



Alliance Creator Network

Annual report 2012

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Generating greater value for the European ICT industry

Mari Ervasti & Minna Pikkarainen

VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland

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Sirris

(Eds.)



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Abstract

We need novel ways to translate scientific advances into marketable innovations in Europe. This is even more important now when ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) promise to command an even greater share of economic activity. ICT innovations are typically taking place in a context of increasing complexity of services and products. In this situation, it is extremely difficult for companies to play the innovation game alone. Creator – a European level expert network – was launched in 2012 in order to support innovation through expertise hubs in various countries. The purpose of the Creator alliance is to support the ICT industry so as to enhance its innovation processes and create international alliances in order to design and deploy innovations on the global market.

During 2012 we started to build a trusted network between three organizations – Institut Mines Télécom, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland and Sirris – sharing our visions and portfolio of R&D projects. The visions and content of the R&D projects were based on the common collective challenges that we have identified, based on our continuous, close work with the small and medium-sized enterprises in our own SME hubs. During the first year of Creator, we worked on the content of the R&D projects in media, energy and smart grid, big data and trust and security domains. Additionally, we launched 14 R&D projects, of which 8 were particularly successful, that directly support acceleration and the go-to-market approach of the SMEs in our network.

So far, our collaboration in the Alliance Creator Network has already helped 30 small and medium-sized enterprises in France, 26 in Finland and 6 in Belgium. Our work made it easier for companies for which European research is something new to enter into the projects. The expert network worked as an architect and trusted research partner in the project preparations. A series of events and seminars were organised with the companies so as to support them in their search for new funding and building new partnerships with players in different European countries. Next year, our target within Creator is to continue the great work with R&D projects, but also to create novel services that help our enterprises gain competitive advantage in their business aims.

Keywords

Alliance Creator Network, ICT company support

Preface

The aim of this report is to give an account of the success of Creator every year so as to be able to make sure that the Alliance Creator Network will serve its stakeholders, ICT industry in particular.

During 2012, the Alliance Creator Network was working hard making access to international R&D projects easier for ICT companies. Altogether, we supported 87 companies – 41 in France, 35 in Finland and 11 in Belgium.

- 62 SMEs¹ were involved into the European projects.
- 14 European projects were supported.
- A total of 80 million Euros were applied: 42 million Euros especially for SMEs.
- Topics such as smart energy and ICT, big data problems, and go-to-market approaches were covered in our research agenda.
- Additionally, the first joint services were provided to companies to help them connect with novel European partners or customers in their field of business.

Looking ahead, in 2013 we will continue our great work with the industrial alliances!

Minna Pikkarainen

Founder of Alliance Creator Network in VTT

¹ “The category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is made up of enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons, and which have an annual turnover not exceeding 50 million euros, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding 43 million euros” (European Commission, Extract of Article 2 of the Annex of Recommendation 2003/361/EC).

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1. Generating greater value in European industry

1.1 Letter from Institut Mines Télécom

Institut Mines Telecom brings together the major engineering schools in France on domains like ICT, energy, materials and management. Its research is known to deliver recognised expertise and major innovations. The Institut Mines Télécom is close to the industry actors, large companies as well as SMEs, with a network of incubators which generates 110 start-ups per year and a 150 more mature SME clubs.

The business today is accelerating continuously with the pressure of innovation. The rate of evolution is so high, and it is no longer affordable to redevelop existing technologies, but all the industrials need to create alliances to master this evolution and to remain in the business. The innovative SMEs are at the heart of this acceleration.

We participate in the French economic development, speeding up innovation and building industrial alliances. These alliances are supported by special R&D projects that are dedicated to business and are called triptych projects (large companies, SMEs, researchers). We intend to use research as a business development tool. After numerous successes in France we intended to extend these principles at the European level and set up the Creator alliance with VTT and Sirris.

After one year, this alliance already appears to be very successful. It has supported the growth of 62 European SMEs, thanks to strengthening technology and gaining access to customers through these triptych projects. Creator was a big gamble, and it has now proved to be such a great success that we intend to extend over the next few years to the profit of the European industrial ecosystem.

I am grateful to VTT and Sirris for collaborating with us on these targets in our common interest.

Philippe Letellier
Innovation Director
Institut Mines Télécom

1.2 Letter from Sirris

Sirris is the collective centre of the Belgian technological industry, representing more than 2,400 member companies. Its main goal is helping companies to increase their competitiveness by technological innovation. As an industry-driven non-profit organization, Sirris has a long tradition in realizing technological innovation in companies and with companies. In order to meet its goal, Sirris realizes more than 5,000 industrial interventions per year (technological advice, shared industrial research and development projects, and innovation services) within 1,840 different companies, of which 75% are SMEs.

As a strong network organization with a broad industrial ecosystem, we are fully aware of the reality and the consequences of an open economy. In that context, we cannot underestimate the importance of international collaboration if we want to exploit the potential impact of R&D on business development and go-to-market in the ICT sector. Now more than ever, we strongly believe in the critical added value of a European ecosystem, consisting of diverse and very complementary partners.

This was in origin the main goal of Creator, namely boosting ICT innovation in European industry by creating international industrial alliances and by turning R&D in ICT into tangible industrial innovations.

I am very pleased to see that after one year, Creator is already delivering concrete results by involving 87 companies in international industrial alliances. The setup of this international alliance and expert network between Sirris (Belgium), Institut Mines-Télécom (France) and VTT (Finland) was clearly a valid and pertinent decision. We feel the three partner organizations have strong complementary skills and each is adding unique experience to the network. The results so far prove that this kind of international alliance and ecosystem delivers the appropriate outcome to tackle little by little the well-known innovation paradox.

We are glad the Creator alliance has helped us pursue this ambitious goal and will continue to do so in the future. But I am also convinced that we are only at the beginning of the real potential of this alliance.

Last but not least, I want to thank the Creator partners Institut Mines-Télécom and VTT for keeping the entrepreneur's spirit high in starting up this initiative and feeding it with professional people and creative ideas.

Jeroen Deleu
Director
Sirris

1.3 Letter from VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland

VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland is a globally networked multi-technological applied research organization. VTT provides high-end technology solutions and innovation services. We enhance our customers' competitiveness, thereby creating prerequisites for society's sustainable development, employment and well-being. Recently, VTT has created a novel portfolio of services addressing the special needs and wants of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The purpose of these services to SMEs is to integrate our knowledge and expertise in different areas of technology into a more easily accessible form, and thereby to create growth companies for the Finnish economy. One of these new services for SMEs is called "Creator". It helps SMEs to reach global markets and competences by forming international industrial alliances of SMEs that are bigger and stronger than any single company. By means of such alliances, the services of research and technology organizations like VTT also become more affordably available.

I am pleased to announce that the first year of Creator has already showed great success in attracting some 70 SMEs into the network. Creator has helped not only SMEs but also VTT to identify new innovation opportunities and to link them to concrete R&D activities. It has also strengthened our international networks, especially with the partnering research organizations **Institut Mines Télécom** (France), **Sirris** (Belgium). While Creator's real success cases in the international growth companies are still in the pipeline, the alliances have already helped their partners in getting significantly more funding for their R&D projects. We are happy to continue Creator during 2013 and to create even better support and services for our SMEs.

Tatu Koljonen

Vice President

VTT, Information and Communication Technologies

1.4 Alliance Creator Network in a nutshell

The well-known European paradox refers to the perceived failure of European countries to translate scientific advances into marketable innovations. At a strategic policy level, good actions are already in place to cope with this paradox. Nevertheless, in practice it remains difficult for companies to penetrate into the global market with their ICT innovations.

This issue deserves particular attention, since ICT technologies promise to command a greater share of economic activity. Today ICT is everywhere; it is used more for innovation than ever before!

The size and effectiveness of investment in software-related R&D can determine economic performance and international competitiveness more broadly. Many firms beyond the traditional software sector embrace software development as a complement to their non-software products, and use ICT as a proper means to innovate.

So as to face this important change, several challenges need to be tackled. The much-discussed knowledge deficit in the ICT sector results in a potential shortage of skills and forces companies and knowledge centres to focus on industrial knowledge development and avoid dispersion of capabilities.

ICT innovation efforts are taking place in a context of increasing complexity of services and products. Furthermore, the delivery of software products on time, within budget and with an acceptable quality, remains challenging.

Companies need to innovate continuously and rapidly in order to survive in today's global competitive market environments. The deployment of ICT innovations needs to be quick and efficient. The current trend is to detect innovation ideas as early as possible, and to deploy them into the global market as soon as possible.

Hence, the deployment of ICT innovations needs to be efficient and fast. The industry has reached a stage where **no more companies are able to play the innovation game alone**. This calls for the creation of industrial business-oriented alliances² focused on innovation.

More and more, companies choose to innovate in collaborative models. These can take many different forms, ranging from peer-to-peer collaboration between two SMEs to large ecosystems of companies centred on larger ICT players.

1.4.1 Three partners, one shared goal

As a response to this need, **Institut Mines Télécom** (France), **Sirris** (Belgium) and **VTT** (Finland) joined forces in Creator, a European expert network that supports ICT innovations through company networks in the various countries. Starting

² Cf. Business ecosystem = Extended system of mutually supportive organizations, "communities of customers, suppliers, lead producers, and other stakeholders interacting with one another to produce goods and services" (Moore, 1998).

with France, Belgium and Finland, Creator aims to support the ICT industry in enhancing its innovation processes and creating international business-oriented industrial alliances to design and deploy ICT innovation on the global market.

Creator's three partners bring together the same strong vision and ambition to tackle the issues of fast go-to-global-market of intrinsic complex ICT services and products. Each partner has an extended local industrial network and an in-depth knowledge of local ICT companies and their industrial challenges.

The partners can rely on each other's experiences in innovation, the creation of new opportunities and bringing innovations to the market.

The goal of the alliance Creator is to support the ICT industry in enhancing its innovation processes and creating international alliances to design and deploy innovations on the global market. The three partners have their own unique contribution in this strategic alliance³. Institut Mines Télécom (IMT) is recognized for its strong involvement in supporting large, medium-sized and small companies. Sirris is a leading player in the realization of industrial technology-driven innovation. VTT is an international top research institute, known for its experience in the setup and realization of shared industrial ICT research projects. The extended industrial network of all three partners and their combined knowledge puts them in a unique position.

1.4.2 Creating alliances, step by step

Creator supports different types of industrial alliances.

In a first stage, Creator has focused on Industrial R&D alliances. These are alliances that boost ICT innovation in European industry by bringing together companies into large industry-driven European research projects. Over the past year, Creator has been very successful in this area, as many projects have been launched in the various research frameworks that are available for ICT research (ITEA 2, FP7, EU SME and EIT ICT Labs).

Next to setting up these R&D alliances, Creator was also involved in setting up industrial business-oriented alliances between companies in the different countries. Often these are peer-to-peer relations between SMEs from Belgium, Finland or France. Creator helps companies find business partners from other European countries.

In both cases, the goal of Creator is to reduce the complexity of the alliance construction for SMEs. This complexity stems from the fact that novel innovations require a new kind of partnership, e.g. partnering with a company having a novel technology solution. However, SMEs do not often know or have access to suitable partners, especially from other countries. In addition, they have limited resources and are focused on their own core business. What is more, markets are hard to understand, such as the domain of health and well-being which is strongly affected

³ Strategic alliance formed by three research organizations in Creator.

by different strict regulations. In this way, Creator is helping the SMEs gain access into either European research projects and/or find suitable partners. The combination of the three large industrial networks of the Creator partners is a unique asset that makes it possible to link European companies together based on their business needs, their competences, experiences and resources.

To turn this into practice, the Creator partners have worked out a specific approach.

The Creator partners share insights in the emerging collective ICT themes for innovation and the national challenges in their respective countries. The result is ideas and concepts for ICT research projects that meet the needs of European ICT companies.

On a regular basis, in-depth workshops are organized between the Creator partners, in which these collective ICT innovation opportunities are shaped, and ideas for project concepts are distilled. Business-oriented industrial alliances are formed, that can result in industrial R&D projects.

The Creator partners support the creation of these alliances from an early idea to the moment of submission and even beyond during execution. This involves several activities such as participating in brokerage events (ITEA PO Preparation Days, Celtic-Plus Proposers' and Networking Day, ARTEMIS Brokerage Event).

The Creator work structure is described in Figure 1.

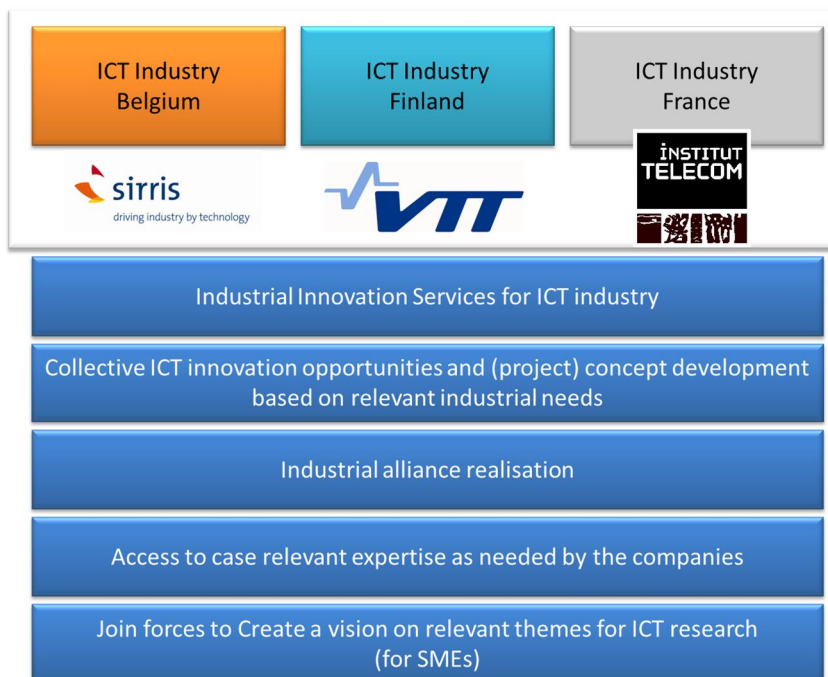


Figure 1. Creator work structure.

1.5 What has been done during the 2012?

European countries often find it difficult to translate scientific advances into marketable innovations. The reasons for this lie in the fact that companies are often fragmented in terms of their go-to-market strategies. Business-oriented cross-country collaboration is, therefore, needed in Europe in order to survive the competition with the US.

In the Alliance Creator Network we have started to work towards this goal, and we have already produced great results by pursuing emerging innovation opportunities through the utilization of the SME networks. In the following, the main results gained during 2012 are overviewed.

1.5.1 Industrial innovation services for the ICT industry

Currently, the Alliance Creator Network has a systematic process to help innovative companies with similar business ambitions. In Creator, we continually help European companies to join international alliances.

During 2012 we started to create joint industrial innovation services to help ICT companies find business partners and potential customers from other European countries. Through the joint services we aim to help companies improve their innovation and go-to-market approaches. Over 60 SMEs in different sectors have been supported by open innovation process. Five workshops have already been organized together with Sirris, VTT and Institut Mines Télécom in order to gather initial ideas for the common service development. Although we have already achieved some great results, this work is just in its initial phase.

Thus, the first Creator result highlights are concerned with linking organizations between countries based on their business needs and purposes. In the following, some examples of the linked companies and cases are introduced.

- **Case 1:** Business & technology matchmaking in **emergency & manufacturing**. A Belgian company active in emergency management was introduced to a French organization by IMT. In addition, a Finnish company active in manufacturing automation was connected to a Belgian company specializing in indoor location technologies.
- **Case 2:** Business & technology matchmaking in **wellness**. 11 SMEs providing ICT wellness solutions for elderly people were evaluated in Finland in order to clarify their business needs and collaboration barriers in this continuously growing market. Among evaluated SMEs one was connected with a new Finnish sensor provider that was then integrated with wellness platform provider in France. The next step is to link these companies with the wellness and healthcare SMEs in France in order to create concrete links between those companies so as to enable new innovation creation.

- **Case 3: Business & technology matchmaking between different sizes of companies in different domains.** A workshop was organized in France, where Finnish and Belgium companies were introduced to large French players. Additionally, we started to share our research expertise. Collaboration agreement was made between the three research institutes.

1.5.2 Collective ICT innovation opportunities and concept development based on industrial needs

During the first year in the Alliance Creator Network, we shared insights into national challenges and themes, delivering a synthesis as a result and formulating ideas for the new European project ideas. In 2012 we identified and created 25 new project concepts, of which 14 were later turned into alliances, and 8 were eventually successful in terms of funding.

The following five main concepts and themes were created:

- **Big data:**
Pierre Pleven (IMT), Nick Boucart (Sirris) & Matias Vierimaa (VTT)
- **Energy & ICT:**
Jean-Hugues (IMT), Olivier Biot (Sirris) & Minna Pikkarainen (VTT)
- **Wellbeing:**
Denis Abraham (IMT), Philippe Thiran (Sirris) & Minna Pikkarainen (VTT)
- **Go-to-market:**
Stephane Lubiarz (IMT), Wim Codenie (Sirris) & Päivi Jaring (VTT)
- **Governance:**
Philippe Letellier (IMT) & Wim Codenie (Sirris) & Päivi Parviainen (VTT).

New projects related to these topics, and short summaries of each thematic concept are introduced in the following.

Big data

With the development of enabling technologies, a wealth of public and organizational data is available for and through collective intelligence applications. We see an unprecedented increase in data being produced by both humans and machines. Thanks to the advances of numerous cloud initiatives, it is now possible to gather, store and process these vast amounts of data. Furthermore, software solutions have become available to manage vast amounts of structured as well as unstructured data. However, specific data mining knowledge and training is required to actually perform complex knowledge discovery. Several challenges face the data owners in creating value with their data.

For data owners, whether it is health, logistics, business intelligence, manufacturing or geospatial intelligence data, it is vitally important to understand its nature, the information content and its correlations and context. However, knowledge

discovery is a complex task that is still an open challenge for Big Data. This leads many (software -intensive) companies to explore the possibility of innovating with data they are capturing to be used as a part of these future ICT services. The challenge they face is applying the knowledge and hence realizing the value of their data with appropriate tools and infrastructures.



CAP project (*Collaborative Analytics Platform*) proposes an innovative platform for analytics services for collective intelligence applications. This infrastructure brings data owners and data scientists together so as to create knowledge by and for cloud services. More information on CAP project's ITEA page <http://www.itea2.org/project/index/view/?project=10162>.

Energy & ICT

Environmental, economic and sustainability challenges linked to the continuously increasing energy consumption are present in Europe as well as in the rest of the world. The importance of energy policies is, therefore, increasing all over the world. Some relevant results of these policies can presently be seen, for example in a significant increase in distributed and renewable electricity generation in the EU and increasingly competitive electricity markets. Although the impact of these changes can be considered very relevant, more research and development of new solutions is required in order to further increase the energy efficiency and sustainability. Meeting the challenges requires cross-industry co-operation and the means for consumers to impact their energy consumption in terms of amount and type of energy consumed, as well as enabling an increase in renewable energy distribution and generation via micro-grids.

Increasing energy efficiency requires taking advantage of the potential contribution of all related stakeholders of the energy business; a transition to a more consumer-focused operation paradigm is needed. Turning this concept into a successful reality, enabling the stakeholders to significantly contribute to a more energy-efficient society and sustainable energy industry is, however, a huge challenge. Introducing new methods of operation, tools and new business models, able to sufficiently interest energy consumers to participate in the overall efficiency and sustainability goals, are key points that must be addressed. The new methods, tools and business models must be supported by the required information and automation technology, so that the huge investments that have already been made in this sector can be exploited.



SEAS project (*Smart Energy Aware Systems*) aims to increase energy efficiency and sustainability via smart energy-aware systems in building and micro-grid environments. More information on SEAS project's ITEA page: <http://www.itea2.org/project/index/view/?project=10156>.

Wellbeing

Our modern lifestyle, inactive information work and fast-food culture has caused an increase in health risks such as obesity, stress and sleeping problems. These health risks have correlations to various diseases and high costs in healthcare. Sensor technologies and sensor meters play important roles in the future wellness and health market, working as enablers for the different types of wellness and health solutions. However, the rate of adoption of such systems is still slow, and these technologies have only just begun to penetrate the market.

Novel ICT solutions are an important way to help European citizens and at the same time decrease the enormous, increasing health care costs in European

society. However, European SMEs are facing several barriers when doing business outside their own country. In practice, SMEs have plenty of valuable ideas that they can never demonstrate, evaluate, implement or sell in other European countries due to the variability problems, lack of resources and lack of awareness of different market situations.



*Some of the Creator SMEs were involved in **EIT ICT Labs business development** funnel in order to support them with their challenges. More information about the Business Development Accelerator: <http://www.eitictlabs.eu/business>.*

Go-to-market

Innovation is the development of new customer value through solutions that address the user and market needs. This can be done through more effective products, processes, services, technologies or ideas. In today's global competitive market environment, no ICT company can survive without innovation and an effective go to market approach. But innovation in industry requires more than just creation of technology. It requires accelerated commercialization or aptly called "go to market" processes. Many companies are searching for new ways to rapidly validate the match between the market and their innovative ICT-intensive technology. The current acceleration market consists primarily of knowledge providers and large sections of acceleration are not taken into account, because they require specific technological innovations.

Thus, for most ICT intensive system builders, the major problem is no longer delivering and engineering the software. The real challenge is more and more situated in the go-to market process. How can bringing ideas to the market be accelerated and made more successful?



Accelerate project (A platform for the acceleration of go-to market in the ICT industry) aims to create services based on technological innovation, advanced processes and new software technologies that will enable a massive adoption of acceleration know-how. More information on Accelerate project's ITEA page: <http://www.itea2.org/project/index/view/?project=10166>.

Governance

Software Development Governance (SDG) is increasingly important to the success of companies engaged in large software-intensive projects. However, today's SDG practices are often vague and sometimes competing. Governance in general is the "exercise of management power and policy" (Wikipedia, 2012). Software Development Governance specifically comprises: (1) the structure of decision making for a software development effort: the roles involved in decision making and the "chains of responsibility" of those roles; (2) the means for monitoring the decisions, including information collected (metrics) and the mechanisms for collecting that information, and, (3) the way the activities of the development effort are controlled (methods, processes, and norms). SDG helps software projects deliver value by ensuring that projects are aligned with business goals. SDG reduces risk by providing insight into the development effort, and promotes communication among developers and decision-makers. SDG facilitates motivation by defining clear roles and norms derived from sound principles.

While point solutions exist that address specific aspects of SDG, there are at present no *comprehensive* SDG solutions. Furthermore, current SDG tool offerings are large, monolithic tools that are consequently difficult to integrate into an existing development environment.



SDGear project (*Software Development Governance (SDG) as a Service*) aims to take a giant leap from today's vague, competing and emergent software governance practices towards well-defined, highly adaptive, iterative and efficient software development governance by developing the first cloud platform that enables offering SDG as a service. More information on SDGear project's ITEA page: <http://www.itea2.org/project/index/view/?project=10164>.

1.5.3 Industrial alliance realization

Two types of industrial alliances (industrial R&D alliances⁴ and business-oriented alliances) have been created during the Creator's first year. At the level of joint R&D, our goal is to invite and help SMEs enter into R&D projects fast all over Europe. We also aim to design the project proposals with a business vision so as to use research as a business development tool. Our work has made it easier for European industry to enter into R&D projects and find business partners from other European countries. The projects have been prepared from the different topics to different European forums such as ITEA, FP7 and EU SME (accounting for seven ITEA projects, three FP7 projects, two EIT ICT Labs projects, one Eurostars, and one EU SME project). Co-operation has been mainly achieved within ITEA and EIT ICT Labs but some project proposals have also been supported in FP7.

In Creator, the aim is to involve companies in a project, and, therefore, the projects are created for SMEs based on their collective industrial needs. Our goal is to help companies to have their research funded, and to reduce the complexity of project construction for SMEs. Without Creator, most of the SMEs would not have succeeded in getting access to European research projects. So far, Creator has

⁴ Alliances that boost ICT innovation in the European industry by bringing together companies into large industry-driven European research projects.

integrated more than 80 companies (over 60 SMEs) from Finland, Belgium and France into European R&D project initiatives (see Figure 2).

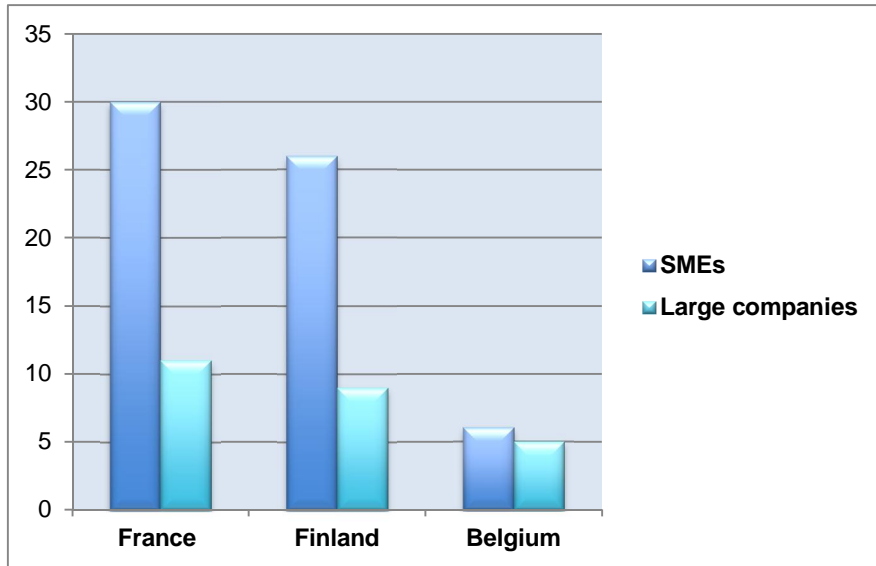


Figure 2. Number of companies involved in 2012.

Global integration of industry into the alliances has enabled the three Creator partners VTT, IMT and Sirris to apply over 17 million Euros from different European forums (Figure 3).

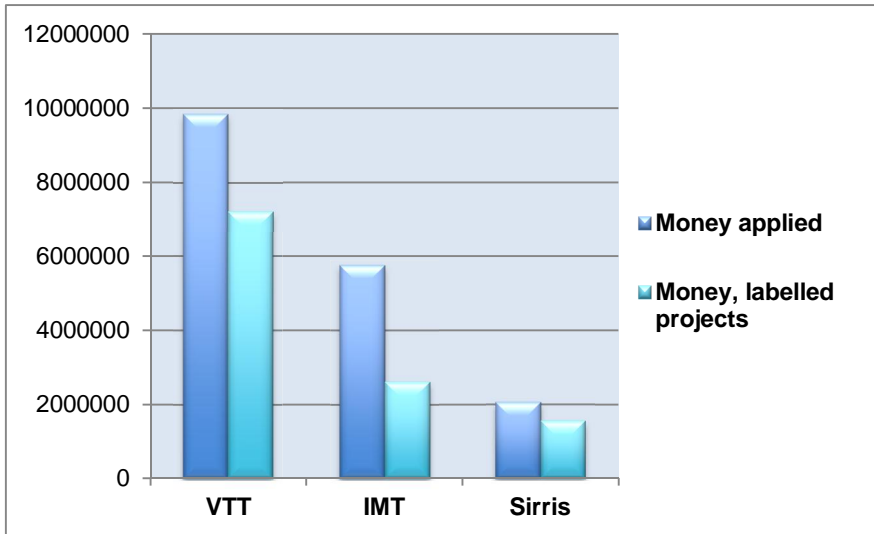


Figure 3. Money applied by each Creator partner.

Since 2011 Creator has helped 87 companies enter into new projects that covered the strategic research areas such as energy and smart grid, big data, go-to-market approach, company governance, wellbeing, and international collaboration. Figure 4 summarizes the money applied via the Alliance Creator Network under the main research themes (previously overviewed in section 1.5.2).

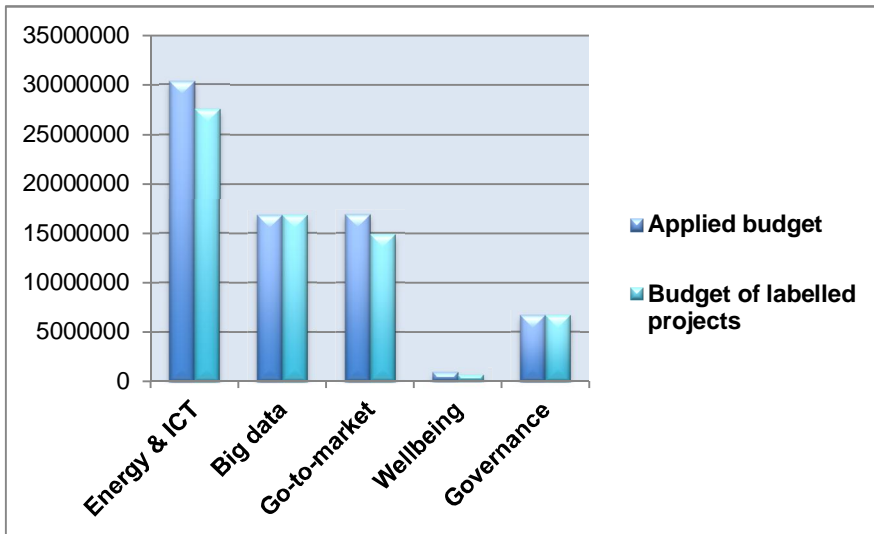


Figure 4. Money applied per theme.

In sum, a globally integrated trusted network allows us to focus our research resources on industry-oriented work and enable rapid deployment of research results.

1.5.4 Access to case relevant expertise as needed by the companies

Creator has helped companies find the best research partners from an industrial point of view by means of, for example, organizing and inviting companies to thematic workshops.

We have organized one workshop in Rennes, France, in which technologies by VTT, Sirris and IMT were presented to more than 100 companies in France. This workshop provided opportunities for e.g. French companies to gain access to research expertise in France.

Another Creator workshop was organized in Oulu, Finland, where Sirris and Institut Mines Télécom presented their cloud programs to more than 100 companies.

One additional workshop was also conducted in Oulu, Finland, where the goal was to identify collaboration opportunities between the partners of the EIT catalyst and other ecosystem builders such as TIVIT in Finland.

1.5.5 Join forces to create a vision of relevant themes for ICT research (for SMEs)

Based on our joint knowledge, we have already identified new emerging research themes based on the collective industrial challenges and project themes. This work will continue and be more in focus during 2013–2014.

1.5.6 Summary

During 2012, Creator's first year, three partners, Sirris, Institut Mines Télécom and VTT, have established a continuous collaboration, including, for example, a series of thematic workshops that have had the following impacts:

- More than 80 companies (of which over 60 SMEs) have been integrated into European R&D projects.
- Additionally, the collaboration promoted starting the in-depth work of linking business strategies of selected companies.
- Business ideas for joint service creation have been collected in order to help the ICT companies improve innovation.
- Technologies of VTT, Institut Télécom and Sirris have been presented to more than 200 companies in France and Finland.

2. Creator success stories

2.1 Sensorfit (from Finland)

Sensorfit is a company dedicated to following and coaching physical activity via smartphones. Our main product is the Activity Tracker mobile application, and our target is to distribute our app through application markets and also find partners who will benefit from our apps, such as partners developing solutions for smart clothing.

Creator has helped us to get funding and connections with international partner candidates. We are looking forward to achieving real co-operation during 2013 with these companies, as collaboration with big companies will help us to grow faster. Participating in projects will also give us new information and know-how on how to innovate more intelligent Sensorfit products.

We are expecting novel opportunities in the technology and business area from Creator in 2013. I believe this co-operation with Creator is very important for Sensorfit, as it opens important doors and provides more opportunities for success.



Marko Kailasuo

CEO, Co-founder of Sensorfit Ltd.

<http://www.sensorfit.com/en>

2.2 Amplidata (from Belgium)

Amplidata goes from big data storage to big data analytics

“We work, among others, for service providers – such as telecoms – who use our products in order to store their large amounts of data,” says CTO and co-founder of Amplidata, Wim De Wispelare. “In addition, the media also rely on our technology to store their archives, for example. Research institutes, who often use their data in an international network, are a third group of customers. And governments are also part of our customer base.”

Innovation in the DNA

Amplidata is a start-up. Founded in 2008, the company currently employs a team of 45 employees spread across offices in Belgium, the United States – in California and soon in Boston – and Taiwan. Growing fast, obviously.

“But it is clear that we must continue to innovate,” adds Wim De Wispelare. “Making the move from data storage to data analytics is a logical step that we must take if we want to further strengthen our market position. That’s why, when Sirris came knocking on our door with the European project proposal, we did not hesitate for a second.”

The growth of a European research project

ICT consultant at Sirris, Nick Boucart, who co-designed the project, explains: “Under Creator, we are, along with various country managers, dealing with the topic of ‘Big Data’ that is currently very hot. In this context, we considered that it would be an interesting idea for a Belgian industrial engineering company to fit its machines – which are operating the world over – with measuring equipment, from which data can be extracted in order to produce clear analyses with regard to optimum productivity or potential problems. A particularly interesting case that shifts the demand for data analytics – until now mainly stemming from Internet services and marketing – to the industrial world.

The partners under Creator – Sirris, Institut Mines-Télécom and VTT – went looking for potentially interested parties in order to jointly start a research project on this subject. As a result, not only did the industrial engineering company get involved in this process, but also La Poste in France, another player with a lot of data. And Squid, a French player specialized in data visualization.

“We talked to three companies in Belgium, including Amplidata, a major and growing player in the big data market. The company is able to obtain grants from IWT for this collaboration,” says Steven Van den Berghe, ICT consultant at Sirris.

“In fact, with Creator we look at where different businesses intersect, and we examine how they can develop a market which until then has not existed,” adds Nick Boucart. “The collaborative analytics project, in which Amplidata is taking part, will run for three years once it is approved.”

Solid ambitions, thanks to unshakeable support

Wim De Wispelare: “We should make the move to data analytics anyway. Google and Facebook were the first to show that it can be used to create value. We will explore ways to build the same analytics technologies into our storage systems. This project allows us to accelerate this step. Firstly, because there is now a very concrete project on the table and secondly, because we are also supported financially.”

He adds: “As a matter of fact, Sirris also acts as a guide for us. Such a European project is complex in nature, in terms of both administration and regulations. On your own as a company, we would never know where to start.”

Even though the project has been in the works for a year already, it is still in its infancy. What are the expectations? “For us, it is a strategic project that revolves

around the expansion of our core business. We therefore expect a lot from it,” says Wim De Wispelare. “Not only do we want to know how we can build analytics functionalities into our systems; we also hope this will allow us to develop a new market. You must remember that many machines are currently not even connected to the Internet. We hope that, in time, it will enable us to expand our activities, increase our turnover considerably and attract a corresponding number of new employees as a result.”



Wim De Wispelare
CTO, Co-founder of Amplidata
<http://www.amplidata.com>

2.3 Santech (from France)

The starting point of Santech was the launch of a collaborative project, headed by Santech and called ReVAD, the French acronym of “Network that Helps you to Live at Home”, which is a technological project dedicated to launching an open platform designed to facilitate Active Healthy Ageing. We now are a software company focused on the development of a set of tools enabling our VAR, Value Added Resellers, to design intelligent service platform facilitating health prevention, coaching about chronic diseases and wellbeing at home for the elderly. Our added value is based on two points:

- Ergonomic tools designed to **enhance the involvement of end users** in the management of their health capital
- Communication tools designed to **organize the information flow** between the end user and the health ecosystem, taking account the specificity of each stakeholder (medical, services, personal help, ...).

As Santech is only a year old, our short term objective is to be regarded as the French leader in our domain.

As we have said, we are at the beginning of our story. Creator has opened our eyes to the multinational aspect of our business and the necessity to quickly prepare the next strategic steps that will obviously partly be taken in Europe, the US and Asia. To date, we have met some potential technological business partners three times in two product lines (medical and prevention), and we have participated in the preparation of two collaborative projects with them. We have gone to Berlin and Helsinki. My feeling is that this is only the beginning. The positive point is not only technological as I am sure that we can learn locally from others and that we should be able to form partnerships in order to address a bigger market.

We have been involved in two collaborative projects. Each time we have been coached by our local contact in France and everything has been done to make it easy. Thanks to the support available, I can tell you that it is a lot easier for us to participate in these kinds of projects than it is to coordinate a local one! As far as the content is concerned, the programmes have helped us to think about the perspectives of our business within 2 to 3 years and to be prepared in this respect. For the time being, I am convinced that if our collaborative projects were to be funded, it would help us to make the right partnerships and to be time to business.

We would appreciate the same support from Alliance Creator Network in 2013. I think that today it's our turn to harvest the benefits of this first year by concretizing the first contacts that we have made. In the meantime, we expect some meetings with the programme representatives in order to identify how we could speed up the process and identify additional potential partners. There might also be some opportunities to collaborate with multinationals abroad.

Regarding the impact of the Creator collaboration for our business in the long term, we have to think European and to be prepared to think global. Thus Creator is the perfect programme to move us from a local approach to a global one.



Christophe Lorieux
CEO, Co-founder of Santech
<http://www.santech.fr>

3. Objectives for 2013

Our goal is to **provide concrete innovation support to European companies, both large enterprises and SMEs, operating in the ICT domain**. This innovation support is realized in new industrial R&D and business alliances and in innovation funding through projects.

To **increase the impact of what Creator** offers, we aim to:

- a) Broaden the service offering by creating a portfolio of joint services that will be offered on a European scale, and
- b) Further deepen the synthesis of the partner competences and knowledge of new hot thematic concepts so as to support our industrial partners and create a European level vision for ICT R&D in the form of a strategic research agenda (SRA).
- c) Continue successfully started support to SMEs in Europe.
- d) Broaden the Creator strategic alliance to another new country with the addition of a fourth new partner.

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We also wish to express our gratitude to all those great people in our own organizations and our stakeholder networks who have been supporting Alliance Creator Network on our way towards great success, which for us means business success i.e. growth, increased revenue, and novel innovations of the small and medium-sized enterprises that we help now and will help in the future.

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Title	Alliance Creator Network Annual Report 2012
Author(s)	Mari Ervasti, Minna Pikkarainen & Wim Codenie
Abstract	<p>We need novel ways to translate scientific advances into marketable innovations in Europe. This is even more important now when ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) promise to command an even greater share of economic activity. ICT innovations are typically taking place in a context of increasing complexity of services and products. In this situation, it is extremely difficult for companies to play the innovation game alone. Creator – a European level expert network – was launched in 2012 in order to support innovation through expertise hubs in various countries. The purpose of the Creator alliance is to support the ICT industry so as to enhance its innovation processes and create international alliances in order to design and deploy innovations on the global market.</p> <p>During 2012 we started to build a trusted network between three organizations – Institut Mines Télécom, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland and Sirris – sharing our visions and portfolio of R&D projects. The visions and content of the R&D projects were based on the common collective challenges that we have identified, based on our continuous, close work with the small and medium-sized enterprises in our own SME hubs. During the first year of Creator, we worked on the content of the R&D projects in media, energy and smart grid, big data and trust and security domains. Additionally, we launched 14 R&D projects, of which 8 were particularly successful, that directly support acceleration and the go-to-market approach of the SMEs in our network.</p> <p>So far, our collaboration in the Alliance Creator Network has already helped 30 small and medium-sized enterprises in France, 26 in Finland and 6 in Belgium. Our work made it easier for companies for which European research is something new to enter into the projects. The expert network worked as an architect and trusted research partner in the project preparations. A series of events and seminars were organised with the companies so as to support them in their search for new funding and building new partnerships with players in different European countries. Next year, our target within Creator is to continue the great work with R&D projects, but also to create novel services that help our enterprises gain competitive advantage in their business aims.</p>
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Alliance Creator Network

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