



PROCEEDINGS OF THE 8th INSULEUR FORUM (LA REUNION, October 29th – November 1st 2008)

This year, La Réunion Chamber of Commerce hosted the 8th INSULEUR Forum which took place from October 29th to November 1st. Dealing with “Innovation and Competitiveness of insular enterprises”, it tried to answer to the following questions: how do our islands set about it in this field? Which are their assets in order to make innovation a factor of competitiveness whereas islanders and their enterprises live in territories having handicaps? Which are their difficulties? How public policies can bring an answer? Which is Chambers’ role? What kind of collaborative projects can they develop?

Faced to these issues, the Forum was the opportunity to:

- take stock of the challenges met by insular enterprises when they are led to fall within an innovative step (particularly through the presentation of experiences lived by a panel of entrepreneurs);
- give examples of best practices of Chambers of Commerce & Industry when they support these enterprises in their access to innovation (both technological and non-technological);
- think about the role of public authorities in the promotion of innovation in insular regions.

The attendance of speakers coming from different backgrounds (Chambers’ representatives, entrepreneurs, representatives of public authorities, University professors) but sharing the same will to help islands, allowed to have rich debates and to describe all the challenges of the development of innovation in insular enterprises.

Therefore, the main messages of this two-day meeting are the following ones:

- the development of innovation in islands relies on the mutualisation of their resources. In this prospect, insular associations can create emulations;

- Because insular regions are in a difficult situation regarding investments in research and innovation, means to develop the latter must be found. But, above all, a problem of method must be solved: the one which is applied in European mainland cannot be duplicated in islands. That is why, these regions should be able to elaborate strategies providing themselves with implementing capacities and integrating transports which are key factors for wealth;
- In order to create the conditions favouring the development of innovation:
 - o It should be thought about the tools necessary to give future IT training to insular youth;
 - o In order to ease the development of innovation in islands, a “cluster” approach should be adopted at the level of entrepreneurial fabric (mainly composed of micro enterprises). Such approach could come in two steps: having a logic of integration, or creating networks of enterprises.