Project Summary

Project Background
The shortage of relevant Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) - skills and competences in Russian small and medium enterprises (SME) is considered to be a severe drawback regarding their growth and competitiveness, and operational business contacts with their EU counterparts. Only 21% of companies have their own network for communication. Most managers and personnel lack ITC and ITC-related skills.

Project Objectives
The project had the following specific objectives:
• to promote ICT based business operations in SMEs through benchmarking, awareness raising and building local ITC consultancy capacity,
• to enhance efficiency of SMEs through improved e-skills of their staff;
• to capitalise on best practices of ICT in selected SMEs and disseminate them to other companies and stakeholders

Project Activities
Activities fell into three components
1. Promotion of ICT-based business
   • identification of best-practice cases in SMEs
   • situation analysis of ICT operations in SMEs and benchmarking against European standards
   • identification of pilot enterprises; audits and pilot projects in SMEs
2. Capacity building, skills assessment and training
   • training needs assessment regarding E-skills
   • assistance to SMEs in developing training plans
   • training of E-skills (classroom, e-learning, web-based training)
   • training of trainers (ToT) for local consultants
3. Awareness creation and feedback
   • communication strategy
   • website, dissemination events
   • feedback of experiences to industry as well as government level

Implementation Features
The project focused on two pilot regions in NW Russia with the objective of further dissemination to other regions. To this end the initial project experience and the local capacity was used to disseminate good practices. This entailed a.o. the development of training courses relevant for the main economic sectors of these regions, which were partly different from the focal sectors of this project.

Services Provided
• Situation analysis for ICT in SMEs
• ICT pilot projects in SMEs
• training programmes for ITC in SMEs
• dissemination from pilot SMEs to the broader audience