

Europe and Latin America united by AL-INVEST

This week marks the official launch of the fourth edition of AL-INVEST, the economic cooperation programme whose objective is to support the internationalisation of small and medium enterprises in Latin America.

The launch takes place in Sao Paulo (Brazil) from June 16 -19 and will be attended by all Latin American and European consortia who are members of AL-INVEST IV.

This initiative, taken in collaboration with members from both sides of the Atlantic, claims to be instrumental in the development of social cohesion in the region.

AL-INVEST IV has five clear priorities: harmony between internationalisation and local development, regional integration, European focus, representation of sectors and territories and synergy with other cooperation programmes.

This fourth AL-INVEST “venture” will run from 2009 to 2012 and all identified action plans will be carried out in the 18 Latin-American countries as well as in the 27 EU member countries. The European Commission’s financial contribution to this programme amounts to 50 million Euros (80% of the total cost).

Three Latin American consortia and one European consortium

Phase IV of the Programme will be implemented by three sub-regional consortia from business organisations who are held specifically responsible for three distinct areas of Latin-America: the first covers Central America/Cuba/Mexico and is led by NAFIN (Mexican governmental development bank); the second covers the Andean region, led by CAINCO (Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Services and Tourism of Bolivia); and finally the third consortium will cover the MERCOSUR countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay), Chile and Venezuela, and will be led by the CNI (National Confederation of Industry).

The three consortia will also be relying on the support of horizontal services provided by a European Consortium led by EUROCHAMBRES. This assembly of institutions led by EUROCHAMBRES includes a Coordination Team responsible for the implementation and functioning of the following services: technical assistance to SMEs, participation of Latin American and European enterprises in trade fairs and meetings with businesses and technical management in Europe and Latin America, market prospection studies, a contact network with European organisations and exchanges of experience, knowledge and technology.

EUROCHAMBRES’ participation in this fourth Phase of the AL-INVEST Programme confirms its long-term relationship with Latin - America and reinforces their cooperation with business organisations in this region.

NAFIN will head up the consortium in the Central American region, Mexico and Cuba, where the Programme will take off with a full analysis so as to pinpoint business areas offering a window of opportunity for improving and obtaining an active participation in those markets integrated by the present European Union.

This analysis will be reviewed every six months to allow the businesses themselves to check their progress by means of a chart of their initiatives and efforts. The primary objective of these activities concerns the SMEs who wish to come out of the external markets, as well as those already in the process of doing so, in order to consolidate and enlarge their internationalisation.

In the Andean region, the most representative business organisations in all four countries have set up a consortium, led by CAINCO (Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Services and Tourism of Bolivia), with the aim of promoting the internationalisation of SMEs in Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador and Peru, using a business model to strengthen the business fabric with cutting edge initiatives and to reinforce the institutional network.

The MERCOSUR, Chile and Venezuela consortium is led by CNI (National Confederation of Brazilian Industry) and made up of the relevant members of the institutions in all four MERCOSUR countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay), as well as Chile and Venezuela; likewise for European members.

Their activities focus on increasing competitiveness and the degree of internationalisation of SMEs in the area; on reinforcing the institutional capacity of intermediate organisations; and on sharing the results of the actions undertaken.

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More information on AL Invest IV on www.al-invest4.eu