwegian-Russian business incubator. Polar Star builds-up on a successful operation of SIVA center in Murmansk, Russia since 1999. For the experience of Polar Star tells Ms. Alma Karabeg in an [interview at iDisc](#). ECAbit congratulates Polar Star and wishes its tenants success in pursuing their visions.



[Uluchay](#) Social-Economical Innovation Center (SEIC), which recently became a member of ECAbit, was founded in 1995 as a local NGO from Sheki, Azerbaijan with the mission *“to create favorable conditions for people living in Northwest Azerbaijan, to help to overcome hindrances politically, legally, socially and to support their civil rights, with the help of local community and abroad.”*

Uluchay is active in a number of areas of common interest to many ECAbit members, such as youth incubation, women empowerment and agricultural sector. Most recently, its [Sheki Youth Business Initiative](#) attracted significant interest among local community and public-private support towards training of young people on business planning, accounting, marketing, time management, etc., organized a competition of innovative business ideas and provide technical and financial support for realization of the most promising youth visions and plans, tells Ilay Safarli, president of Uluchay. The three winners, which successfully started-up small

businesses in 2008, and continue to be incubated by Uluchay are:

- ⇒ Design Studio – the main aim was to develop Internet Technologies in Sheki region creating of websites, providing different designing services. The budget of the business plan is \$2115.
- ⇒ Second hand store – the purpose of the project was to create a store for poor people of Sheki with cheap price and good quality clothes. The budget was \$ 1670.
- ⇒ Mehriban Girls' Café – the main aim was to create the place where girls can drink tea, coffee and rest. The budget was \$ 1286.



The High-Tech Business Incubator (HTBI), Burgas, also a new member of ECABit was just awarded a grant to support academic entrepreneurship in “Prof. Assen Zlatarov” University, one of the leading Bulgarian education and research centers in biotech and chemical engineering. The grant is part of a larger [US-Bulgaria IT/Innovation Partnership](#), which will provide seed and matching funding for start-up private and public-private initiatives. HTBI has already built a technology-transfer office within the Assen Zlatarov University, tells Todor Stanev, HTBI executive director. Plans include building modern laboratories, where private R&D could be outsourced to academic spin-off companies.

One of the other first six grantees of the same program, [ARC Fund](#) will support the Bulgarian ICT policy reevaluation and identify short and long-term challenges and institutional and policy solutions to increase Bulgarian ICT competitiveness and sector growth. Mr. Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia, Mr. Nikolay Vassilev, Minister of State Administration and Administrative Reform, US Ambassador to Bulgaria Nancy McEldowney and many ICT executives attended the launching event of the initiative.

Gordana Danilovic Grkovic, General Manager of the Business Technology Incubator, Belgrade, Serbia has just received the award Business Lady, within the project Successful women of Serbia, Club of business journalists of Serbia. Congratulations to Gordana!

News from the coordinating office

Some ECABit members already have expressed their interest that the ECABit coordinating office would send support letters to respective authorities and/or donors introducing the 3rd Global Forum to them and extend an invitation to support incubators from their country to participate at the Forum. Should you be interested in similar support, please do not hesitate [to contact](#) the coordinating office.

ECABit members are invited to regularly update their incubator's profiles [at iDisc](#). iDisc profile directory is a powerful marketing and networking tool within the global incubator community.

Funding opportunities

In this section information for funding of potential collaborative projects among ECABit members/tenants is provided. Geographical restrictions prevent, as a rule, application of all members, but this should not be a barrier to utilize these opportunities for

network development as well. In some of the announcements call identifier is provided, which can be used to obtain all documents from [EuropeAid](#).

Joint Operational Programme “BLACK SEA 2007-2013”

Deadline: **June 30, 2009**

Grants: from 50,000 to 700,000 euro

Eligible areas: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria (NUTS II regions of Severoiztochen and Yugoiztochen), Greece (NUTS II regions of Kentriki Makedonia and Anatoliki Makedonia – Thraki), Georgia, R. Moldova, Romania (NUTS II region of South-East), Russia (Rostov Oblast, Krasnodar Krai and Adygea Republic), Turkey (NUTS II equivalent regions of Istanbul, Tekirdağ, Kocaeli, Zonguldak, Kastamonu, Samsun and Trabzon), Ukraine (Odessa, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Zaporoshye and Donetsk Oblasts, Crimea Republic and Sevastopol).

The **overall objective of the programme** is to **achieve stronger regional partnerships and cooperation**. By doing so, the programme is aiming to contribute to its key **wider objective**: “**a stronger and more sustainable economic and social development of the regions of the Black Sea Basin**”. The programme’s 3 **specific objectives**, based on those of the ENPI CBC Strategy Paper, are:

- Promoting economic and social development in the Black Sea Basin areas;
- Working together to address common challenges;
- Promoting local, people-to-people type actions.

More information at the [Black Sea Cross-Border Cooperation](#).

Non-State Actors in Development: Tajikistan

Deadline: July 3, 2009

Grants: from 50,000 to 300,000 euro

Eligible partners: Non-state actors from Tajikistan and EU member states
Call identifier: EuropeAid/128404/L/ACT/TJ

Promoting Youth Employment (PYE) Grant Scheme: Turkey

Deadline: September 14, 2009

Grants: from 100,000 to 400,000 euro

Eligible partners: From Turkey and EU member states

Call identifier: EuropeAid/128729/D/ACT/TR

Non-State Actors in Development: Armenia

Deadline: September 21, 2009

Grants: from 50,000 to 200,000 euro

Eligible partners: Non-state actors from Armenia and EU member states

Call identifier: EuropeAid/128679/L/ACT/AM

CIP Eco-Innovation

Deadline: September 10, 2009

Grants: 50% co-financing, no upper limit on budget

Eligible partners from EU 27, Macedonia, Croatia, Montenegro, Israel, Albania, Serbia, Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Turkey and other non-EU countries, provided they have signed an agreement to participate in the program.

More information at the [Eco-Innovation web-site](#).

Youth in Action: Funding opportunities in 2009

Deadlines: various deadlines within 2009

Specific action line targeting innovation: September 30, 2009

Different action lines have different targeted countries.

More information at [Youth in Action web-site](#).

Global Development Network: Regional Research Competition

Deadline: July 15, 2009

Grants up to 20,000 USD

Purpose: Research proposals on wide area of issues including enterprise

development, labor markets and various public policies

Eligibility: Applicants must be residents of any of the following countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Kosovo

(UNMIK), Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Full call announcement could be downloaded from [CERGE's web site](#).

Contact us! Share your news, opinion and vision for incubation development in Eastern Europe and Central Asia!

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