

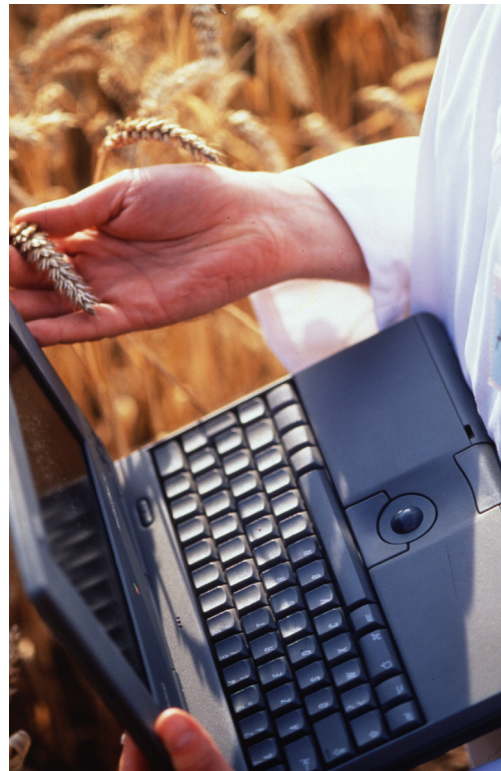
# RUBIES

## Rural Business Information Exchange System

With the rapid expansion of ICT and increased business use of the internet, rural (especially peripheral) SMEs should no longer be disadvantaged in the “knowledge economy” as they are able to access a wide variety of business information to generate knowledge. However, Rural SMEs often lack the skills and knowledge of ICT needed for sustainability and growth, while they also lack support for these services. Inconsistencies have been identified in information provision and although gaps still exist in some information areas, information overload is also becoming a more critical issue. The RuBIES project seeks to address the problems faced by rural entrepreneurs in sourcing, processing and using pertinent and timely business support information to make efficient and effective entrepreneurial decisions.

### Objectives

- The main objective of the RuBIES project is to provide relevant and meaningful assistance and support to rural businesses and SMEs in the Northern Periphery.
- The project aims to solve problems of information exchange and provide new solutions and methods for it from the demand driven point of view. It will also undertake a mapping exercise of the supply of information to the demand for that information.
- The project aims to raise the general awareness of rural SMEs and their advisors of the possibilities and assistance that advanced ICT solutions can provide them.
- A sub-objective of RuBIES is to support the formation of regional, national and transnational networks and encourage co-operation between SMEs, advisors and information suppliers through exchange of information and experiences using both ICT-solutions and providing forums for personal contacts in partner meetings, regional, national and international meetings and conferences.



## Project activities

The project is being implemented in four overlapping phases including:

- Research phase that has focused on understanding information and the advice that land-based businesses use, where they source it and through which technologies they can access it. This phase has also identified how information and advice is currently supplied to these businesses and will make recommendations for modernising this supply, taking account of end-users needs.
- A design phase that will create pilot solutions to facilitate better access to business information and advice. It is anticipated that this will be achieved through software development and hardware developments, as well as developing information delivery methods.
- A testing phase that will trial the pilot solutions created with selected end-user groups; allowing the best solutions to be identified and further enhanced. This stage of the project will be conducted in close collaboration with representatives of the end-user groups and key institutions providing information and advice to groups.
- A state of the art technology watch is on-going throughout the life of the project. This ensures that RUBIES will provide tools that are not only appropriate for the existing technologies available but also take into account innovative technologies which may be utilised in the peripheral regions in the future. In addition to this, a best practice review of systems of information provision and knowledge transfer is being undertaken that will provide information and ideas for the design of appropriate tools.

## Expected results

- Identification of information flows and media in rural SMEs
- Analysis of the demand for and supply of information and services
- SME ICT skills assessment
- Matrix-matching identification of SME user groups, information and service gaps and blockages
- Participatory demand driven information system design and meta-data infrastructure design. This specification will lead to outsourced bespoke technology development.
- The innovation in this project lies in refining widely the results of the research phase and the technology watch into new solutions developed from the user perspective. Through the solutions developed, it will be easier for entrepreneurs to find and develop new business opportunities and thereby improve the efficiency of their businesses.
- The long-term effects of the project are to widen and strengthen the SMEs and new networks in the regions. New enterprises are supported after the project by the new network and advisory services of partner organisations, and new business activities by the model created during the project.

## Partners

PICT Innovation - Scotland

University of Helsinki, Seinäjoki Institute for Rural Research and Training - Finland

Technological Institute of Iceland - Iceland

UD – Project – Iceland

Rural Economy and Agricultural Society of Norrbotten County – Sweden

Rural Economy and Agricultural Society of Jämtland County - Sweden

## Project website

<http://www.rubies.eu.com>

### Measure

1.2

### Total Budget

714 093

### NPP Award

355 954

### Project Period

14/09/2003 – 14/09/2006

### Countries Involved

Scotland, Finland, Sweden, Iceland

### Lead Partner

#### Organisation

Scottish Agricultural College, Scotland  
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### Project leader

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