

The Approach of Project Management of SMES in Turkey: Analysis of EU LDV Projects

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Abstract

SMEs have very important roles and functions in the economy. SMEs which are the driving forces of the economy in developing countries are in different quests in terms of getting finance for both their expanding overseas and for business operations. In this sense, there are different projects offering economical, social and cultural opportunities to SMEs. One of the outstanding ones in our country is the European Union projects.

This research consists of the review of the literature on the subject as well as the LDV (Leonardo Da Vinci) mobility projects which are the kinds of European Union projects and the works of SMEs in our country. The research carried out through the secondary data acquired from the National Agency, the short name of which is the Presidency of the European Union Education and Youth Programs includes the project application statistics of SMEs between 2004-2012 according to the provinces, project issues, and the number of people benefiting from these projects, and the relevant information related with the amount of funding provided by this means. As a result of this research, a number of proposals about project management have been submitted to SMEs operating in our country.

Key Words: SME, Project Management, EU Projects, LDV Projects, National Agency

Introduction

SMEs hold a significant mission almost in the whole economies contributing and functioning to production in international economies. Furthermore SMEs took place largely in all enterprises based on their operating economies. Besides to all those issues, the employment and the contribution to per capita income supplied by SMEs are other major characteristics of them (Parrilli, 2007).

Because of a kind of power or driving forces of economic development, SMEs occurred to be the basic concern for researches and policymakers. SMEs have a great capacity for development through their elevated structures formed by flexibility and adaptability. Because of those characteristics SMEs are the keys of economic development in line with their capacity and dynamic structures according to researches (Leninhan et al., 2010, Alkış and Temizkan, 2012).

According to Senses and Taymaz, SMEs acquired currency for the aim of developing new

technologies, supporting the entrepreneurship, creating employment especially beginning from the early years of 1970s to today in all around the world. Institutions such as International Labor Organization and World Bank suggested developing countries in that period to practice active SME policies. As an industrial policy mean, though the policies devoted to SMEs were launched in Turkey before 1980, the major initiatives in direction with that policy were given a start after 1980 and especially in the last ten years (Senses and Taymaz, 2003).

SMEs are in need of several funding sources both for their economic activities and enlargement goals. SMEs considering their class and capacity supply their funding needs through borrowing, utilization of bank loan, purchasing or selling share and bond and etc. Another way for SMEs to supply the need of funding is to apply to projects. The project support which changes according to grand of funding demand or requirements of SMEs normally comes up with a loan and sometimes with directly grant supply. Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization (hereafter, KOSGEB), State Planning Organization (hereafter DPT, Ministry of Development, Banks, International Organizations (World Bank, OECD etc.) are ranked as fund supplying organizations through projects to SMEs.

There are a large number of organizations supporting project and one of them is European Union grant programs. European Union Central Finance and Contracting Unit (CFCU), National Agency, the short name of which is the Presidency of the European Union Education and Youth Programs are a few of them. The institutions which are formed like economical, social and cultural bridge between Turkey and Europe enables internationalization, new markets and new cooperation for SMEs through supporting funds.

1. SMEs in Turkey

The description of SME in our country changes in a direction with target audience, the sources separated for their activities, the institutions or organizations that provide service or loan to them. This situation alters in some conditions such as SME's activity field or the opportunity to benefit from incentives. For example, whereas KOSGEB states the enterprises with 1-50 employees as small sized, the enterprises with 51-250 employees as medium sized, Halkbank defines the enterprises with 1-250 employees as small sized enterprises. Turkey Export Credit Agency (Eximbank) accepts the institutions and organizations as SMEs whose fixed investments are unable to exceed 200 million dollars based on fixed capital amount and which employs 1-200 workers. Ministry of Industry, Under secretariat of Foreign Trade (DTM), Ministry of Treasury, Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) and DPT have the same attitudes in concern of number of employees. However the difference occurs in fixed capital amounts (Bayülken and Kütükoğlu, 2012, Akgemci, 2001).

In the lights of data mentioned above, SME attitudes changing in regard of the number of employees in some institutions in our country and EU are stated at the table below. The information at the table below are shown with in different ways, in different papers (Zincirkıran and Tiftik, 2013)

Table 1. SME Criteria of Enterprises in Turkey and EU

Type of Organization	Micro Sized (very small enterprise)	Small Sized	Medium Sized	Fixed Capital Amount	Yearly Sale
KOSGEB		1-50 Employees	51-250 Employees		
Halkbank		1-250 Employees	1-250 Employees		
Eximbank		1-200 Employees	1-200 Employees	Less than 2 Million USD	
DTM		1-200 Employees	1-200 Employees	Less than 2 Million USD	
Industry Ministry	1-9 Employees	10-49 Employees	50-250 Employees	Between 1-25 million TL	
TÜİK ve DPT	1-9 Employees	10-49 Employees	50-250 Employees		
Ministry of Treasury	1-9 Employees	10-49 Employees	50-250 Employees		Not exceeding 950.000TL
TOSYÖV (Turkey Self Employed and Managers Association)	1-5 Employees	6-100 Employees	101-200 Employees		
AB Commision	Less than 10	10-49 Employees	50-250 Employees		Between 2 -43 Million Euro
EUROSAT	1-9 Employees	10-49 Employees	50-249 Employees		

The data was acquired from SME report of TMMOB (Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects).

According to the table above, there are some differences on SME criteria of EU and Turkey. For example, the fact that the number of employed people in middle sized enterprises is less than 250 in EU and less than 100 in Turkey has been taken as a criteria. However many varieties take place in small sized enterprises. EU as distinct from Turkey accepts annual return of enterprises as criteria when it comes to the definition of enterprises. It is vital that the return shall not exceed 40 million euro in middle sized enterprises, not exceed 7 million or be at the level of 5 million euro in small sized enterprises. Rates of return of SMEs are widely not accepted as criteria in Turkey. Nevertheless in SMEs incentive amounts are designated according to number of employed workers. The principle of “independence” is not even included in the definitions of SMEs in Turkey (Oren,2003).

2. Project and Project Management

There are so many kinds of definitions of Project. It's a complement of activities designed to produce a unique product, service or result through benefiting from a set of sources which

have a defined beginning and end in time (PMBOOK Guide, 2000). In line with another approach, it is the smallest unit of a designation planned in accordance with a necessity, devoted to some kind of investment applicable in terms of economically and technically which can be analyzed and assessed (Dikleyand Miller 1984; Little and Mirrlees 1974; Adler 1971 et al.Yılmaz and Akça, 2002).

The project may be defined as in below when considered the statements above; it is a complement of activities based on economic, social, cultural or education carried out through a specific budget which has a defined beginning and end in time aimed at individual, corporate or social and prepared in that parallel.

Project management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to Project activities with the aim of meeting the requirements of the Project. Project management consists of evaluation of the shareholders' various needs, anxieties and expectations, identification of distinct and contradicting parts of the Project at the phases of needs assessment, planning and executing the Project (Passenheim, 2009, PMBOOK Guide 2000, Project Management Guide 2011).

It is possible to express as follows: Project management is the activities including support for necessary coordination to execute projects effectively in each phase, benefiting from the budget in an efficient way, enabling the Project team to move in a applicable way with the Project aims, harmonization of project activities with the aims, active communication with partners and shareholders, implementation of assessment and reporting processes in a whole and complete way and optimum timing.

3. European Union Projects and National Agency

When mentioned about European Union financial contributions, funds separated for countries to benefit in the negotiation process can be imagined. Those contributions are provided in two ways. One is the low interest and long term loans supplied by European Investment Bank (AYB). The other one includes unreturned grants based on projects financed by the budget of European Union (Aykın and Gursay, 2011). The research is prepared in accordance with the second way of the funds.

Besides to the loans for the projects about SMEs which don't exceed 25 million euro provided by intermediary institutions in the relevant country of AYB, there are financial contributions loans for the projects exceeding more than 25 million in EU (Karabacak, 2004).

These contributions are observed as a significant mean in some issues such as developing common economy policies among the countries, enhancing the welfare level of the countries, removing the developmental differential ties as mentioned in Treaty of Rome (Bilici, 2003, Özcanlı, 2006).

Financial contributions of EU assist to our country in constituting fertile circles in well designed and planned conditions in concern of political, social and economical perspectives. These contributions also consist of some specific goals such as consciousness-raising about energy efficiency, supply for the relevant finance in reconstruction and reinforcement of several sectors, support women and youths in the fields of vocational education, improving the consciousness level of the society about human rights. Furthermore, the activities on increase the regional cooperation, diminishing the poverty inciting sustainable development and support the citizens to contribute to the process are another goals. Apart from these, for the SMEs which are backbones of Europe and Turkey economies EU presented loan opportunities for small enterprises in all sectors in the frame of "Small Enterprises Loan Programme II" (EU Turkey Financial Cooperation Report, 2011).

One of the organizations managing one part of European Union financial contributions is Presidency of the European Union Education and Youth Programs. By the short name "National Agency" operates as executive and coordinator unit in each country on introduction,

coordination, execution of the relevant programs in the country, evaluation of the projects benefiting from the programs in the domestic country, compilation of project applications that will be produced by EU Commission and appraisal of them, implementation of the program together with member countries and EU Commission, execution of cooperative relations (www.ua.gov.tr).

Turkish National Agency serves as a model for Turkish Public Management in terms of both organizational structure, code of conduct and corporate structure (Ünsal, 2008). The missions of National Agency are listed in articles below (www.ua.gov.tr).

4. Missions of National Agency

- ✓ Provide close relations with public institutions, public and private education institutions, nongovernmental organizations, local governments, vocational institutes and youth institutes,
- ✓ Introduction of EU Education and Youth Programs to the relevant beneficiaries in Turkey and form and develop the necessary human force, information, physical and legal substructure,
- ✓ Execution of small sized pilot applications in various fields.
- ✓ Translation of the relevant documents in Turkish,
- ✓ Data support in terms of participant conditions, application and electiveness, support, organization and registration of application processes,
- ✓ Suggestion for the applicants on preparation of project proposals and for the participants on application of project proposals selected to be financed; and train them if necessary.
- ✓ Assessment and formation of opinions about project proposals and other applications before admission,
- ✓ Support to national decision body and EU Commission at the phase of project selection,
- ✓ Agreement on the relevant subjects together with beneficiaries of the programs in Turkey and EU Commission and make payment to beneficiaries,
- ✓ Found and operate the necessary system in order for efficient management of separated funds and for accounting and monitoring the sources appointed to Presidency (National Agency),
- ✓ Monitor of project development financed and selected in a program frame, technical supervision, report demand and evaluation in accordance with benefit of sources appointed (execution of administrative, financial and legal operations),
- ✓ Contribute to dissemination of project results and especially favored good applications in domestic and foreign countries,
- ✓ Contribute to general assessment, development of the program and increase in cooperation among various programs,
- ✓ Contact with EU Commission, other national agencies and other countries' beneficiaries, study on developing, coordinating and cooperation with them.

5. Leonardo Da Vinci Projects

One of the programs that National Agency provides grants is Leonardo Da Vinci Vocational Education Mobility projects, a subprogram of Lifelong Learning Programs. The general goals of the program whose name belongs to a European well-known artist; (LDV Activity Report, 2012, Göksan et al, 2011);

- ✓ Increase the abilities and competences in line with basic vocational education in all levels,
- ✓ Improve the quality in continuing-vocational education and in gaining lifelong abilities and competences, enhance the accession to them,
- ✓ Improve the innovative applications in vocational education field, support the competition and entrepreneurship in accordance with new employment opportunities,
- ✓ Develop language abilities in vocational education field and form a common language,

- ✓ Promote language education,
- ✓ Prioritize some disadvantaged groups in the way of social, physical, geographical, psychological, and economical.

LDV projects are open to application for vocational education organizations/institutions, enterprises, SMEs, local governments, vocational institutions (chambers, commodity exchanges, and unions), NGOs (associations and foundations), universities, and public institutions owning legal entities in condition to vocational education. In that context, LDV projects can be assessed as a major opportunity in regard of raising qualified labor force required by SMEs.

6. LDV Project Statistics of SMEs in Turkey

In Table 2 below, data is shown which is obtained from National Agency in regard of researches and consists of the years between 2004-2012 about the applications submitted by mostly SMEs to take project support. Dissemination of SMEs into the provinces, the amount of beneficiaries, amount of grants provided to SMEs, activity fields of SMEs and project subjects are included in the table.

Table 2. General information of National Agency between the years of 2004-2012

Financial year	Amount of Grant application (number)	Amount of Provided Grant Application (number)	Allocated Grant (Euro)	Number of participants going abroad**(person)
2004	1.844	996	13.884.260	5.210
2005	6.025	1.708	24.863.891	11.304
2006	7.370	2.383	40.853.740	16.997
2007	8.413	2.238	51.662.916	23.521
2008	7.371	2.224	57.871.388	27.119
2009	9.141	2.315	63.716.524	32.309
2010*	11.961	2.771	75.443.594	38.945
2011*	15.278	2.862	82.476.636	44.995
2012*	15.911	3.596	112.822.860	60.483
Total	83.314	21.093	523.555.808	260.883

*The data which belongs to 2010, 2011 and 2012 outstanding budget period is provided as predictions in concern with allocations of grant.

**This number doesn't exceed 300.000 together with the participants to local project activities not going abroad in the framework of projects.

Resource: www.ua.gov.tr 2012 LDV Activity Report

The LDV project application numbers of SMEs disseminated by provinces between the years of 2004-2012 are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Dissemination of LDV Project Application Numbers of SMEs by Years

Provinces	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
ANKARA	9	5	7	6	2	1	1	3	4	38
İSTANBUL	3	-	4	5	1	-	2	-	3	18
ADANA	-	-	2	-	1	-	1	1	1	6
ADİYAMA N	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	2
AĞRI	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	2
AKSARAY	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
ANTALYA	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
BARTIN	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	2
BOLU	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	2	1	6
BURSA	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	4
ÇANKIRI	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
ÇORUM	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	2
DENİZLİ	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
DÜZCE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
ELAZIĞ	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	2
GAZİANTE P	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	2
GİRESUN	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2
HATAY	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	3
İZMİR	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	3
KASTAMO NU	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
KOCAELİ	-	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	4
KONYA	2	1	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	6
KÜTAHYA	-	-	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	4
MANİSA	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
SAMSUN	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
SİNOP	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
TOKAT	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	2	6
VAN	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2
ZONGULD AK	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	2
YOZGAT	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
YALOVA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Grand Total	14	13	19	17	14	8	16	15	16	130

Source: National Agency

It is observed that Ankara and Istanbul have the most project application amount as stated in the Table 3. This situation may be derived from the population density of the provinces and labor potential in terms of SME. When we examine the table in different perspectives we can state that although the population and labor potential of Istanbul is higher than Ankara, the application in Ankara has the highest number because of National Agency active in Ankara. In regard of project fields supported by National Agency contact meetings and education seminars are afforded. The reason of the density in Ankara may derive from close relations with the Institution. According to the table, project application is disseminated into 31

provinces in the country which has 81 provinces and the interest of SMEs to LDV projects is really scarce. However the project applications or dissemination by years increase in following periods, the rate of SMEs is at low levels among the total grant application 83.314 as shown in Table1. The requirement of SMEs' qualified labor force in our country is revealed together with various researches (Zincirkiran, 2007). In accordance with this situation, the scarce interest of SMEs' to LDV projects will be comprehended. Lack of projects in 50 not included in the table is another sign of deficiency of SMEs project approaches in terms of provinces. In that subject, some significant responsibilities belong to National Agency in regard of education and contact meetings and activities in non-applicant provinces. In such education programs, SME support, benefits from international cooperation, returns of sample project applications and shareholder interaction should be put forward and so the approaches of SME to the projects will be affected positively and altered. As a matter of fact, the significant problem here may be SMEs' fears about project design. It may be estimated that managers of SMEs who have no sufficient information about difference between grant and loan are prejudiced toward the whole projects including LDV.

Numbers of participants or beneficiaries in LDV projects submitted by SMEs active in our country and provided grant amounts from projects by Euro are shown below in Table 4.

Table 4. Number of LDV Projects Beneficiaries Dissemination and Provided Grant Amounts (Euro) by Provinces (between 2004-2012)

Provinces	Beneficiary Number	Provided Grant Amount (Euro)
ADANA	61	116249
ADIYAMAN	29	51109
AĞRI	57	182050
AKSARAY	15	26250
ANKARA	650	1529649
ANTALYA	23	41200
BARTIN	27	48252
BOLU	168	324462
BURSA	71	134800
ÇANKIRI	17	26106
ÇORUM	34	61574,5
DENİZLİ	3	5400
DÜZCE	58	136000
ELAZIĞ	54	167682
GAZİANTEP	44	88568
GİRESUN	55	108235
HATAY	61	109678
İSTANBUL	218	554988
İZMİR	20	43565
KASTAMONU	42	70822
KOCAELİ	36	73210
KONYA	87	157806
KÜTAHYA	35	58395
MANİSA	20	34000
SAMSUN	10	15330
SİNOP	20	33680
TOKAT	76	120956
VAN	51	99610
ZONGULDAK	40	76692
YOZGAT	23	38225
YALOVA	35	57585
Grand Total	2140	4.592.128,5

Source: National Agency

Between the years of 2004-2012 totally 2140 people benefited from SME LDV projects in 31 provinces as mentioned in Table4. In LDV projects prepared by SMEs, participant profiles such as People in Labor Market (PLM), Vocational and Education and Training Professions (VETPRO), Initial Vocational Training (IVT) may be included. Management and organization, pedagogical, cultural, language studies, road fee (flight, bus etc.), daily subsistence (food, drinking, and accommodation) and so on are the field that is provided grant. Fund amounts supplied to project participants change according to countries and stay times in abroad. Projects are implemented through minimum 1 week, maximum 6 weeks (www.ua.gov.tr). In concern of the Table, 65 participants and grant supply cost 1.529.649 Euro are provided to Ankara because of the reasons mentioned before. At grand total, 2140 participants as SMEs benefited from the projects and gained grand supply at the cost of 4.592.128,5 Euro. Many

participants by means of LDV projects submitted by SMEs not only get a vocational education certificate valid in Turkey and Europe and increase value added to the enterprises they work in. From that point of view, LDV mobility projects are kind of opportunity for SME in terms of developing employees' professions, search and invention of new markets, foundation of new partnership and cooperation and internationalization.

Activity fields and project titles of totally 131 SMEs which was accepted and implemented between the years of 2004-2012 are shown at the end of the paper Appendix 1.

It is observed that SMEs active in various sectors apply to LDV projects when we analyze the Appendix 1. In a parallel that LDV projects' main goal is vocational education, most of the project applications are oriented at vocational education prepared by "Education and Consultancy" firms. However it is perceived that many various sectors (Architecture, Engineering, Construction, Foreign Trade, Amusement, Tourism Hotel Management, Electric-Electronic, Agriculture, Food, Biomedical, Health, Real Estate, Furniture, Fine Arts, Energy, Informatics, Automotive, Media, Textile, Security) have applications. On a general review of projects, there are vocational education projects that are devoted to raising vocational and intermediate staff required mostly by SMEs. Besides to that, some subjects such as *"Contribution to the culture of Europeanness, learning the European dimension of the study, mutual information share, observation and research, quality increase, transfer of various applications to our country, internship"* are also included in the aims of projects. It may be mentioned that perceptions of SMEs about the goals and aims of projects are at sufficient levels. On sectoral distribution of the projects, applications from developing new sectors (Health, Biomedical, Energy, and Automotive) in our country may be assessed positively. Though the situation in above, it becomes more of an issue that the sectors which are active in our country and require especially qualified labor force intensively should transfer the relevant sector experiences of EU countries to our country. In this respect SMEs in our country should be promoted about LDV projects.

7. Results and Suggestions

In the lights of secondary data supplied by National Agency a number of assessments have been placed about the relative project attitudes of SMEs. In that context, project experience of SMEs is not at sufficient levels throughout our country. LDV mobility project which National Agency provides grant supply is one of the easiest programs in terms of feasibility and practicability for SMEs. However in concern of dissemination especially by provinces in our country SMEs show not so much interest in LDV projects at sufficient levels. Concerned of SMEs' requirements the significance of both LDV projects and other grant and support kind of projects will be regarded as well. Because of the fact that the study was only aimed at National Agency LDV projects more comprehensive researches shall be carried out in order to get clear and specific results about SMEs' project approaches. The negative view on LDV projects which are easy for SMEs in concern of feasibility and practicability shall not be ignored. For SMEs that are active in our country and the researchers studying on that subject there are a few of suggestions below as a result of the research.

- ✓ On the purpose of effective and efficient execution of economical activities, they can provide required finance through grants or loans supplied LDV or other similar projects.
- ✓ On behalf of being able to capture for international opportunities SMEs which aims to enlarge and sustain the existence need to make use of project chances such as LDV and etc.
- ✓ They can put into practice strategic aims and goals such as invention of new markets, foundation of new cooperation, increase the market share in the related projects.
- ✓ They can benefit from the international projects as a mean in order to adapt to changing and developing external environment conditions.

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- ✓ The opportunities such as training the employees vocationally, bringing new perspectives to them, international expansion can be provided by projects.
 - ✓ SMEs, the keys of economy, can contribute to our country's rapid adaptation of European Union negotiation process.
 - ✓ Projects such as SME strategic partnership, clustering, international consortium etc, may open the way in order to be included in common studies with European and other countries' enterprises.
 - ✓ It can provide to increase competitiveness, to support sustainable entrepreneurship, develop multi culturalism, and form new employment fields pursuant to the goals of LDV projects.
 - ✓ Besides these, project questionnaires can be supplied to SMEs to reach more clarified results.

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