



Enhancing Russian SME collaboration  
and business development through  
Communities of Practice

## **The RUSMECO project**

# Presentation Overview

RUSMECO: 6th Framework INCO project (STREP);  
two year duration (May 2005 – May 2007).

3. Project background
4. Looking back – research approach
5. Current status – the community
6. Future outlook – next steps



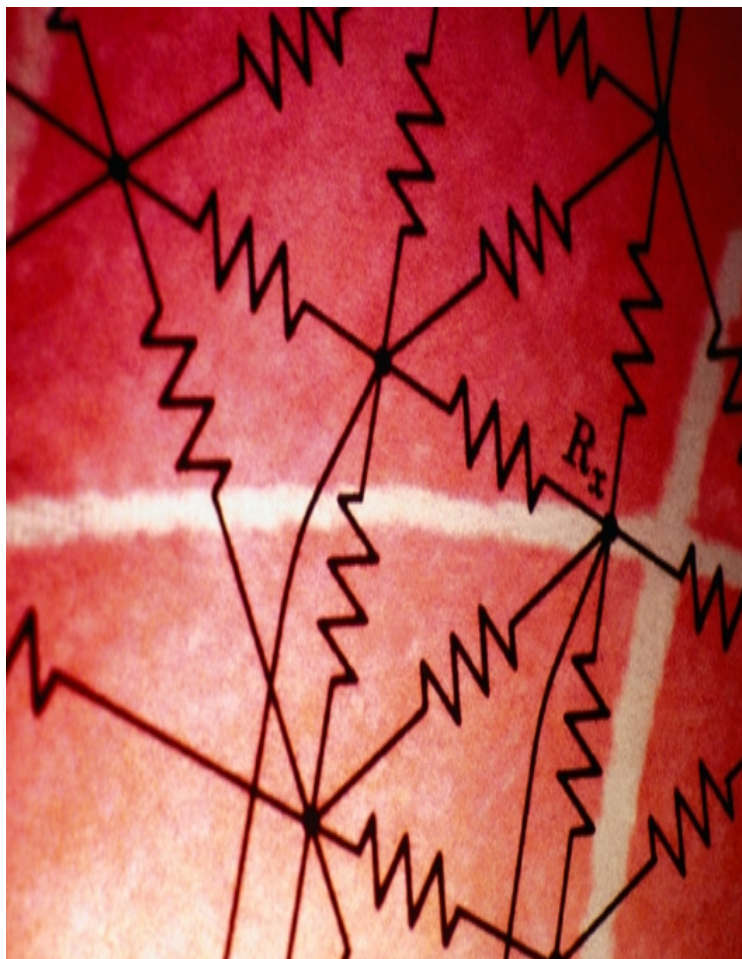
# 1. Project background

## Supporting SMEs = Supporting Economic Growth

Innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (iSMEs) in Russia:

- important economic role and significant innovation capabilities
- struggle to compete on a global scale due to a lack in management skills
- competitiveness could be improved by giving them access to practical knowledge and expertise

# 1. Project background



**Ru SME Co**

= **Russian innovative SMEs  
Community of Practice**

Aim: Enhancing Russian SME  
collaboration and business  
development through communities of  
practice.

Focus: Moscow, St. Petersburg and  
Ekaterinburg.

# 1. Project background

"[CoPs are] informal groups of people bound by a shared practice related to a set of problems".

Snyder and Wenger (1999)

CoPs ...

- a) work on common problems
- b) share insights, experiences, information
- c) mentor and coach each other
- d) generate plans for future activities



# 1. Project background

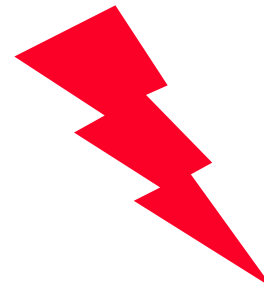
## Impact of culture on collaboration

### Cultural dimensions impact

- how people talk to each other
- how they work with each other
- how they share experiences and knowledge

#### *German managers:*

*“Russian executives seldom show their position openly but argue very vaguely on the basis of general moral values.”*



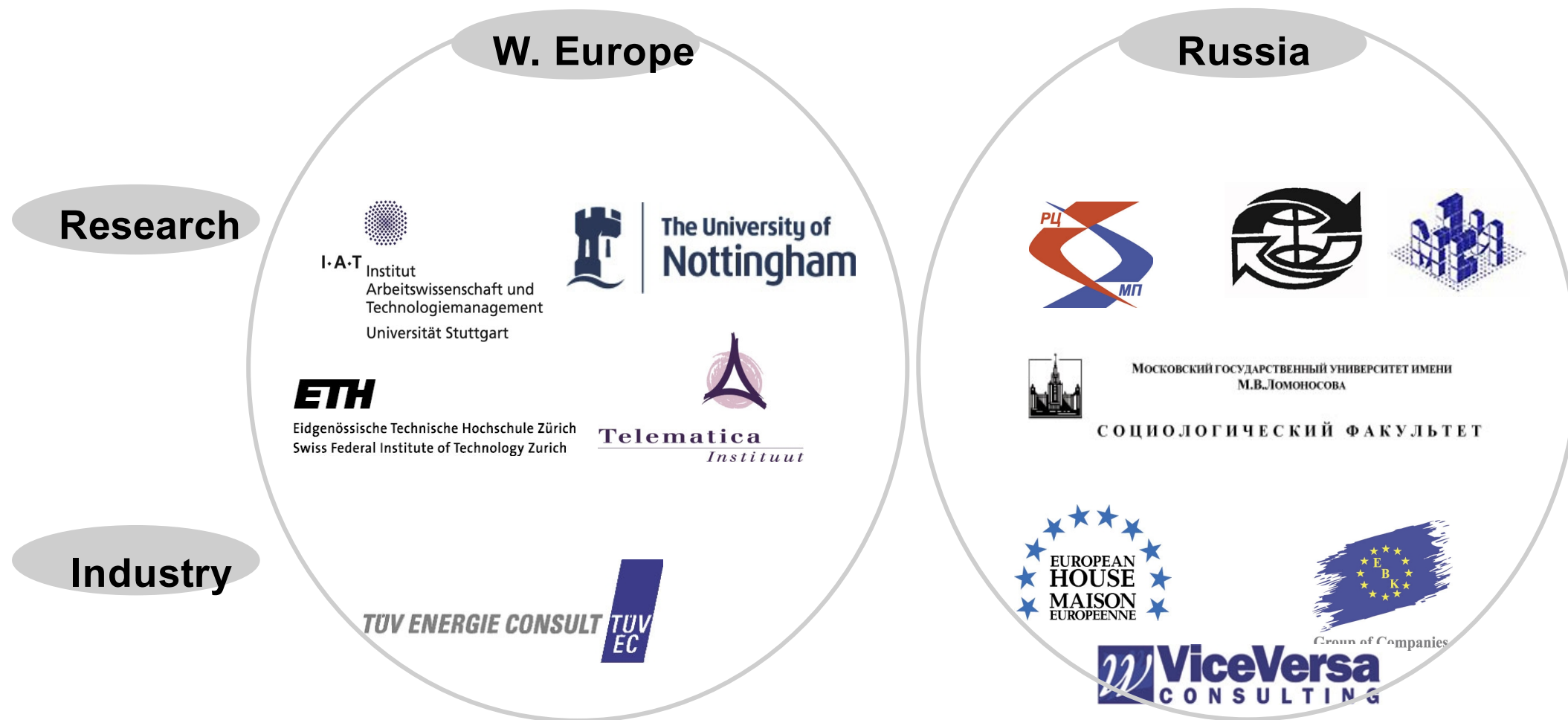
#### *Russian managers:*

*“German executives frequently have a materialistic and strongly profit oriented attitude and neglect social aims.”*

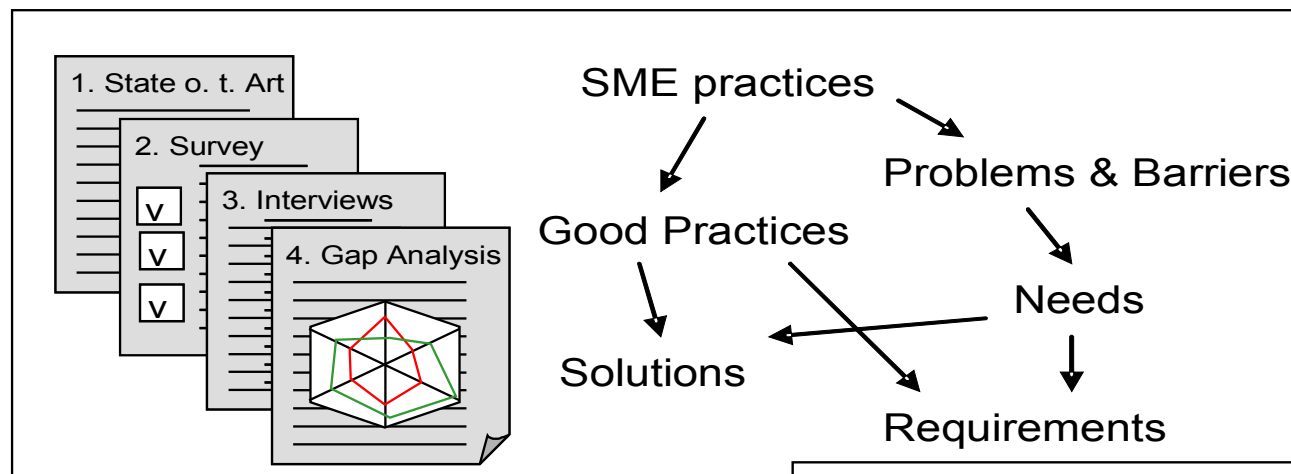
(Holtbrügge 1996)

# 1. Project background

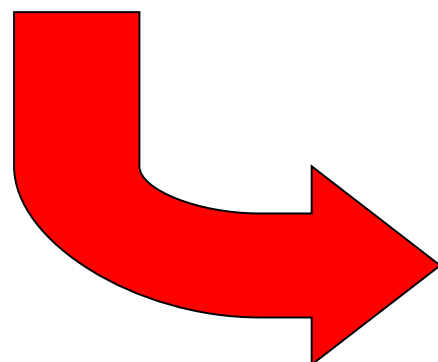
## Consortium



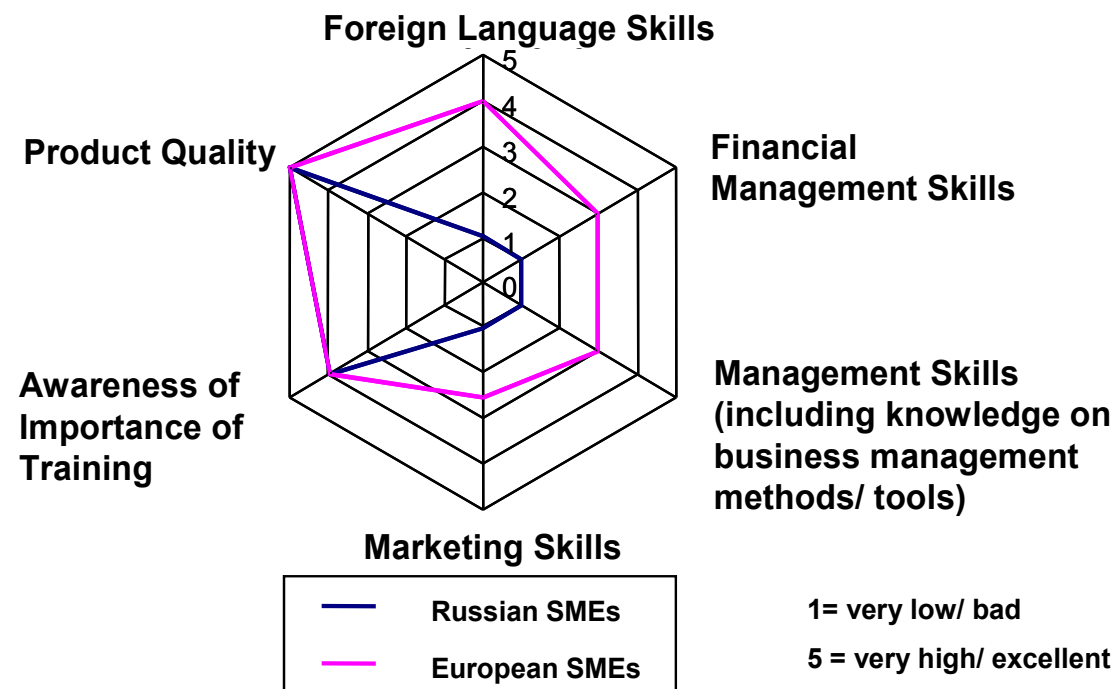
## 2. Looking back – research approach



- Literature analysis
- Own research: survey with interviews (53) + questionnaires (81)



### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT: SKILLS/COMPETENCIES



## 2. Looking back – research approach

### Extract of survey results:

- The concept of communities, and especially Communities of Practice, is **something entirely new** to Russian iSMEs.
- Collaboration and **knowledge sharing is less common** in Russian organisations.
- **Personal relationships** are crucial to build up trust and to enable collaboration.
- Russian SMEs prefer the **local community** for choosing partners
- ...

# 3. Current status – the community

CoP elements

Blended Training

F2f events



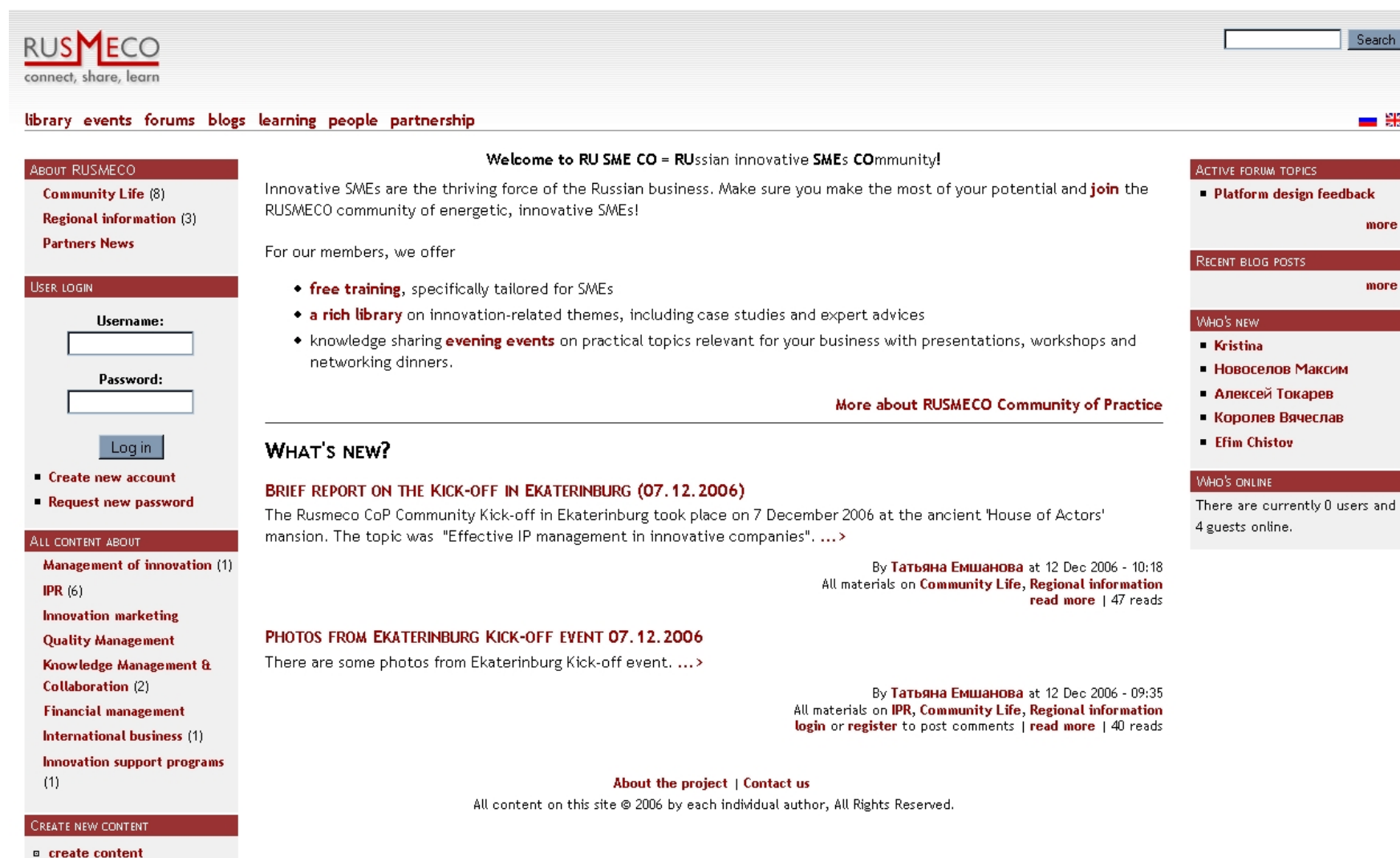
Online events

Community portal with

- library (case studies, articles, ..)
- forums, blogs
- events calendar
- profiles (companies, persons)
- brokerage area
- self-assessment tools

# 3. Current status – the community

www.rusmeco.ru



The screenshot shows the homepage of the RUSMECO website. At the top left is the RUSMECO logo with the tagline "connect, share, learn". To the right is a search bar. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links for "library", "events", "forums", "blogs", "learning", "people", and "partnership". There are also flags for Russian and UK.

The main content area features a welcome message: "Welcome to RU SME CO = RUssian innovative SMEs COMMunity!". Below this, it states: "Innovative SMEs are the thriving force of the Russian business. Make sure you make the most of your potential and **join** the RUSMECO community of energetic, innovative SMEs!".

For members, the site offers:

- ♦ **free training**, specifically tailored for SMEs
- ♦ **a rich library** on innovation-related themes, including case studies and expert advices
- ♦ knowledge sharing **evening events** on practical topics relevant for your business with presentations, workshops and networking dinners.

There is a link for "More about RUSMECO Community of Practice".

A "WHAT'S NEW?" section highlights a "BRIEF REPORT ON THE KICK-OFF IN EKATERINBURG (07. 12. 2006)". The report describes the kick-off event on 7 December 2006 at the 'House of Actors' mansion, with the topic "Effective IP management in innovative companies". It is attributed to Татьяна Емшанова, dated 12 Dec 2006 - 10:18, and has 47 reads.

Another news item is "PHOTOS FROM EKATERINBURG KICK-OFF EVENT 07. 12. 2006", which is attributed to Татьяна Емшанова, dated 12 Dec 2006 - 09:35, and has 40 reads.

At the bottom, there are links for "About the project" and "Contact us", and a copyright notice: "All content on this site © 2006 by each individual author, All Rights Reserved."

The left sidebar contains sections for "ABOUT RUSMECO" (Community Life (8), Regional information (3), Partners News), "USER LOGIN" (Username, Password, Log in, Create new account, Request new password), and "ALL CONTENT ABOUT" (Management of innovation (1), IPR (6), Innovation marketing, Quality Management, Knowledge Management & Collaboration (2), Financial management, International business (1), Innovation support programs (1)).

The right sidebar contains "ACTIVE FORUM TOPICS" (Platform design feedback, more), "RECENT BLOG POSTS" (more), "WHO'S NEW" (Kristina, Новоселов Максим, Алексей Токарев, Королев Вячеслав, Efim Chistov), and "WHO'S ONLINE" (0 users and 4 guests online).

### 3. Current status – the community

#### Topics of the next months

Topic	On-line event	F2f event	Training
Intellectual Property Rights		+	-
Collaboration Management	+		Online
Quality Management		+	Blended
Innovation supporting programs and projects	+		Online
Marketing of Innovation	+		Blended
International Business		+	Blended
Knowledge Management	+		Online

# 3. Current status – the community

## Kick-off events

- Moscow (Zelenograd): November 16, 2006
- St. Petersburg: November 24, 2006
- Ekaterinburg: December 7, 2006



## 4. Future outlook – next steps

### Next steps

- Support the community (f2f events, online events, trainings, portal)
- Test and improve the platform and our community concept
- Develop a roadmap and policy recommendations for the future sustainability of the community
- Write a book about our project and the community

## 4. Future outlook – next steps

*"Differences of habit and language are nothing at all if our aims are identical and our hearts are open."*

*J. K. Rowling*

### Some lessons learned so far

- The age of the participants is important for designing the community events (online/offline).
- Participants have more interest in exchanging practical ideas than in theoretical advice.
- It is crucial to have a good concept for the worksessions.
- Building up trust is the main challenge.

# Contact

[www.rusmeco.net](http://www.rusmeco.net) (project website)

[www.rusmeco.ru](http://www.rusmeco.ru) (community portal)

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