



Innovation.bg: a National Reform Agenda

Innovation.bg is Applied Research and Communications Fund's overall program for shaping the national innovation policy agenda. It combines several components, which offer expertise, own policy building and impact assessment know-how. Over several consecutive years each of the following tools acts towards building innovation culture for boosting the efforts of the public and private sector for a successful transition to an innovation economy.

***Innovation.bg* report**

Since 2004 the *Innovation.bg* report offers to stakeholders a comprehensive annual performance assessment tool, which provides independent analysis of the national innovation system and the innovation performance of the national economy, based on original survey and other micro-studies. *Innovation.bg* applies its own original methodology to assess the degree of business innovation activity, based on the understanding of the types of innovation and the degree of novelty of introduced innovation products and processes. The innovation index of the Bulgarian economy is an integrated indicator for innovativeness on company level measuring four types of innovations: product, process, marketing and organizational. Traditionally, the *Innovation.bg* report assesses Bulgaria's innovation potential in five fundamental fields:

- 1) Gross Innovation Product, which indicates the results of the national R&D system;
- 2) Entrepreneurship and innovation networks – the launch of new enterprises and the bounding of the existing ones in international R&D networks;
- 3) Investment and Financing of Innovation – considers the role of foreign direct investment and the import of R&D products and knowledge in the transfer of foreign products and knowledge as well as the available instruments for R&D investment;
- 4) Human capital for innovation – reviews the available human resources needed for innovation development; and
- 5) Information and communication technologies (ICT) – which analyses the existing ICT infrastructure as R&D catalyst.

Innovation.bg offers policy recommendations and reviews the national policy as part of the European innovation policy. It is being published annually stressing upon up-to-date economic and financial challenges.

National Innovation Forum & Innovative Enterprise of the Year Award

The National Innovation Forum is an annual high-profile event, which brings together all stakeholders to discuss the innovation environment in Bulgaria. The event passes under the highest-level auspices and with the participation of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Prime Minister, and relevant Ministers.

Another component of ARC Fund's strategy to support the development of the innovation process in Bulgaria is the annual Innovative Enterprise of the Year Award. It is awarded to Bulgarian enterprises that have successfully introduced innovations or Bulgarian scientific accomplishments, thus transforming their operations and achieving sustainable economic effect. Evaluation of the companies is being conducted by a three-stage methodology. The winner in each of the two categories receives a statuette – the symbol of the competition.

Expert Council on Innovation

Since 2003 ARC Fund has established an Expert Council on Innovation, which consists of specialists from the academia, universities, business incubators, innovative companies. It operates to advise the relevant institutions in Bulgaria on innovation and research issues. The council is the peer review committee of the *Innovation.bg* report; it draws the evaluation methodology under which the Innovative Enterprise of the Year Contest is held and performs the expert evaluation of the shortlisted companies; the Council acts as an advisory board on shaping Bulgaria's R&D policies.

Business Club

ARC Fund has also established an Innovation Business Club, which brings together innovative companies to promote the exchange of information, experience and best practices. Most of the member companies have participated at the Innovative Enterprise of the Year contests. The club meets once in three months and works for improving the competitiveness of companies through the implementation of innovative practices and solutions towards achieving greater involvement of stakeholders into solving the problems of development and adoption of innovation. The club uses the expertise of the Expert Council of Innovation to organise R&D training seminars.