

## Island enterprises: innovative and competitive

8<sup>th</sup> Forum INSULEUR in La Réunion, France



This year, La Réunion Chamber of Commerce successfully hosted the **8<sup>th</sup> INSULEUR Forum** which took place from October 29<sup>th</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup>. 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**, first, 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); second, to 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); and third, to 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. First, the development of innovation in islands relies on the mutualisation of their resources. In this prospect, insular associations can create emulations. Also, 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. Furthermore, in order to create the conditions favouring the development of innovation, it should be thought about the tools necessary to give future IT training to insular youth, and 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 logic of integration, or creating networks of enterprises.

Last but not least, during the closing ceremony of the VII Forum INSULEUR, two documents were adopted by the General Assembly, that is a **Common Declaration** and a **Declaration on the Financial Crisis**.

Alexandre Czmal, INSULEUR EU Delegate

**8th INSULEUR FORUM  
(LA REUNION, October 29th – November 1st 2008)  
Common Declaration**

Whereas the economic structure of islands is characterized by a real mono-activity, a poor economic diversification, a seasonality of the activities, and a weak penetration of innovation in SMEs;

Whereas islands suffer from strong researchers, laboratories and patents shortages;

Whereas compared to the situation on the continent, islands are in a backward position as regards R&D, except in cases where there is a voluntarist policy from public authorities, or in others where a sector is so economically important that it allows to reach a threshold likely to create or support research activities;

Whereas innovation has become one of the cardinal principles of the policies and programs in the EU, more particularly through Structural Funds, State Aids, or CIP (Competitiveness & Innovation Program);

Whereas the EESC adopted, on 10/07/08, an opinion on "A better integration in the internal market as key factor for cohesion and growth for islands";

Whereas ESPON will launch a study on "The development of the Islands – European Islands and Cohesion Policy";

Whereas the European institutions decided to take into account the question of SMEs, through a "Small Business Act for Europe" aimed at, generally speaking, facilitating their life, and more particularly simplifying their access to innovation;

Whereas the European Commission adopted, on 03/09/08, a strategy for Research and Innovation in support of protecting marine eco-systems and developing sustainable maritime activities;

Whereas the European Commission adopted, on 17/10/08, a communication entitled "Towards world-class clusters in the EU: Implementing the broad-based innovation strategy";

Whereas 2009 will be the European Year of creativity and innovation;

The INSULEUR Network:

*Affirms that innovation should be widely grasped: in fact, it should be understood both in its technological and non-technological aspects. Thus the preservation of ancestral know-how represents a dimension of innovation which must not be forgotten;*

*Believes the spreading of the new information and communication technologies in the EU is really an opportunity for the diversification of island economies;*

*Affirms that islands have a natural environment which is favourable to innovation (for instance: renewable energies, blue biotechnologies ...). Knowing that economic performance and innovation performance are linked, islands have much room to manoeuvre;*

*Urges public policies to help islands to develop renewable energy resources, to encourage entrepreneurs to resort to them, and to promote an efficient use of energy, while ensuring the protection of the environment and the preservation of natural landscapes;*

*Asks an easier access of SMEs to R&D, for instance thanks to tools like JEREMIE, or the improvement of their integration in clusters which have to lie within genuine regional innovation partnership strategies;*

*Asks the reinforcement of public research in order to compensate the weaknesses of private research;*

*Invites public institutions, on the basis of the actions considered by the Small*

*Business Act for Europe, to favour innovative initiatives in European island SMEs by:*

- encouraging cooperations between these SMEs, and with their non-EU counterparts;*
- promoting the upgrading of skills in island SMEs.*



## OTIE

### OTIE General Assembly: prolific 2008, promising 2009

During the celebration of the VII Forum INSULEUR in La Réunion (France), the OTIE (The Observatory on Tourism in the European Islands) held its **Annual General Assembly** the past 30<sup>th</sup> October. OTIE is associated member of INSULEUR since the current year. 2008 has been a productive period for this organization that was founded in Sicily (Italy) in 2007 with the aim to **promote new research studies and share the results among the European Islands**.

Among the **initiatives undertaken by OTIE in 2008** several of them must be highlighted, such as the partnership with the Universities of Palermo (Sicily) and Cairo (Egypt) for the realization of a "Master on Tourism and Management of Mediterranean Cultural Destinations", the adhesion to "The Phoenicians Route", cultural itinerary of the Council of Europe and as well the adhesion, as a founding member in the constitution of "Assonautica Euromediterranean" led by Assonautica Italiana, the Sassari Chamber of Commerce (Italy) and "The Phoenicians Route", for the promotion of nautical tourism in the European Union. Among the **projects in 2008**, OTIE has participated as partner in the proposal named "Cambusa", based on the furnishing of nutritional goods for leisure boats, proposed by Assonautica Italiana and the proposal called "Incubator", focused on small and medium enterprises development together with the Rethymno Chamber of Commerce (Greece).

The **program of actions for 2009** starts with the presentation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Focus on European Insular Tourism to be held in Palermo and Brussels next 3<sup>rd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> February. Also, OTIE is going to participate next April at the meeting of the "Intergroupe Tourism" of the European Parliament, to be held at the Bastia Chamber of Commerce premises (Corsica). Moreover, OTIE, together with UNESCO, Insula and the collaboration of the Sicily Region, is organizing the 1<sup>st</sup> World Conference "Volcanos, Landscapes and Cultures", to be celebrated in May, in Catania (Italy).



**OTIE's mission** is to offer new policies and new strategies to the local actors in order to develop innovative tourisms in the EU islands. OTIE cooperates with public organizations, local institutions, Universities, Research centres and enterprises associations involved in the tourism field.

#### For more information, please contact:

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### GERRI 2030:

#### La Réunion as energy self-sufficient island

Along the VIII Forum INSULEUR, we have the opportunity to attend the presentation of the GERRI 2030 project. The **GERRI project (Green Energy Revolution Reunion Island)** aims to make Reunion Island the first territory in the world where all environmental-friendly innovations in terms of transport, energy production, storage and use, town planning and construction are integrated into society by 2030. The GERRI project is steered by the French Government, Regional Council, Department Council and economic actors.

GERRI is to be implemented along **5 priority lines**. First, regarding **transport** (private and public), GERRI is aimed at making Reunion the first territory in the world where all motor travel, whether public or private, is made with clean transport means that do not run on fossil fuels.

As regards as **energy production**, it has to be established that without recourse to nuclear power or connection to large scale continental networks, Reunion Island must reach energy self-sufficiency through GERRI. This objective requires the development of photovoltaic electricity and quick implementation of experiments on hydraulic micro-turbines, wave and sea thermal energy, offshore wind turbines or the harnessing of geothermal resources. Actions carried out in the framework of Energy Management will be continued and amplified.

Concerning **energy storage**, GERRI will involve building a testing area for all energy storage systems. Embedded storage must be studied in depth and innovative technology models implemented. In a remote island having mostly intermittent renewable energy resources, mass storage is the only limit to energy self-sufficiency known to date.

In relation to **town planning and construction**, GERRI must help initiate and foster the emergence of a High Environment Quality and High Energy Performance urban planning movement to be supported by strong political resolve for the building of new towns or eco-districts that will accommodate the 200,000 additional population expected to live in Reunion Island by 2030. This policy must also have potent effects on existing housing units, whether private homes or blocks of flats.

As fifth priority, **tourism**, the rise of sustainable development standards in society will make Reunion a strongly attractive destination as the exemplary embodiment of environment-friendly concepts. GERRI must contribute to transforming Reunion's tourist offer in coherence with the project through the construction of energy self-sufficient hotel structures, the development of clean rental vehicle fleets.

To sum up, Reunion Island intends thus to become through GERRI a pioneering land, a pro-active call to the future, a unique opportunity to make tomorrow's society visible with all its complexity and chances.

**For more information, please visit:**

<http://www.geri.fr/>



## A look into an Insular Chamber:

Las Palmas de Gran Canaria Chamber of Commerce,  
Industry and Navigation, Spain

Las Palmas Chamber of Commerce is settled in the capital town of the island of Gran Canaria, in the Canary Islands, an archipelago located in the Atlantic Ocean 210 kilometers from the northwest coast of Africa. It is located southeast of Tenerife and west of Fuerteventura. The island is of volcanic origin, mostly made of fissure vents.

With **local antennas** in the municipalities of Santa María de Guía, Mogán, San Bartolomé, Telde and Terror, and international delegations in Cape Verde, China, Guinea, Togo, Ghana, Mali and Burkina Faso, Las Palmas Chamber offers a wide **range of services** for businessmen, unemployed businessmen, entrepreneurs and professionals. The most important services are the support to creation of companies, the Single Point of Enterprises, information on funding assistance, viability plans, proceedings for the opening of a company, selection of enterprise projects for lines of microcredits, training courses and seminars, programs of support to the internationalization of SMEs, market research, advising on the systems of Management of the Quality Program, support to the entrepreneurial women, arbitration in the mercantile conflicts and European projects.

In order to inform the business community of Gran Canaria, Las Palmas Chamber publish monthly the **magazine "Infocámara"**, which gathers news concerning the actions of the several sectorial commissions (such as local commerce, environment, family enterprise, training or tourism), conferences and events, and official visits and trips to the Chamber and abroad. All this information and more can be achieved through its website [www.cameralaspalmas.org](http://www.cameralaspalmas.org)



Furthermore, at the main front of the institution, Ángel Luís Tadeo Tejera is the **President of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria Chamber of Commerce** since 2006. Born in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, he is married and has 3 children. He graduated as technical architect at the Universidad de La Laguna. He is President of Grupo Dunas, a holding company specialized in the hotel touristic sector, and building and property development. Also, he is member of the tourism employers EXELTUR. Last but not least, he was President of the Union Deportiva Las Palmas Football Club.



## INTERREG IIB Açores – Madeira – Canarias: Las Palmas Chamber & Transnational cooperation

Las Palmas Chamber of Commerce is active in the framework of the **International Cooperation to the European Union**, especially in the Interreg IIB Program, which is a Community initiative concerning trans-European cooperation intended to encourage harmonious and balanced development of the European territory. Its main objective is to promote transnational cooperation between national, regional and local authorities to strength a higher degree of territorial integration within large groups of European regions and a better territorial integration with the candidate and other neighboring countries. This program constitutes a bet by the cooperation as value-added element for the **integrated development of the regions of Azores, Madeira and Canary Islands**.



Among the Interreg Programms in which Las Palmas Chamber participates, as partner or leader are, first it must be highlighted **“Investafri”**, a business to business (B2B) electronic commerce platform through a notice board of offers and demands aiming to achieve private investment in Cape Verde. Investafri performs as direct link to websites of Cape Verde, Barlavento and Sotavento Chambers of Commerce.



Furthermore, **“Atlantic Logistic”** is a logistics and distribution platform in the Atlantic Ocean area. The project is oriented to encourage the cooperation and commercial exchanges between the Macaronesia archipelago and the creation of management tools adapted to the needs of the commercial distribution market. Macaronesia is a modern collective name for a group of islands in the North Atlantic Ocean near Europe and North Africa which consists of five archipelagos, being Azores (Portugal), Canary Islands (Spain), Cape Verde (Cape Verde), Madeira, including Desertas Islands (Portugal) and Savage Islands (Portugal), administratively part of the Madeira Autonomous Region. The name comes from the Greek for "fortunate islands".



Moreover **“DiscoverMacaronesia”** is a touristic sector platform, a public portal with interesting information. Its main aim is to bring about direct relations between the potential clients and those providers of touristic services of the Macaronesia, thus improving the direct marketing of enterprises and the client's loyalty program through an on-line booking portal. The project is made up of a main central portal of Macaronesia and other four portals (one per archipelago).



Last but not least, **“Servinte”** is an assistance programme to the expansion of services enterprises. It boosts the development and competitiveness through the research of new opportunities of business and guarantees the commercial growth and profitability. The programme offers assistance, counseling, training, business cooperation and the new technologies (ICTs) are key aspects of the projects.

### **For more information, please contact:**

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## Looking forward 2009:

### Technical Committee meets in Spanish Chambers Delegation in Brussels

On Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December, the Delegation in Brussels of the High Council of Spanish Chambers of Commerce held a meeting of the INSULEUR Technical Committee, made up by representatives of Italian, Greek, French and Spanish Insular Chambers of Commerce and the INSULEUR Delegate to the EU, and with the participation of the General Secretary of the Mallorca Chamber of Commerce, and the Director of the Delegation of the High Council of Spanish Chambers of Commerce in Brussels.



This fruitful meeting offered the opportunity to the participants to debate and build meaningful results as regards several aspects, such as the definition of actions and follow-up calendar for 2009, and the organization of the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum, that will be held in Piraeus, in Autumn 2009, to be organized by the Manufacturers Chamber of Commerce of Piraeus and the Piraeus Chamber of Commerce.

## EU news

### World-class clusters in the EU: the Commission calls for more efforts

A Commission communication calls for more efforts for facilitating the emergence of world-class clusters in the European Union. It addresses key challenges to achieve this: Deepening the internal market, improving cluster policies, fostering trans-national cooperation, promoting excellence of cluster organizations, and improving the integration of innovative SMEs into clusters.

In order to create a more efficient framework for cluster support in the EU, the Communication has made several proposes.

For more information, please visit:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/innovation/doc/com\\_2008\\_652\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/innovation/doc/com_2008_652_en.pdf)

### European Economic Recovery Plan for Growth and Jobs

A major plank of the European Commission's €200 billion Economic Recovery Plan is the emphasis on financial and administrative support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are key to rebooting Europe's economic growth and safeguarding jobs. The measures include providing SMEs with better access to loans and speeding up reforms under the Small Business Act.

For more information, please visit:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e\\_i/news/article\\_7350\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e_i/news/article_7350_en.htm)

### Small Business Act & global crisis

Last 2<sup>nd</sup> December, the Competitiveness Council gave strong support to the European Commission's initiative on small and medium-sized businesses. It adopted an action plan on the Small Business Act for Europe that seeks to shield and support SMEs in the current economic crisis. The Member States commit themselves to implementing a series of key principles and accompanying actions in areas such as improving access to finance, alleviating administrative burden and facilitating small businesses' access to markets.

For more information, please visit:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item\\_id=1957](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=1957)

### Removing hidden and non tariff barriers

The European Commission today reinforced its commitment to keeping Europe's markets open and to increasing efforts to improve openness further afield. This Communication identifies the main non tariff barriers faced by European exporters and sets out a plan to tackle them, including through deepening regulatory co-operation with key countries and regions.

For more information, please visit:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item\\_id=1984](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=1984)



## **Outermost regions: the way ahead 2007-2013**

The Commission presented last October a communication on the outermost regions (OR), which are the four French overseas departments DOM (Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Reunion and Martinique), together with Azores and Madeira and the Canary Islands.

Recognition of the specific characteristics of the OR has resulted, since 2007, in the adoption of new programmes and measures targeted at them. Since 1999, the European Union has recognized that outermost regions face different geographical and economic conditions compared to other regions of Europe: insularity, remoteness, small size, economic dependence etc.

The new strategy seeks to overcome these handicaps while at the same time emphasizing how Europe can make the most of the special assets that OR offer: their remarkable biodiversity and wealth of marine ecosystems, their geostrategic impact, their ideal location for experimentation to combat the effects of climate change and high-quality laboratories.

For more information, please visit:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communic/rup2008/rup\\_com2008642\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communic/rup2008/rup_com2008642_en.pdf)

## **New EU Trade Commissioner: UK Catherine Ashton**

Catherine Ashton was on 6th October confirmed as the new European Commissioner for External Trade. The appointment by the Council of Ministers follows the departure of Peter Mandelson to take up the position of Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform in the United Kingdom. Commissioner Ashton assumes the duties of Trade Commissioner as of 6th October.

For more information, please visit:

[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_barroso/ashton/](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/ashton/)



## **European Economic and Social Committee: Mario Sepi, new President**

On 22 October 2008, the EESC elected a new presidency for the 2008-2010 mandate. The new President is Mr. Mario Sepi, Italy, from the EESC's Employees' Group. The two new Vice-Presidents are Ms. Irini Piri, Greece, from the EESC's employers' group, who will be responsible for communication, and Mr. Seppo Kallio, Finland, from the Committee's Various Interests Group, who will be responsible for budgetary matters.

The European Economic and Social Committee represents the various economic and social components of organised civil society. It is an institutional consultative body established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome. Its consultative role enables its members, and hence the organisations they represent, to participate in the Community decision-making process. The Committee has 344 members, who are appointed by the Council of Ministers.

The EESC's presidency rotates among its three groups (employers, employees and various interests). The President is elected for a two-year term. The Vice-Presidents are elected from the two other groups.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/organisation/president/Sepi/presentation/index-en.asp>



## Calls of proposals

### **Boosting research for the benefit of Europe's SMEs**

Two calls for proposals that aim to help SMEs become more innovative have been announced recently under the EU'S Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP7).

For more information, please visit:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item\\_id=1839](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=1839)



### 9-13.02.2009: Sustainable Energy Week

Under the umbrella of the Sustainable Energy Europe Campaign (SEE), the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy and Transport, the European Institutions and major stakeholders concerned with sustainable energy are together putting on the third edition of the EU Sustainable Energy Week (EUSEW). It will take place in Brussels, Belgium, and in other cities across Europe from Monday 9 to Friday 13 February 2009, although many side events are foreseen during the weeks immediately before and after.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.eusew.eu/>

### 16-17.02.2008: Regions for economic change – networking for results, Brussels

On 16 and 17 February 2009, the European Commission will hold its annual conference of the 'Regions for economic change' initiative under the title "Regions for Economic Change – Networking for Results". The event will be organized by the Commission's Regional Policy Directorate General and other Commission services in cooperation with the Committee of the Regions. During the evening of the first day, Commissioner Danuta Hübner will present the 2009 'RegioStars' awards to projects displaying good practice and innovation in regional policy.

For more information, please visit:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/conferences/networking/programme\\_en.cfm?nmenu=4](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/networking/programme_en.cfm?nmenu=4)

### 6-14.05.2009 - 1<sup>st</sup> European SME Week '09: Small business, big ideas

The first European SME Week, taking place from 6 to 14 May 2009, is a campaign to promote entrepreneurship across Europe and to inform entrepreneurs about support available for them at European, national and local level. It allows SMEs to discover an array of information, advice, support and ideas to help them develop their activities.

For more information:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policy/entrepreneurship/sme-week/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policy/entrepreneurship/sme-week/index_en.htm)

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Europe INNOVA Conference in Lyon: time to innovate

The second conference of the Europe INNOVA community focused on the current financial turmoil and how accelerating innovation would help the EU to weather the storm and prosper.

For more information, please visit:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e\\_i/news/article\\_7123\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e_i/news/article_7123_en.htm)

### Enterprise Europe Network: First Annual Conference: looking ahead to 2009

The Enterprise Europe Network's first Annual Conference took place in Strasbourg in November. Organized in association with the French Presidency of the EU, the Conference was the occasion to define the main direction for the Network in 2009 and to discuss events and policies at EU level of direct relevance to SMEs. Furthermore, Network partners and the Commission took stock of the first year of the Network's activities. Through a series of dynamic workshops, the Network partners were also able to exchange ideas and good practice as well as provide input into future Network activities.

For more information, please visit:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e\\_i/news/article\\_7326\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e_i/news/article_7326_en.htm)

**INSULEUR wish you Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2009**

-Coming back in February 2009 with issue 5-

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