



Sistema Económico
Latinoamericano y del Caribe
Latin American and Caribbean
Economic System

Sistema Económico
Latino-Americano e do Caribe
Système Economique
Latinoaméricain et Caribéen

Draft Project of Activities of the IBERPYME Programme for the year 2011

Copyright © SELA, October 2010. All rights reserved.
Printed in the Permanent Secretariat of SELA, Caracas, Venezuela.

The Press and Publications Department of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA must authorize reproduction of this document, whether totally or partially, through sela@sela.org. The Member States and their government institutions may reproduce this document without prior authorization, provided that the source is mentioned and the Secretariat is aware of said reproduction.

C O N T E N T S

I.	INTRODUCTION	3
A.	BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION	4
B.	OBJECTIVE	4
C.	RESULTS AND PROSPECTS	5
D.	ACTIVITIES OF THE IBERPYME PROGRAMME FOR 2011	7
D.1	SCHEDULE OF THE IBERPYME PROGRAMME FOR 2011	9
D.2	SCHEDULE OF THE IBERPYME-CARIBBEAN PROGRAMME FOR 2011	12
D.3	SPECIAL PROJECTS: AECID'S OPEN AND PERMANENT CALL FOR COOPERATION (CAP)	13
E.	FINAL CONSIDERATIONS	15

I. INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the global financial and economic crisis, coupled with technological breakthroughs – particularly the intensive use of information and communication technologies – questions have arisen about the business performance of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), as they must face unpredictable scenarios which force them to review all their strategies and undertake in-depth restructurings of their operations. It is necessary, therefore, to make efforts to provide employers with some guidance as regards their actions to face current and future challenges.

The environment in which SMEs are working is conditioned by three main elements of the New Economy, also known as digital economy or information economy: Globalization, knowledge, and use of information networks. Thus, knowledge has become the main asset of enterprises in the New Economy, which is also characterized by an intensive use of information technologies and process innovation.

SMEs have a series of virtues that turn them into a sector of fundamental importance for the economic and social development of the countries in the region. Their high degree of flexibility to respond to unforeseen demands, adapt themselves to changing circumstances, and their close relations with employees, suppliers and customers make them an ideal sector to generate jobs and income. They are mainly focused on domestic markets, but sometimes they are also offered opportunities in international trade. However, because they are not naturally inclined to exporting or because they lack knowledge of foreign markets, their participation is still meagre, compared to SMEs in developed countries.

For this reason, SMEs must identify the changes occurring in the global economy and proceed to adopt new business management models, undertake innovation processes with a view to improving products and services, develop a strategy for market intelligence and permanently train staff to get involved in restructuring processes. Another aspect that SMEs should consider is to establish links with large enterprises in order to serve as suppliers or work with them jointly or in partnership to build the necessary production and marketing scale.

Such changes are not only related to internal aspects of the enterprise, but also to SMEs' relations with their external milieu, including a more active participation of consumers, who have become more demanding and no longer limit themselves to be passive buyers of products, but are becoming more selective and are looking for more personalized products, thus creating a distinct niche for SMEs.

In conclusion, the future business model will be characterized by an intensive use of ICTs, by a highly skilled workforce and a mentality favouring permanent change, flexible organizational structures, collaboration with other enterprises to achieve common objectives, and an orientation throughout the organization towards quality and customer service.

4

A. BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

The Ibero-American Programme on Institutional Cooperation for the Development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (IBERPyme) was approved at the Ibero-American Summit held in Oporto, Portugal, in 1998. It is implemented and administered by the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) and it is attached to the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB). It has provided support and assistance to intermediate organizations and institutions supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)¹ in Ibero America.

Over the years, the IBERPyme Programme has been operating with the support and collaboration of governmental institutions and business associations which have benefited from the knowledge gained by the Programme in each one of its thematic areas, through the exchange of experiences among those institutions, which has allowed them to jointly define policies and actions to favour the development of SMEs. In recent years, the IBERPyme Programme, in addition to expanding its attention to most Ibero-American countries, it has also organized activities in the Caribbean countries to strengthen the spreading of knowledge, which has resulted in increased recognition in the region, and has also promoted greater interaction as regards the subject of SMEs with other countries in the region.

B. OBJECTIVE

The general objective of IBERPyme is to contribute to the development of institutional capacities of government institutions and business associations carrying out programmes to support SMEs, through the design and implementation of programmes and activities aimed at helping to increase their competitiveness, with a view to a more active participation in domestic markets and greater opportunities for integrating themselves into international markets.

Its specific objectives are as follows:

- Contribute to capacity building of intermediary institutions supporting SMEs by sharing experiences.
- Promote strategies for partnership and inter-entrepreneurial cooperation among SMEs and with large companies, and for the creation of sectoral networks (clusters) and increased productive integration.
- Contribute to the internationalization process of Ibero-American enterprises.
- Strengthen SMEs technological capacities and access to information, by using existing programmes and creating synergies with other institutions with expertise in this area.
- Support regional and international efforts already underway, in order to promote successful experiences as regards inter-institutional cooperation for the development of SMEs.

¹ For the purposes of this document, SMEs includes micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

The IBERPYME Programme has focused on the following thematic areas:

- Development of public policies to support SMEs
- Partnerships
- Internationalization
- Strengthening of intermediate structures supporting businesses
 - ✓ Exchange of experiences and thematic workshops
 - ✓ Strengthening and interconnection of informatics networks and business services
 - ✓ Promotion actions, spreading of information and awareness raising
- Innovation to support SMEs
- Entrepreneurship

C. RESULTS AND PROSPECTS

In its eleven years of existence, the IBERPYME Programme (www.iberpymeonline.org) has organized and successfully conducted a series of business meetings, missions, seminars and workshops in various areas, such as partnerships, competitiveness, globalization, information and communication technologies, export consortiums, industrial districts, public policies to support SMEs, financing and guarantees, inter-entrepreneurial cooperation, development of entrepreneurs, micro-franchises and micro-enterprises, and other subjects of interest. During that period, IBERPYME has conducted approximately 150 activities in which more than 16,000 people have participated.

The IBERPYME Programme has conducted activities in the majority of Ibero-American countries and some nations of the Caribbean Community that are Member States of SELA. Altogether, events have been organized in the following countries: Argentina, Barbados, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Spain, Jamaica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela.

In addition, the programme has achieved a dynamic exchange of experiences and dissemination of information about best practices in the area of public policies to support SMEs, which is one of the areas of work to which IBERPYME must attach top priority in this new stage, in view of the interests of member countries.

Similarly, it has gradually created a network for learning best practices, for dissemination of successful cases and lessons learned. It has also maintained a permanent follow-up of the initiatives, ideas, projects and proposals submitted by participants in the events, which have provided direct input into the planning of annual activities.

Some partners in the region have said that thanks to the events of the IBERPYME Programme they have been able to materialize projects related to productive integration, the use of information and communication technologies for SMEs, and new business development and innovation, while some of the recommendations stemming from the events have been included in national public policies for SMEs.

6

However, despite the benefits listed above, the analysis of the progress and implementation of the activities proposed by the IBERPYME Programme raises some concerns, namely:

1. The need to increase AECID's contributions to the IBERPYME Programme, whose purposes are directly related to the promotion of productive development and social progress. In light of the nature and high level of the commitments that Ibero-American countries have pledged to other Ibero-American cooperation programmes, the efforts made by the IBERPYME Programme would be expected to receive increased financial support from international cooperation, since they are directly related to the promotion of the Ibero-American productive sectors, with an unquestionable impact on social development.
2. The requests of Caribbean countries that are Member States of SELA to expand activities in support of SMEs in those nations, which have different characteristics in terms of their development levels. This has led those countries to commit themselves to increasing the support of the public and private sectors to their SMEs, as part of their strategies for economic development with social inclusion.
3. The inability of some countries in the region to honour their commitments and pay their annual quotas to the Programme. This problem has aggravated in recent years due to the adverse international economic and financial situation, which is still affecting the countries in our region.
4. At present, the IBERPYME programme's strategy focuses on the exploration of alternatives to meet the growing demand of Member States for activities and support, and for a more efficient use of the various tools to support the work and organization of the activities of the institution.

The actions and measures to be undertaken in order to accomplish its objectives of the IBERPYME Programme, in the short and medium term, are as follows:

- a. Focus on the most important, current and relevant thematic areas, so as to deal with them in a more consistent way, on a permanent basis, not only as regards their contents but also the number of countries collaborating with the Programme.
- b. Expand the range of institutions and experts collaborating with the Programme, which will contribute to increase the diversity of theoretical concepts, work methodologies and ways to identify best practices.
- c. Promote a greater number of two-way business missions abroad, which will not only allow for negotiating sales and purchases of products and services, but also to finding greater and more effective opportunities for technology transfers.
- d. Identify opportunities for specific internships in order to train officials and business association leaders, as regards management and technical aspects related to the SME sector.
- e. Encourage the development and certification of specialized consulting capabilities in SMEs, as a natural mechanism to address a greater number of SMEs.

- f. Study the possibility of publishing printed and digital manuals for spreading information and knowledge about skills in specific subjects, including work methodologies, based on experiences or case studies.
- g. Make a better use and take advantage of the tools offered by Internet for distance learning, online training, forums and chats on specific topics, videoconferencing and teleconferencing.
- h. Promote, on IBERPYME's Web site, the use of the "Meeting Point" (*Punto de Encuentro*) as a mechanism for consultation to solve specific problems, exchange information, and post offers for supply and demand of products and services of SMEs.
- i. Establish mechanisms for follow-up and evaluation of the performance of participants in training activities, exchange of experiences and technical assistance, in order to assess the efficiency of the activities conducted by the Programme.
- j. Reinforce databases that provide information on various aspects taken into account by the IBERPYME Programme since its inception, such as crossed lists of participants by country and by events, lists of institutions and experts in specific subjects. Furthermore, set up a registry of international SME programmes, including planned activities, experts participating in such activities, and officials responsible for those programmes, in order to identify possible areas for cooperation.
- k. Strengthen and attach priority to relations with governmental focal points, business associations, financial institutions and other relevant international, regional and subregional organizations related to SMEs.
- l. Promote technical assistance and training activities, through formulas for triangular cooperation from the most developed countries in the region to those countries with a relatively lower level of technical development in the SMEs sector.
- m. Outline cooperation projects that contribute to clarify the specific needs raised by groups of countries with similar problems in the sector of SMEs.

D. ACTIVITIES OF THE IBERPYME PROGRAMME FOR 2011

Based on the considerations above, IBERPYME is proposing a work programme to respond to them and expand the coverage of those countries where events are scheduled to take place.

Following is a detailed schedule of the activities to be conducted by the IBERPYME Programme in three main areas: a) Ibero-American Countries, b) Caribbean Countries, and c) Special Projects.

Training activities are aimed at providing participants with work methodologies and tools to improve the performance of public and private institutions conducting programmes to support and assist SMEs. In this connection, the objective is to take advantage of the infrastructure and facilities offered by AECID, namely the agency's Training Centres located in Antigua (Guatemala), Cartagena de Indias (Colombia), Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia) and Montevideo (Uruguay).

8

Some events have a regional focus, as they are aimed at strengthening the regional integration processes through a productive development based on SMEs, and at generating an exchange of views as regards similar problems affecting businesses in the member countries, so as to find common solutions and provide mutual support, while promoting trade exchanges.

Another thematic area for the year 2011 is the definition and adoption of public policies to encourage the development of women entrepreneurs, including considering activities to deal with the issue of Gender and SMEs. The programme of activities also includes the promotion of SMEs working in the area of tourism, as service-oriented SMEs that may be incorporated into the tourism development plans of the region's countries, with a great potential for generating jobs and income. SMEs working in the cultural sector also offer a wealth of opportunities; therefore, some activities have been scheduled in this connection.

In view of the interest expressed by the Caribbean Member States of SELA in the IBERPYME Programme, a substantial number of important activities were conducted in Caribbean countries in 2009. A number of activities in Caribbean countries have been scheduled once again for 2011, which are subject to the approval of financing from AECID, bearing in mind that they contribute to strengthening the integration process based on a sector of great significance for the region: SMEs.

In addition, IBERPYME is submitting two projects for consideration of AECID, which would be financed by AECID'S Assistance Programme Open and Permanent Call for Cooperation (CAP). The first project is a Plan for Online Internationalization of SMEs in the Andean countries and Paraguay. The second one envisages the creation of an AECID Innovation Centre and the conduction of a series of activities for the Andean countries and Paraguay.

D.1. SCHEDULE OF THE IBERPYME PROGRAMME FOR 2011

ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVES	ORGANIZERS	VENUE AND DATE
1. Ibero-American Meeting on Business Associations of SMEs	Promote an exchange among authorities of business associations of SMEs and identify strategies for strengthening them	IBERPYPE Programme, Committee on the Small Industry (COPEI) of the National Society of Industries of Peru	Lima, Peru 15-17 March 2011
2. Strategies to promote and develop entrepreneurship: Development of new businesses	Promote an exchange in order to learn about the strategies to promote entrepreneurship in Ibero America	IBERPYPE Programme, Ministry of Economy, Development and Tourism of Chile, PROCHILE	Santiago, Chile 21-23 March 2011
3. Seminar on Competitiveness in SMEs and market access	Review the strategies to improve competitiveness in SMEs as a means to facilitate market access	IBERPYPE Programme, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and Chamber of Commerce of Cartagena	Cartagena , Colombia 14-15 April 2011
4. Seminar on Social Networks: Opportunities for promotion and business for SMEs	Gain knowledge and spread information about the various social networks which represent an alternative for business promotion and development for SMEs	IBERPYPE Programme, National Guarantee Fund for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises of Venezuela (FONPYME), Venezuelan Chamber of Information and Communication Technologies(CAVEDATOS)	Caracas, Venezuela 2-3 May 2011
5. Workshop on Innovation and Competitiveness for SMEs	Gain knowledge about the relevant aspects of the processes of innovation in products, services and technologies, and how to incorporate and develop innovation in MSMEs in Ibero America.	IBERPYPE Programme, Barrabes, Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID), Fund of Technological Innovation of Peru	Lima, Peru 16-17 May 2011
6. Ibero-American Meeting on Gender and SMEs	Promote an exchange among authorities and experts on the relation between gender and development of SMEs. Propose courses of action for the inclusion of the issue of gender in public policies to support SMEs.	IBERPYPE Programme and authorities and authorities of the government of Mexico	Mexico City, Mexico 19-20 May 2011
7. Forum on knowledge management and the use of ICTs for the development of SMEs	Review various experiences of Ibero-American countries to underpin the use of Information and Communication Technologies	IBERPYPE Programme, Authority for Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (AMPYME), National Union of SMEs	Panama City, Panama 2 -3 June

10

	to support the business performance of SMEs	(UNPYME), Costa Rican Chamber of Information and Communication Technologies (CANTIC), Centre for the Promotion of Micro and Small Enterprises in Central America (CENPROMYPE)	2011
8. Ibero American Training Course on internationalization of SMEs	Spread information about strategies, best practices, successful cases and lessons learned as regards the internationalization process of SMEs	IBERPYPE Programme, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism of Colombia, Spanish Foreign Trade Institute (ICEX), Colombian Association of Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (ACOPI)	Cartagena, Colombia 6-10 June 2011
9. Workshop on Management of Innovation in SMEs	Review methodologies to optimize the innovation processes within the productive management of SMEs	IBERPYPE Programme, National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT) of Paraguay	Asunción, Paraguay 15-17 June 2011
10. Regional Seminar "Learning to Export": The challenge of internationalization of SMEs	Spread information about strategies, best practices, successful cases and lessons learned as regards the internationalization process of SMEs	IBERPYPE Programme, Spanish Foreign Trade Institute (ICEX), Corporation of Exporters of El Salvador (COEXPORT), Centre for the Promotion of Micro and Small Enterprises in Central America (CENPROMYPE) and National Commission for Micro and Small Enterprises (CONAMYPE)	San Salvador, El Salvador 12-13 July 2011
11. Workshop on innovative practices for better performance of agricultural cooperatives	Implement recommendations to improve performance for the development of agricultural cooperatives	IBERPYPE Programme, Ministry of Economy and Planning of Cuba	Havana, Cuba 1-2 September 2011
12. Training Workshop on marketing and business strategies on Internet for SMEs	Analyze the different strategies and modalities adopted by various countries in the region to use the Internet to improve productivity of MSMEs	IBERPYPE Programme, Ministry of Industries and Productivity of Ecuador	Quito, Ecuador 12-13 September 2011
13. XVI Ibero American Forum on Guarantee and Financing Systems for MSMEs	Gain knowledge about the achievements in the use of financial support instruments aimed at guarantees and other modalities of financing for MSMEs	Ibero-American Guarantee Network (REGAR), IBERPYME Programme, Ministry of Economy, Industry and Commerce of Costa Rica, Latin American Association of Development Financing Institutions (ALIDE) and IBERAVAL SGR of Spain	San José, Costa Rica 19-20 September 2011

14. Workshop on Regional Economic Development and SMEs	Gain knowledge about the tools to strengthen municipal management through the simplification of administrative procedures and single windows as an instrument to facilitate relations of SMEs	IBERPYPE Programme, Secretariat of SMEs and Regional Development (SEPYME)	Buenos Aires, Argentina 22-23 September 2011
15. Course on Innovation, ICTs and competitiveness for SMEs	Promote training of government officials and entrepreneurs in the development of innovation processes, use of ICTs and improvement of competitiveness	IBERPYPE Programme, Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID), National Direction of SMEs of Uruguay and Chamber of Industries	Montevideo, Uruguay 26-30 September de 2011
16. Workshop on Local Productive Arrangements	Review methodologies to promote the local economic development based on the participation of SMEs	IBERPYPE Programme, Brazilian Service to support MSMEs	Sao Paulo, Brazil 4-5 October 2011
17. VI Central American Seminar on Innovation and Commerce: INNOTRADE 2011	Inform about best practices of the policies and strategies related to innovation and international trade for MSMEs, with a focus on technology transfer	IBERPYPE Programme, Central American Sustainable Development Programme (DESCA), Centre for Promotion of Micro and Small-sized Enterprises of Central America (CENPROMYPE), Authority for Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (AMPYME)	Panama City, Panama 17-18 October 2011
18. Regional Workshop on strategies for access to international cooperation sources	Inform about the priorities and sources of international cooperation and the mechanisms and instruments to obtain their support	IBERPYPE Programme, Centre for Promotion of Micro and Small-sized Enterprises of Central America (CENPROMYPE), AMPYME	Managua, Nicaragua 20-21 October 2011
19. Ibero American Course on Partnership and Inter-Entrepreneurial Cooperation	Gain knowledge about the strategies and best practices on partnership, enterprise networks, productive chains, export consortiums, development of suppliers and clusters	IBERPYPE Programme, Centre for Promotion of Micro and Small-sized Enterprises of Central America (CENPROMYPE)	La Antigua, Guatemala 24-28 October 2011
20. Mission on the institutional framework of public policies for SMEs	Review the experiences in the definition of public policies for SMEs and best practices	IBERPYPE Programme, General Direction of Policies for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (DGPYME)	Madrid, Spain 7-9 November 2011

12

21. Ibero-American Seminar on development strategies for cultural SMEs	Encourage an exchange in order to learn the strategies and development programmes for cultural SMEs	IBERPYPE Programme, National Guarantee Fund for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises of Venezuela (FONPYME)	Caracas, Venezuela 14-15 November 2011
22. III Workshop on Transfer of Best Practices in Public Policies to support SMEs	Promote an exchange of experiences, strategies and best practices among experts and institutions in Latin America in order to encourage the transfer of these practices and improve the quality of public policies for the development of SMEs	IBERPYPE Programme, Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), Authority for Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (AMPYME), Centre for Promotion of Micro and Small-sized Enterprises of Central America (CENPROMYPE)	Panama City, Panama 17-18 November 2011
23. Forum on the development of SMEs in tourist projects	Promote the development of SMEs in the area of tourism, as a source of opportunities for SMEs	IBERPYPE Programme, National Council for Promotion and Support of Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (PROMIPYME), Dominican Confederation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (CODOPYME), World Tourism Organization	Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic 21-22 November 2011
24. Ibero-American Seminar on Competitiveness and Internationalization of SMEs	Spread information on strategies, best practices, successful cases and lessons learned about the processes of productivity, competitiveness and internationalization	IBERPYPE Programme, National Chamber of Exporters of Bolivia (CANEB)	Santa Cruz, Bolivia 28 November to 1 December 2011

D.2. SCHEDULE OF THE IBERPYME-CARIBBEAN PROGRAMME FOR 2011

ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVES	ORGANIZERS	VENUE AND DATE
1. Regional Seminar on Tourism	Gain knowledge about best practices, strategies and successful cases to follow in the area of tourism	IBERPYPE Programme, Ministry of Tourism and Aviation of Bahamas, CARICOM, Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID)	Nassau, Bahamas 29-30 August 2011

2. Training Workshop on strategies for internationalization of SMEs	Gain knowledge about best practices, strategies and programmes to promote the internationalization and exports	IBERPYPME Programme, CARICOM, Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID), Ministry of Industry and Commerce of Jamaica	Kingston, Jamaica 5-6 September 2011
3. Regional Seminar on New Enterprises	Gain knowledge about the methodologies, strategies, best practices and successful cases to help new entrepreneurs and promote the development of new entrepreneurs	IBERPYPME Programme, Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID), CARICOM, BELTRAIDE	Belize City, Belize 24 November 2011
4. Workshop on financing instruments for MSMEs	Analyze the different strategies and instruments to facilitate access to credit and financing of MSMEs in the region	IBERPYPME Programme, CARICOM, Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID), Ministry of Industry and Commerce of Trinidad	Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago 5-6 December 2011
5. Regional Forum on public policies to support SMEs	Spread information about best practices, transfer of knowledge and experiences, as well as strategies and programmes in the public policies to support SMEs	IBERPYPME Programme, CARICOM, Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID), Ministry of Industry and Commerce of Guyana	Georgetown, Guyana 8-9 December 2011

Budget requested to AECID-Venezuela to conduct activities in the Caribbean: US\$ 170,000.00.

D.3. SPECIAL PROJECTS: AECID'S OPEN AND PERMANENT CALL FOR COOPERATION (CAP)

This facility, offered periodically by AECID, allows for financing projects that meet the criteria and conditions stipulated by the Agency, so two projects were proposed which, if approved, should begin to be implemented as of 1 December 2010, for a period between 13 and 15 months, in their initial stage.

D.3.1. Internationalization Project

Objective: To promote the internationalization and export of products and services of SMEs in the Andean countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) and Paraguay. In Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Paraguay, SMEs account for about 97% of the business fabric, and in most of the countries of the region they are the largest source of employment and provide a major contribution to the GDP.

Due to its characteristics, this project is also benefited by the local initiatives in each country, which foresee the promotion of exports through the participation of a greater number of enterprises as a strategic action. This project seeks to strengthen the participation of SMEs in international markets, by enhancing their productivity for a

14

successful positioning in export markets, while contributing to economic and social development in the region.

Budget requested: 170,000 Euros

D.3.2. Innovation Project

Objective: To promote innovation in the Andean countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) and Paraguay, particularly in the groups it is aimed at, so that small and medium-sized enterprises, cooperatives and new entrepreneurs who want to start their business distinguish themselves by adding value to their products and services, find market niches, and ultimately obtain new weapons to survive the growing international competition and the pressures from the major multinationals. Therefore, this project will contribute to the economic and social development in the area of enforcement, by supporting specific groups, creating jobs and training human resources, and by incorporating new systems and tools.

Budget requested: 205,040 Euros

E. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Without a doubt, the global changes and the technological advances resulting from the increasingly intensive use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) force us to rethink the business management model for SMEs, in order to better face the challenges of the new global economy. The organizations in charge of meeting the needs of SMEs should clearly understand this point, and recognize in advance those issues that will have the greatest impact on the performance of SMEs, so that the focus of their work, response modalities and methodologies meet present and future realities.

Despite the meagre resources available, the IBERPYME Programme, since its very inception, has managed to meet the growing demands of the countries of the region, by incorporating new thematic working areas in line with the interests and realities of SMEs the region.

Subjects such as entrepreneurship, innovation, gender, cultural industries, tourism, corporate social responsibility and others areas in which IBERPYME could undertake actions to support transformation in business management must necessarily be included in its annual project of activities.

The increase in financing for the IBERPYME Programme remains a pending issue to be solved. The annual subventions from the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID) have been a crucial support to cover most of the costs of planned activities. The programme acknowledges and expresses its gratitude for such support, in the hope that the amount awarded can be increased in the near future. Due recognition should also be made of the annual quotas approved by some countries in the region, as well as the special contributions made by some of them to conduct specific activities in support of groups of countries.

The formulation of special projects with funds from international cooperation, dealing with priority thematic areas of the IBERPYME Programme, is also a strategy that must be expanded and diversified by taking advantage of the opportunities offered by various sources of international cooperation.

Finally, special mention must be made of the support received during this period by the Permanent Secretariat of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA), which not only helped to design the IBERPYME Programme, but has provided the physical space for the IBERPYME Programme Management Unit and its administrative and logistics infrastructure, as well as technical and institutional support, without additional cost for the programme. Such support has been a fundamental element for the consolidation and expansion of the Programme since its inception.