

This is a regular feature by the Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of the Economy and Foreign Trade. Business Review is distributed each month to embassies, honorary consuls and trade delegations in over 150 countries to inform them and potential trade partners of the wide range of opportunities that exist in the Grand Duchy.

## MORE THAN 100 PARTICIPANTS AT THE "INTERNATIONALISATION DAY"



The Chamber of Commerce's Euro Info Centre-Luxembourg PME/PMI organised an "Internationalisation Day" on 27th June which aimed to raise awareness amongst SMEs of the opportunities and support available to boost their activities abroad. In his welcoming address, Chamber Director Pierre Gramengna underlined the numerous advantages of the Saar-Lor-Lux Greater Region. Within this region, businesses have easy access to neighbouring markets in which they can expand. For many, breaking the Greater Region market is often a crucial first step before branching out into wider Europe and beyond.

Internationalisation can come in the form of a partnership with a foreign business. In the first session of the day, Maître Didier Matray, a barrister in Liège, Cologne and Paris, highlighted the importance of taking all legal issues into account when signing an international contract. He highlighted the two big freedoms governing international business law: the choice of which law will apply and which country will have jurisdiction. These issues are of great importance if there is a conflict. Alternatively, the parties could opt for arbitration, and this is frequently a useful alternative. Maître Matray spelled out the main principals and advantages of this system and also gave some general advice about how to draw up such an agreement. There followed case studies from Robert Dennewald, Chairman of Eurobéton and Roland Streber, Director of Luxconsult who gave practical illustrations of their sometimes difficult international experiences. The session ended

with a presentation by the manager of the EIC Sabrina Sagramola.

Participants were then able to attend workshops on topics linked to internationalisation: public markets, ICT, existing business partnerships, customs and tax questions and issues related to intellectual property. In the first workshop on public markets and ICT, Maître Christophe Kühl, avocat à la Cour and Rechtsanwalt with the Franco-German practice Epp, Gebauer & Kühl summarised some general principals, procedures and financing arrangements. The aim of the presentation was to lay out key information for businesses looking to win public markets abroad. Niels Dickens, who is responsible for projects with the Euro Info Centre-Luxembourg PME/PMI, then introduced the "lookout" services offered to businesses who are seeking access to regional and European calls for tender.

The "Customs and Tax" workshop had two main themes. André Schott, Inspector with the Luxembourg Administration des Douanes et Accises presented the new IT application "Paperless Customs and Excise" (PLDA), developed by his administration to streamline the process of making customs declarations over the internet. Then Claude Steichen, Inspector with the VAT department of the Administration de l'Enregistrement et des Domaines gave a short overview of tax rules governing the most frequent cross-border operations within the EU. After explaining the main principals, he looked in more depth into taxes on the delivery of goods and services, illustrating with examples.

The "Partnerships between businesses" workshop consisted of three presentations. Anne Pagani of the Hainaut Euro Info Centre sought to answer the question: "how to start a business partnership". She highlighted four key issues that must be asked before undertaking such a business move abroad. The company must understand clearly the objective they are seeking from a partnership, what means are necessary to bring this about, what is the ideal partner and what form the relationship should take. Only then can an effective cooperative arrangement be brought into being. Arnaud Duban, Project Manager with Luxinnovation and coordinator of the Centre Relais Innovation Luxembourg-Trier-Saarland then looked into international technology partnerships. Finally, workshop moderator Sabrina Sagramola presented the various virtual platforms made available for businesses which provide a useful, low cost way of seeking out potential partners in the international context. Pierre Kihn, European Patent Attorney with the Office Ernest T. Freylinger S.A. spoke to the final workshop about intellectual property, drawing a distinction between patents, brands, drawings and models, copyright and associated rights.

The morning drew to a close with a buffet lunch over which participants could network and discuss these subjects in greater detail. In all, the sessions enabled business managers were to gain a greater understanding of how to approach foreign markets. This service was particularly useful for small businesses unable to afford in-house specialists.