

EU BUSINESS SUPPORT IN MARKETS OUTSIDE THE EU

Listed below are various kinds of activities currently carried out at the EU level to support business, and in some cases specifically SMEs, in markets outside the EU through Centres and other programmes. *First*, Business Centres that have been established by the EU or that are currently being considered by the EU; *secondly*, an EU Centre that also has a related role in supporting business and, *thirdly*, certain Centres and programmes that have been established by the private sector but are partly supported by the EU.

1. EU Business Support Centres

(a) Existing

- **European Business and Technology Centre, New Delhi and with antennae in Mumbai, Kolkata and Bangalore**

Purpose: Foster links between EU and Indian business as well as between science and technology actors to promote the EU in India and respond to demands of the Indian market for EU business. Strong emphasis on technology, with focus on the four clusters of environment, transport, biotech and energy as well as the horizontal issues of climate change and market access issues. Not only for SMEs.

Start date: 1 October 2008

Operator: Consortium led by Eurochambres; three grant agreements so far: EBTC I, II and III.

Total budget for the three phases: €20.5 million, of which €17 million from the EU budget.

Source (and share) of EU funding: EP initiative: Budget Item 19 10 01 0 "Preparatory Action in India"

Foreseen duration of project activities: 8 years

- **EU Centre for Support to European SMEs ("EU SME Centre"), Beijing, China**

Purpose: Assist EU business, in particular SMEs, doing business in China (exporting to or investing in), including fostering their cooperation with Chinese business.

Start date: started in 2010

Operator: External service provider following a call for tender launched in April 2009; service contract

Total budget: €5 million

Source (and share) of EU funding: EP initiative: Budget Item 19 10 01 04 "Preparatory Action in China"

Foreseen duration of project activities: 5 years

- **The European ASEAN Business Centre (EABC), Bangkok, Thailand**

Purpose: Assist EU business, in particular SMEs, doing business in Thailand and ASEAN, including facilitating market access.

Start date: 24. December 2010

Operator: Consortium led by German-Thai Chamber of Commerce, involving eight further European-Thai bilateral Chambers of Commerce as well as Eurochambres; grant contract

Total budget: €2.3 million, of which €2 million from EU budget

Source (and share) of EU funding: EP initiative: Budget Item 19 10 04 05 Preparatory Action – Cooperation with middle-income group countries in Asia.

Foreseen duration of project activities: 4 years

2. Other EU-financed Centres that carry out some business support activities

• EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation, Tokyo, Japan

Purpose: Headquartered in Tokyo with a branch office in Brussels, the Centre was established jointly by the Commission (DG Enterprise and Industry) and the Japanese Government (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, METI) following a Council decision (92/278/EEC). Unlike the other EU Business Centres it has been mainly focusing on business skills for individuals through its programmes such as Vulcanus stipends for internships and Human Resources Training mostly for SME staff. Its activities are also covering a think tank role on industrial policy issues and general business support with information services provided to SMEs wishing to develop their presence in Japan.

Start date: 1986 as a pilot scheme, as from 1992 following legal basis

Operator: Co-managed by the Commission (DG Enterprise and Industry) and the Japanese Government (METI) with locally detached management.

Annual budget: €4.2 million

Source (and share) of EU funding: Individual budget line 02020201Industrial Cooperation (54%)

Foreseen duration of project: Joint long term effort, subject to rules of the EC Financial Regulation

Main activities:

a) Think tank activities

- New focus put on the common challenges faced by the EU and Japan (global warming and environmental issues, energy concerns, competition from emerging countries, foreign direct investment, etc)
- Present and confront EU and Japanese industrial policies in specific areas of joint interest: e.g. SME policy (seminar on the succession challenges for SMEs) or energy, environment and climate change issues

b) Training programmes

- Managerial training programmes on how to succeed in Japan (5 week training for executives from EU SMEs in Japan)

- Vulcanus in Japan: internships in Japan for European students in the fields of engineering, science and architecture
- Training programmes in World Class Manufacturing for European Executives (5-days training, e.g. on “sustainable manufacturing”)
- c) Information services and helpdesk
 - Answer EU business inquiries about Japan
 - Assist EU clusters in their internationalisation efforts
 - Develop the Enterprise Europe Network in Japan
 - Offer support to SME missions to Japan organised by regional organisations and industrial federations; launch seminars targeted at EU SMEs keen to improve their exports.

3. EU support to private sector business support bodies

- **EU Business Information Programme, Hong Kong**

Purpose: to enhance EU visibility, promote a better understanding of Community actions and policies.

Start date: January 2009

Operator: DG Relex with European Chambers of Commerce in Hong Kong

Total budget: €0.75 million

Source (and share) of EU funding: Industrialised Countries Instrument (68%)

Foreseen duration of project: 3 years.

- **EU-Malaysia : Services Sector Dialogue & Business Cooperation**

Purpose: To boost trade and investment between the EU and Malaysia in the services sector through dialogue with the Government of Malaysia on the development of the services sector as well as promoting business cooperation.

Start date: December 2009

Operator: Grant contract

Total budget: €572,593

Source (and share) of EU funding: Preparatory Action for Middle Income Countries (PA MIC)

Foreseen duration of project: 3 years

- **EU-Malaysia: EU Outreach & Visibility**

Purpose: To develop the institutional capacity to promote the understanding and knowledge of the European Union as a major player in the global economic and political system to decision makers, general public, media and academia.

Start date: December 2009

Operator: Grant contract

Total budget: €575,000

Source (and share) of EU funding: Preparatory Action for Middle Income Countries (PA MIC)

Foreseen duration of project: 3 years

- **Specific activities of the European Chamber of Commerce (EuroCham) in Singapore**

Purpose: Improve the competitiveness of EU business and strengthen their local presence in Singapore as well as in key ASEAN markets, including market access

Start date: January 2009

Operator: The EBO (see Annex 2) in Singapore: the European Chamber of Commerce in Singapore

Total budget: €0.5 million to cover 82 specific activities of business to business cooperation (not administration)

Source (and share) of EU funding: Industrialised Countries Instrument (ICI) (74%)

Foreseen duration of project: 3 years

OTHER BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

- **EU Gateway Programme for Japan and Korea**

Legal basis: the Industrialised Countries Instrument (ICI) – Council Regulation (EC) n° 1934/2006 of 21 December 2006 establishing a financing instrument for cooperation with industrialised and other high-income countries and territories.

Purpose: In a number of promising sectors, European companies face difficulties in entering the Japanese and Korean markets. The long-standing Gateway to Japan programme has provided support to about 2 500 European small and medium-sized companies in selected sectors from 1994 to 2007. In recent years, 98% of Gateway participants have made new contacts during Gateway events, and 88% of the contacts turned into business relations, resulting in a substantial increase in turnover, investment and job creation. However, former participants still report some difficulties in exporting to Japan, mainly in the areas of technical standards, regulatory requirements, pricing and marketing arrangements. In 2008, the Gateway programme was upgraded and extended to Korea. Henceforth participating companies receive extensive “coaching” as regards their business plan ahead of their participation in business events in Seoul or Tokyo as well as during and after their participation in EU Gateway business missions.

Start date: 1992 as a pilot scheme; from 1994 as a regular Commission Programme in the context of bilateral relations with Japan and with Korea from 2008.

Operator: Managed and financed formerly by Unit C.2 of DG RELEX (Relations with Japan and Korea) and since 2011 by FPIS (Foreign Policy Instruments Service), implemented by contractors in the EU, in Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Budget: multi-annual budget 2007 – 2013 under the ICI Regulation. Maximum budget for the implementation of the EU Gateway Programme for Japan and Korea in the period 200 – 2015 is €40.7 million.

Main activities: The new Gateway programme with Japan covers six sectors where European companies have a strong expansion potential: Environmental and Energy-related technology, Information and Communication technology, Healthcare and Medical technology, Construction and Building technology, High-end fashion design, Interior design.

The Gateway programme with Korea focuses on three technological sectors: Environmental and Energy-related technology, Healthcare and Medical technology, Construction and Building technology.

The quantitative objectives are to organise six business events per year in Japan and three business events per year in Korea for the benefit of about 300 European companies each year. The expected results are an increase in exports or investment by European companies, including medium-sized companies, in the selected sectors. The effectiveness of this programme will be measured on the basis of increased turnover, investments and employment for the European participants.

- **Executive Training Programme – ETP for Japan and Korea**

Legal basis: the Industrialised Countries Instrument (ICI) – Council Regulation (EC) n° 1934/2006 of 21 December 2006 establishing a financing instrument for cooperation with industrialised and other high-income countries and territories.

Purpose: The Executive Training Programme (ETP) for Japan and Korea is a human resources development programme targeted at European managers who want to develop business with Japan and Korea. This programme, which was created in 1979 and counts more than 1 000 alumni, has been re-designed in 2010 with a more focused business-orientation.

Operator: Managed and financed formerly by Unit C.2 of DG RELEX (Relations with Japan and Korea) and since 2011 by FPIS (Foreign Policy Instruments Service), implemented by contractors in the EU, in Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Main activities: The current ETP is a 12-month intensive programme consisting of linguistic training, business administration courses, and lectures on society and culture in Japan or Korea, as well as an internship at a Korean or Japanese company. This training must be part of a business development strategy and applications must be supported by the employer (sponsoring company). The expected results are:

- an enhanced knowledge of the Japanese/Korean languages and business cultures enabling ETP graduates to perform in a Japanese/Korean business environment;
- an increase in the exports/investments of the European sponsoring companies;
- an increase in the pool of European executives and a greater presence of European business in Japan/Korea.

The enrolment of potential candidates for the first training cycle in Japan or Korea will start probably in August 2011, the training in November 2012. Two others training cycles will be launch in November 2013 and November 2014.

- **Al-Invest Regional Aid Programme**

Al-Invest is an economic co-operation programme that aims to support the internationalisation of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Latin America, in collaboration with their European partners in order to contribute to reinforce social cohesion in the region.

The fourth phase of the AL-INVEST (2009-2012) is implemented through three groups of business organisations belonging to three distinct geographical areas of Latin America:

- Central America-Cuba-México;
- Andean Region;
- Mercosur Chile and Venezuela

These three groups are supported through horizontal services delivered by a European consortium lead by EUROCHAMBRES. This consortium will carry out market studies, business meetings, individual exchange programmes and trainings. In addition, all European business organisations with experience and/or interest in working with Latin America will be gathered under a Network of Interested Institutions.

- **Pro-Invest**

This programme concentrates on countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific. It promotes the co-operation and technology transfer between companies. In this regard, Pro-Invest can provide grants and technical assistance to companies.

Its implementation has been entrusted to an autonomous Management Unit within the Centre for the Development of the Enterprise (CDE) under the supervision of EuropeAid, the Co-operation office of the European Commission.

PRO INVEST's objective is to promote investment and technology flows to enterprises operating within key sectors in ACP countries.

CLUSTERS AND NETWORKS POLICY – CURRENT AND FUTURE INITIATIVES

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform¹ (ECCP) is an open collaboration platform under the European Cluster Excellence Initiative that was established in 2010 to facilitate transnational cluster cooperation by offering relevant information about companies hosted by clusters. To promote a more institutionalised approach in target markets, the ECCP has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the European Business Technology Centre in India and another one with the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation. More of such collaboration agreements may be envisaged with other foreign markets, in particular neighbouring countries such as the Mediterranean countries which are of great political interest. The ECCP will explore how to further enhance such cooperation, building upon the recently signed MoUs, by notably organising specific events that bring together clusters from different regions with strong SME participation with a view to preparing the ground for practical cooperation across borders. In the long run, the services provided by the current European Cluster Collaboration Platform will have to be consolidated into a more sustainable approach with a view to helping European clusters develop international networks and partnerships in a long term perspective. Different options are currently assessed including the possibility to establish a foundation.

cluster the Additionally, the European Club of Cluster Managers² will conduct selected innovation intelligence activities for SMEs relevant to their internationalisation and two Europe INNOVA

¹ For more information see <http://www.cluster-excellence.eu/collaboration>.

² For more information see: <http://www.cluster-excellence.eu/club>.

projects (EcoCluP and ABC Europe)³ will explore the scope for internationalisation support tools to eco-innovative and biotech SMEs through cluster partnerships.

From 2011 the European Creative Industries Alliance⁴ will launch a public-private partnership on cluster excellence & cooperation that will develop and test new or better tools and service packages in support of the internationalisation of SMEs in creative industries.

A new initiative in 2011 will support pilot actions aimed at promoting international clusters activities by encouraging cluster organisations in Europe to develop jointly an international strategy. To this extent, a specific call for proposals has been launched under CIP in March 2011 to stimulate international cooperation through regional and national cluster programmes.⁵

In this respect, the European Cluster Alliance (ECA)⁶ is also preparing two handbooks to provide guidance on the internationalisation of clusters. ECA also prepares a handbook on how to develop successful cluster marketing and branding activities to contribute to promoting clusters at the international level.

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³ The “Eco-innovative cluster partnership for growth and internationalisation” (EcoCluP) is developing a toolbox including self-assessment of SMEs’ internationalisation potential, in-depth information about up-and-coming markets, practical support such as training, networking and coaching. More information is available at <http://www.europe-innova.eu/EcoCluP>. The “Advanced Biotech Cluster platforms for Europe” (ABCEurope) cluster partnership develops a model IPR agreement for the internationalisation of biotech SMEs as well as training and office space at international “partnerports” for SMEs. More information is available at <http://www.europe-innova.eu/ABCEurope>.

⁴ For more information about creative industries see at <http://www.europe-innova.eu/creative-industries>.

⁵ The text of relevant call for proposals: Promotion and development of world-class clusters in Europe is available at http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=4968.

⁶ The European Cluster Alliance is an open network for public authorities managing cluster programmes. Further information can be found at: <http://www.proinno-europe.eu/eca>.

⁷ For more information about creative industries see at <http://www.europe-innova.eu/creative-industries>.

MARKET ACCESS STRATEGY

Market Access Teams under the Market Access Partnership

A key element of the Market Access Strategy is the work of local Market Access Teams (MAT), bringing together the partners based in the third country concerned. While the concept of a MAT is a flexible one, MATs can functionally be seen as mirroring the structure of the MAAC (Market Access Advisory Committee) in Brussels: from providing a general platform for coordination among the Commission and Member States, involving business where needed, to creating specific thematic Working Groups when necessary.

The format of a MAT does therefore range from regular trade counsellors' coordination meetings on market access issues (between EU Delegations and Member States and involving business when appropriate) to very specific, working group-type meetings that focus on a specific barrier or sector. While in some countries, this sort of coordination on trade barriers has already been well established (and served as best practice for new MATs), for other countries the launch of the Market Access Partnership has given a new impetus. MATs have been established in a number of countries; reflections are ongoing on the setting up of further MATs. The MATs in Indonesia, Israel and Switzerland can be mentioned as best practice examples where a close cooperation between EU business, Member States and the Delegation ensures information exchange amongst all partners, active tackling of trade barriers, detection of future trade barriers in form of new laws or regulations ("early warning") and other coordinated business related actions.

Market Access Database

The Market Access Database is an important operational tool of the European Union's Market Access Strategy, supporting a continuous three-way exchange of information between the EU institutions, Member States and European business. The Market Access Database is a free, interactive, easy to use service providing:

1. Information about Market Access conditions in non-EU countries.
2. A systematic way for the European Commission to follow up complaints from businesses about barriers to trade in non-EU countries.
3. A means of ensuring that our trading partners are abiding by their international commitments.

The planned online "International Business Portal" will be linked to the Market Access Database in order to make full use of the information already available and to promote its visibility to SMEs.

EUROPEAN BUSINESS ORGANISATIONS (EBOs) WORLDWIDE NETWORK

Profile of participating organisations

Participating organisations are selected based on the following criteria: EU-wide representation of industry; a sufficient level of representation for all European industry present in the host country; main task is lobbying the host country authorities.

Organisations identified

- Afghanistan – European Chamber of Commerce in Afghanistan (EUCCA) *
- Argentina – Grupo Empresarial Unión Europea en Argentina
- Armenia – European Union Chamber of Commerce in Armenia (EUCCA)
- Australia – Australia/EU Business Council
- Brazil – EUROCAMARAS – Federation of the European Bilateral Chamber of Commerce & Industry in Brazil
- Chile - (EuroChile)
- China - European Union Chamber of Commerce in China (EUCCC)
- fYROMacedonia – European Business Organisation of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (EBA)
- Hong Kong – European Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong
- India - European Business Group (EBG) India
- Indonesia – European Business Chamber of Commerce in Indonesia (EuroCham Indonesia)
- Japan - European Business Community Japan (EBC)
- Kazakhstan – European Business Association of Kazakhstan (EUROBAK)
- Korea - European Union Chamber of Commerce in Korea (EUCCCK)
- Malaysia – EU-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce & Industry (EUMCCI)
- Philippines – European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP)
- Russia – Association of European Businesses (AEB)
- Singapore – European Chamber of Commerce Singapore (EuroCham)
- Sri Lanka – European Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka (ECCSL)
- Taiwan – European Chamber of Commerce Taipei (ECCT)
- Thailand – Thai European Business Association (TEBA)
- Ukraine - European Business Association (EBA)
- US - European-American Business Council (EABC)
- Vietnam – The European Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam (EuroCham)

* The EU Chamber of Commerce in Afghanistan is in the process of being created. A first meeting took place on March 9, 2011.

EXAMPLES OF MEMBER STATE BUSINESS SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

FINLAND

Evaluated support measure	Vientirenkaat
Evaluated support measure in English	Export partnership
Member State	Finland
Kind of support measure	Business cooperation and networking
Target countries	General support measure: no specific target countries
Budget	Around 3.7 million euro
Measure in operation from	1993 to ongoing (Finpro)
Estimate of SME-share	Approximately 99%
Website	http://www.finpro.fi/fi-FI/Business/Export+Partnership/
Executing agent	Trade association: Finpro

Short description of the measure

The goal of the measure “Export Partnership” is to ease companies’ entry to target markets by forming synergetic export clusters. It is a cooperation project of SMEs, heading together to a selected target market(s), with a minimum of four companies forming a synergetic offering. The executing agent will recruit an external export manager for the group, who acts as an extra resource to the companies and offers a local presence in the target market, alongside their network. The export manager may also be based in Finland, if the operation mode supports that. The participating companies have an active role in the project. The way of working also offers them an excellent learning and growth opportunity. The job description of the export manager can be designed according to company needs. Primarily it is about door opening, market study, partner search and coaching.

Finpro has the role of project management, and manages approximately 30 export partnerships annually to various target markets and different lines of industry. The maximum duration of government aid is three and half years. However, the commitment and financing are always for one year at a time. In the early phase a six-month-long preparatory period is possible.

The target group are Finnish SMEs with a special emphasis on growth companies. Larger companies may participate as well, but depending on the company size the amount of government aid may be reduced or may not be available at all.

GERMANY

Evaluated support measure	Exportinitiative Erneuerbare Energien
Evaluated support measure in English	Export Initiative for “Renewable Energies”
Member State	Germany
Kind of support measure	The Renewable Energy Export Initiative includes different kinds of support measures. The main aim of the used support measures is to provide market information and to establish business contacts. Other services are: seminars and workshops; trade missions, trade fairs and matchmaking events; advice and consultancy; services in target countries as well as business cooperation and networking.
Target countries	General support measure: no specific target countries
Budget	In 2006 the implementation of the different measures of the export initiative cost around 8.8 million euro
Measure in operation from	Since 2003
Estimate of SME-share	About 80%
Website	www.exportinitiative.de ; www.germany-renewable-energy.com ; www.b2benergy.com
Executing agent	Various special agencies: among others but with a special coordinating function: Germany Trade and Invest.

Short description of the measure

The export initiative aims to help German companies in exporting renewable energy technologies by providing information, leveraging existing initiatives and activities as well as actively supporting projects abroad. One of the initiatives' central tasks is to showcase German renewable energy technology products and companies abroad.

Several support packages are financed by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology and are implemented by various service providers in Germany and abroad.

The export initiative uses the following support measures:

- trade fairs (partly integrated into the Foreign trade fair programme of the Federal Republic of Germany)
- business trips to potential business partners abroad and organisation of special thematic conferences abroad (supported by the Network of German Chambers Abroad)
- information and contact events (integrated into the programme for foreign trade related information and contact events coordinated by Germany Trade and Invest)
- trips of foreign decision makers to Germany where they can inform themselves about German renewable energy technologies "on the spot" and conclude business contracts
- installation of reference or flagship projects abroad at German official institutions together with accompanying PR-measures
- B2B-plattform
- provision of information on foreign markets and marketing abroad (German Energy Agency: dena)
- Public financial support (e.g. “KfW Bankengruppe”).

All in all, the main aim of the measure is to provide market information and to establish business contacts.

The measure is aimed at enterprises, mainly SMEs, engaged in renewable energies like solar energy, wind power, bio fuel, geothermal energy, and hydropower.

THE NETHERLANDS

Evaluated support measure	Prepare2start (formerly called Programma Starters op Buitenlandse Markten (PSB))
Evaluated support measure in English	Prepare2start (formerly called Programme Starters in Foreign Markets (PSB))
Member State	The Netherlands
Kind of support measure	Advice and consultancy, and subsidies and grants
Target countries	General support measure: no specific target countries
Budget	Around 12 million euro (2010)
Measure in operation from	Since 1999 (since 2007 it has a new name)
Estimate of SME-share	100% (70% have less than 10 employees)
Website	www.evd.nl/home/financiering_projecten/financiering/programma_pts.asp?land=pts
Executing agent	Special agency: Agentschap NL (formerly EVD)

Short description of the measure

The objective of the measure is to provide advice and assistance in drawing up and implementing an internationalisation plan, and a 50% subsidy for activities such as partner search, trade fair participation and legal advice. Prepare2start is the continuation of the former PSB-measure: Programme Starters in Foreign Markets (1999-2007). The target group is comprised of SMEs with less than 100 employees, with little or no international experience, and wishing to start exports to a (new) foreign market.

UNITED KINGDOM

Evaluated support measure	Tradeshaw Access Programme (TAP)
Evaluated support measure in English	Tradeshaw Access Programme (TAP)
Member State	UK
Kind of support measure	Trade missions, trade fairs and matchmaking events, and subsidies and grants
Target countries	General support measure: no specific target countries
Budget	£8 million per annum
Measure in operation from	Since 2006
Estimate of SME-share	90-100%
Website	www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk/ukti/appmanager/ukti/ourservices?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=market_entry&_nfls=false
Executing agent	Government: UK Trade and Investment (UKTI)

Short description of the measure

UKTI's Tradeshaw Access Programme (TAP) provides grant support to attend trade shows overseas. Participation is available in two forms – TAP Group or TAP SOLO. TAP Group offers businesses the option of participating as part of a group of UK businesses led by an Accredited Trade Association (ATO). TAP Group grants vary from £1,000 - £1,800. TAP SOLO supports a smaller number of companies on an independent or 'solo' basis who wish to exhibit at trade shows where there is no ATO-led group. They receive a fixed grant of £1,000.

In March 2010 grants were available for over 400 trade shows in many markets. These include specific events in China, India, Russia, Ukraine, Japan and Brazil.

The key objectives of the TAP scheme are to:

- help new exporters overcome initial barriers to export;
- help high technology businesses and firms that are new to emerging markets learn how to use overseas trade fairs as part of their trade development plans; and
- help UK firms maximise the benefits from exhibiting at overseas trade fairs.

The target group is as follows:

- SME or UK publicly funded centre of higher learning or a UK publicly funded research organisation.
- New-to-export (based on a percentage of turnover resulting from exports).

Have less than 3 TAP grants (involving more than one market). In April 2009 this number was increased to 6.

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS PORTAL

The new portal should take into account the strategy of the Commission aiming at streamlining EU information and business support to SMEs. Placing it back to back with a similar portal already known by the business community would be coherent with this strategy. The most suitable option in this context would be Your Europe-Business (www.youreurope.eu) which is a portal providing information and online services to European SMEs interested in doing business within the single market. Your Europe-Business (YEB) has on average 150,000 visitors per month and would be a good vehicle to promote the new portal at the start. As a consequence, the latter should have the same look and feel as YEB.

As it is already the case for YEB, the new portal would not pretend to answer all the questions raised by small businesses as to their internationalisation possibilities. It would be a virtual entry point offering a first level of information and directing the visitors towards the usual business support providers close to SMEs such as Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Chambers of Crafts, Innovation Agencies, many of which are existing partners in the Enterprise Europe Network.

The new portal should be a practical handbook written in plain language.

A possible option would be to provide visitors with information along the life cycle of a business: from starting-up to winding-down a business in a third country by just clicking on a map. Some horizontal issues could also be presented such as taxation, accounting rules, public procurement procedures, funding opportunities, IPR.

In order to help visitors find what they need in an easy and quick manner, the new portal should offer twofold information and services. On the one hand, visitors would be given access to information of a European nature such as on the EU business support programmes; on the other hand, they would have access to information on business support from each individual Member State.

The linguistic regime of is a difficult issue: in the short term, it should limit the translations of the main European part to DE, EN, FR and EN and national language/s for the national parts. In the longer term, the portal could provide 23 languages for the European part and DE, EN, FR for the national parts in addition to national language/s. While we understand the added value and political significance of a multilingual portal, we are also aware of the complexities in management terms as well as the associated costs.

Another issue is the content updating policy. Outdated information has no value. However, if the information is updated manually, then translated, the time spent between the change happening in a given MS and the upload in the portal is significant. That is why an automatic content syndication mechanism should be foreseen. YEB is exploring this approach and could transfer valuable lessons to the new portal. The involvement of EU Member States in the updating and verification of the content will be important in ensuring the success of the new portal.

FAQ and success stories should be available as well as the possibility of interactive dialogue.