

Business support structures

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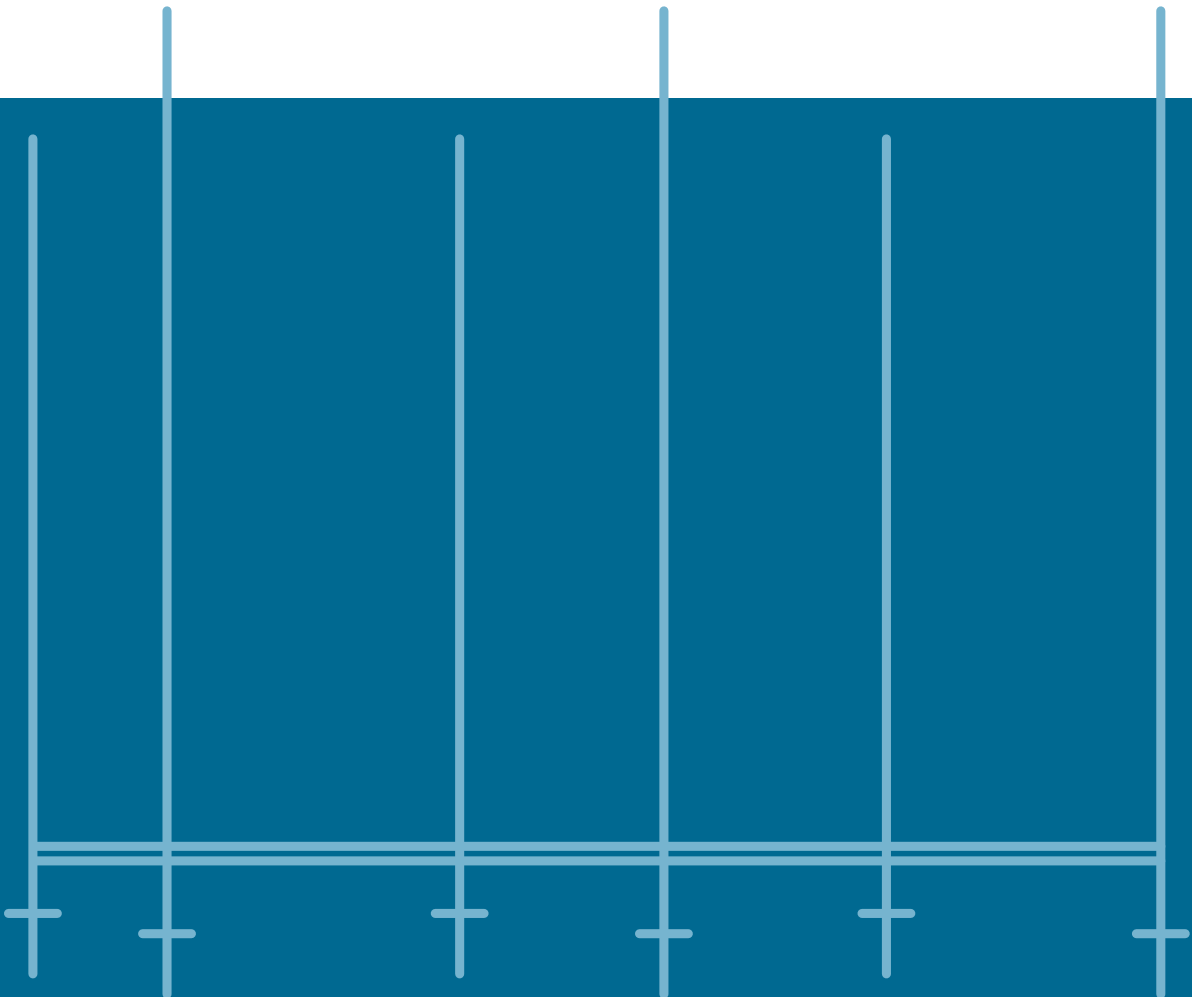
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Introduction



In France, the question of the assistance afforded to newly set up or developing businesses has been the subject of numerous analyses and criticisms.

The aim of this dossier is to present the main business creation support structures and the network that has been set up in France. The list of these structures is far from exhaustive and we have deliberately targeted the support structures dedicated to business creation.

The principal missions of these structures are as follows: providing assistance in the form of advice and/or financial support and/or accommodation.

45% of company heads feel that they lacked help when they were creating their businesses. The main reason for this lack of help is ignorance or misunderstanding of the services offered by the various support structures [SOURCE: A look at SMEs].

The main theme of the Transnational Cooperation Agreement concerning European Entrepreneurship Cooperation [E.E.C.] is business creation, and the aim of the Agreement is to introduce tools that will facilitate the provision of assistance and advice to women wishing to create a business.

A joint diagnosis concerning access to the support structures in the TCA countries: [Portugal, Italy and France] made it possible for us to pool our knowledge.

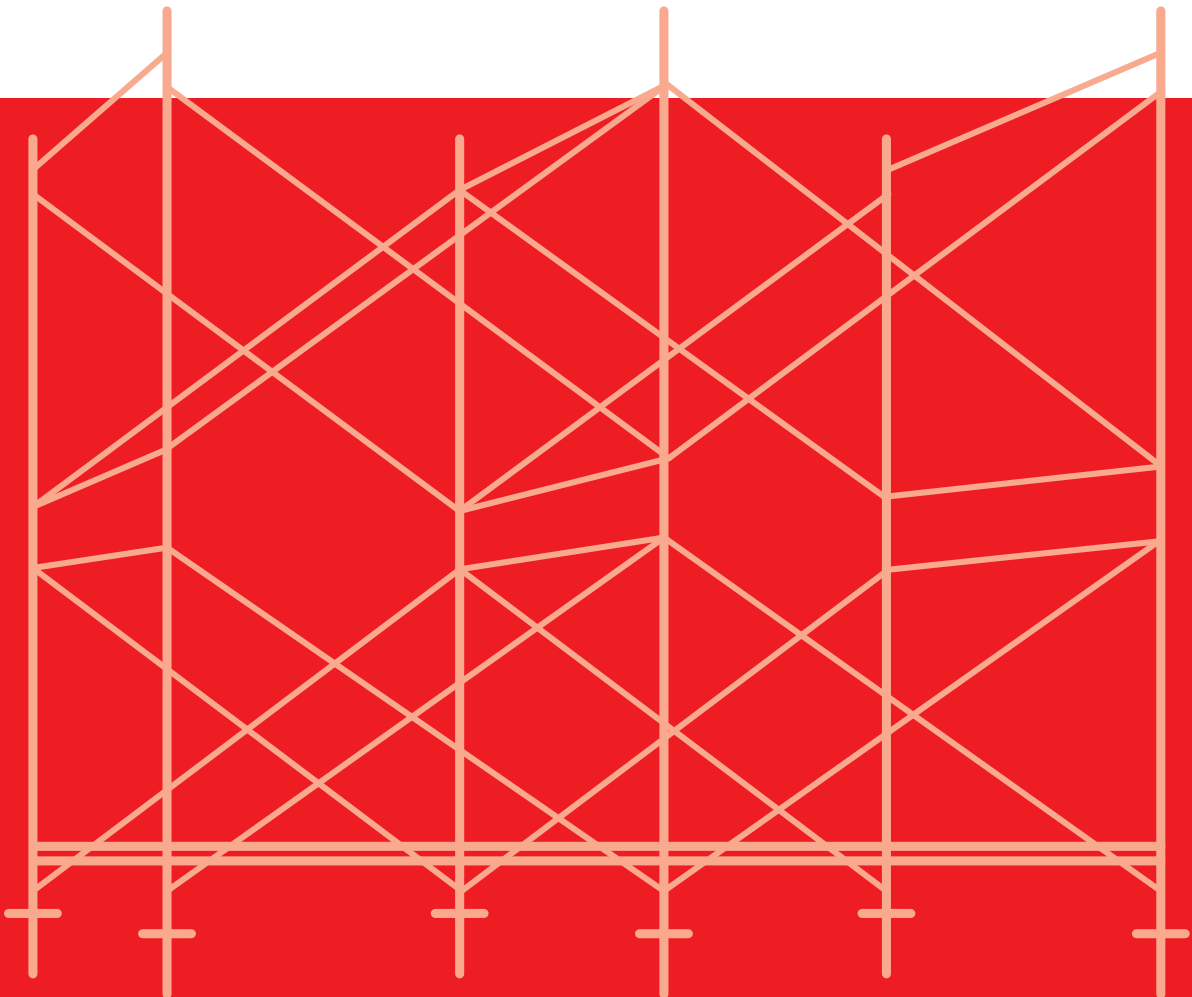
We felt that people with business creation projects are unclear as to the role of the business creation support structures, the services they offer and the public they are targeting.

We felt it necessary to identify the structures in each country which provide assistance and counselling, financing and accommodation in order to facilitate access to information on the part of both beneficiaries and technicians.

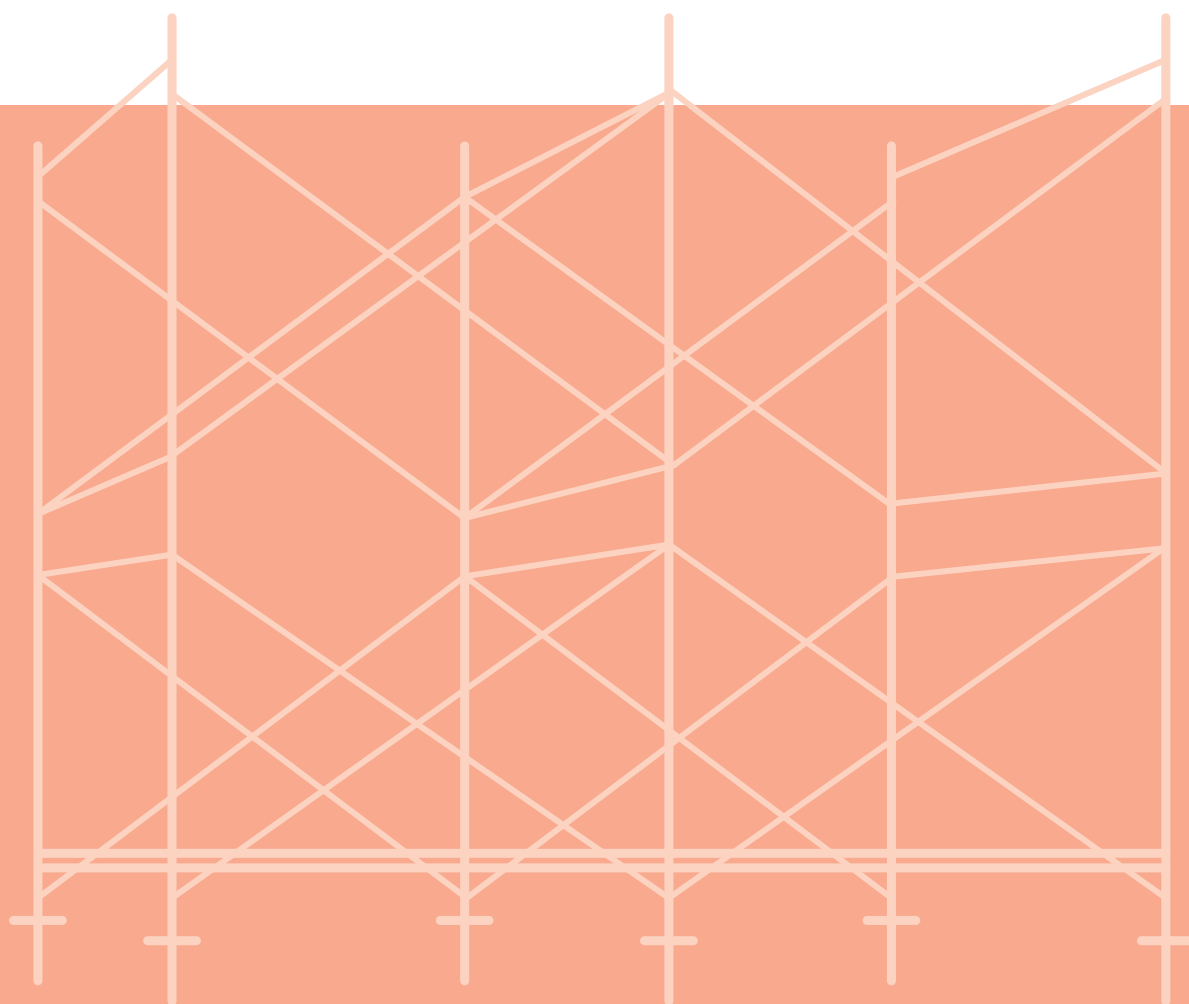
By identifying these structures we can enable those involved in business creation to get a clearer understanding of the missions and aims of each of the structures presented

This document, entitled 'Business support structures', valorizes the most representative of the support networks dedicated to business creation found in the TCA countries.

A Presentation of common forms of business start-up support



A1 France



Introduction

Assistance can be afforded by means of various different kinds of structure, which may be state-aided, private or an association. These structures usually work in close conjunction with one another and with local or regional partners. The following are the principal structures in France:

Associations Comprising Networks:

- ADIE: Economic Development Association
- France Initiative
- France Active
- 'Entreprendre' network
- Management shops network
- ANVAR [national agency for the promotion of research]

Business Incubators:

- ELAN: national association of managers of business incubators
- Union of Business Incubators

State structures:

- Chambers of Commerce
- Chambers of Agriculture
- Chambers of Trade

A. ADIE:

ADIE is an Economic Development Association

Status

ADIE is a non-governmental association governed by the 1901 act

Address and Geographical Cover

Now established virtually everywhere in France [both in metropolitan France and in the overseas départements and territories].

There are 22 regional delegations, 98 branches and 300 offices, mostly established in deprived areas.

ADIE

4, boulevard Poissonnière

75009 Paris

Tel.: 33 [0]1 56 03 539 00

Objectives and Missions

1. ADIE provides assistance and advice to help get projects off the ground.
 - Evaluating the feasibility of the project
 - Making an economic/financial analysis of projects
 - Preparing the file for financing requests
2. ADIE will offer you the financing package appropriate for your particular project; the upper limit is 15,000 euros. There are various types of loan available;
 - A business creation loan of 5000 euros maximum: to start up a business
 - A progressive loan of 1000 to 5000 euros to finance a small-scale economic activity
 - A development loan to develop an existing business, invest in equipment, increase one's stock, diversify the goods offered
 - A loan on trust of 5000 euros maximum to supplement one's own funds, granted in conjunction with the business creation loan
 - A 70% guarantee for the bank loan obtained from banks acting as partners

Beneficiaries

Anyone who is unemployed or on minimum income support who is unable to secure an ordinary bank loan and wishes to create their own employment can contact ADIE advisers.

Criteria for Receiving Support

ADIE supports all kinds of project. The criteria used to assess whether applicants are eligible for support are:

- the viability of the project
- the applicant's skills and abilities
- the degree of determination demonstrated by the applicant

A Few Figures

The percentage of businesses financed that prove to be successful [64% still active 2 years after being set up and 54% at the end of 3 years] is higher than that recorded at national level for personal businesses. The percentage of unrepaid loans is 6.2%.

Nearly 22,692 businesses, representing 27,230 jobs, have been created since 1989.

References and Web Sites

- <http://www.adie.org>
- <http://www.bourse-solidaire.org/>
- <http://www.franceactive.org/>
- <http://www.fir.asso.fr/>
- <http://www.pme.gouv.fr/>
- <http://www.defijeunes.fr/>
- <http://www.cime.asso.fr/>

B. The France Initiative Network

Definition and Status

France Initiative Réseau [FIR] is the leading association/network offering support and financing for business creation.

FIR is a non-governmental network governed by the 1901 act.

The network comprises 233 Local Initiative Platforms, with a further 40 currently being set up. Their primary mission is to mobilize funds for the purpose of financing business creation by means of unsecured, interest-free loans and mobilizing local economic and financial skills to sponsor business creators and accompany newly set up businesses.

Address and Geographical Cover

France Initiative Réseau/France Initiative Network

14 rue Delambre
75014 Paris

Objectives and Missions

France Initiative Network's mission is to create an environment favourable to the development of economic initiatives and the creation of new jobs in conjunction with local authorities and local institutions and businesses.

A single aim: to help business creators realize their project and improve their business's chances of survival.

The Local Initiative Platforms enable people with business creation projects to bring their project to fruition by welcoming potential business creators and providing customized accompaniment and follow-up both prior to start-up and during the first few years of the company's existence. For those who lack adequate funds of their own, the Local Initiative Platforms provide financial support in the form of a loan on trust.

The objectives are:

- To mobilize financing in the form of unsecured, interest-free loans on trust,
- To mobilize local economic players to sponsor business creators
- To assist businesses on the point of being set up

Beneficiaries

People with business creation projects who lack funds of their own

References And Web Sites

■ www.eficea.org

A free service for the purpose of orientating business creators and those taking over an existing but struggling business

■ www.globenet.org/finansol

Integral financing

C. France Active

Status

FRANCE ACTIVE is an association created in 1988 under the aegis of the France Foundation, the *Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations*, the *Crédit Coopératif*, the MACIF Foundation and various charities.

Address and Geographical Cover

France Active

37 Rue Bergère

75009 Paris

Tel.: 01. 53. 24.26.26

Objectives and Missions

France Active offers individuals or structures supporting business creation initiatives a range of financial and technical tools to foster durable social integration via a form of economic activity. In concrete terms, France Active provides financial and technical assistance to individuals or collectives with business creation projects which plan to hire the disadvantaged or assist their social rehabilitation, create activities associated with social solidarity initiatives or the introduction of new neighbourhood services.

Beneficiaries

- Job-seekers
- Those on income support
- Anyone of modest means who wishes to create their own job or a business,
- Any individual or structure planning to set up a new neighbourhood service that will meet a social need,
- Businesses or associations geared to promoting social solidarity.

A Few Figures

France Active has assisted 18,894 people with business creation projects and created 7070 jobs.

50% of those with business creation projects have set up a micro-enterprise

Reception: 7000 people with business creation projects per year

Finance: 2000 applicants assisted

Création: 5000 jobs per year

Site

■ <http://www.franceactive.org>

D. Entreprendre Network

Definition and Status

An entrepreneurial network consisting of a federation of business executives' associations providing business creators with assistance to help them successfully set up their own businesses.

Address and Geographical Cover

The network has 25 branches in FRANCE.

Reseau Entreprendre/Entreprendre Network

Bourse du Commerce

Bureau E24

2, rue de Viarmes

75001 Paris

Tel.: 01.55.65.33.47

Fax: 01.55.65.33.90

Objectives and Missions

The Entreprendre Network has 4 missions:

- *Evaluating/approving business creation projects*: sending back an echo to people with a business creation project to help them finalize their plan on a sound basis
- *Granting interest-free unsecured loans on trust*: providing a financial contribution and a financial lever
- *Incorporating newly created businesses into the local economic networks*: creating working links with existing businesses with minimum delay
- *Providing help and advice for 2 years*: 'training' new business heads through swapping experiences

Beneficiaries

- small projects with genuine potential
- future SMEs

A Few Figures

- 1200 business creators have won awards
- Loans on trust worth nearly 30 million have been granted
- More than 65,000 hours of counselling and assistance provided by business heads
- More than 2500 business heads involved

References And Web Sites

- <http://www.reseau-entreprendre.org>

E. Management Shops Network

Definition

The management shops constitute a network of skills to accompany projects, people, businesses and initiatives.

Status

A non-governmental association governed by the 1901 act

Address and Geographical Cover

14 rue Delambre
75 014 Paris

- 269 management shops
- 560 advisers
- 21 regions
- 72 départements
- 5 overseas départements

Objectives and Missions

- To promote and support the creation and development of small businesses
- To encourage individual initiatives, to create economic activities and jobs
- To assist and advise business creators throughout the project, and follow-up and accompany newly set up businesses
- To advise the heads of businesses
- To suggest suitable training
- To play an active part in revitalizing the economic fabric and encouraging local development

A Few Figures

In 2004 the Management Shop network helped 8100 people with business creation projects and created 10,611 jobs.

References and Web Sites

- www.boutiques-de-gestion.com

1.1.2 The business incubators network

A. ELAN Business Incubators

Definition and Status

A national association of business incubator managers.

The ELAN Association, considers that 150 business incubators in France either meet or could meet the criteria that have been determined. ELAN, which is now acknowledged to be a leading force in the business creation network, has played a major role in developing the regional networks. There are now 14 local networks grouping together anything from 4 to 30 business incubators. The largest are in Aquitaine, Pays de Loire, Ile de France, Provence- Alpes Maritimes – Côte d'Azur and Brittany. All 14 networks, which are all at different stages of the process, are currently at the certification stage. 4 of them have very nearly completed this process.

The current trend reveals that there are four different types of business incubator:

'Generalist' business incubators: the great majority are of this type, which can host all kinds of businesses. There is no selection based on criteria associated with a specific activity. All the regional business incubators answer this definition.

'High-tech' or 'innovative' business incubators:

These give priority to hosting budding businesses with a technical, technological or innovative activity such as new information and communication technologies. These are very numerous in the vicinity of megalopolises or technological centres and are only found near research centres, major polytechnics and universities.

'Crafts' business incubators:

There are a few of these to be found in France, often linked to, run by or set up by consular chambers of commerce.

'Theme-based' business incubators:

This concept is only embodied in a very partial or local fashion. We found a few business incubators focussed on metiers associated with the sea, or with agriculture or cross-border trade. The new economy is currently developing 'Net economy', 'biotechnology' and 'life sciences' sites, but it is still too early to judge their real interest and know whether or not they will prove to be a durable phenomenon.

Address and Geographical Cover

101 Avenue Raymond Poincaré
75116 Paris Cedex
Tel.: 01 49 84 85 85

Objectives and Missions

The aim is to assist member businesses and increase their chances of success and development and their incorporation into the local economic fabric. ELAN business incubators offer various AFNOR-certified services on the basis of shared costs.

Accommodation: offices are made available for a period of not more than 48 months. In the same building business creators also have common areas at their disposal [e.g. reception, fully equipped conference rooms, cafeteria, etc].

Reception and services: the businesses enjoy services in common, such as: fax, photocopier, e-mail facilities, a permanently staffed switchboard, secretarial assistance, etc.

Advice: easy access to consultants in various fields: law, accounting, taxation, banking, commerce, management, technological development, etc. This is often possible as a result of partnerships established by the business incubator.

Assistance: the manager of the business incubator provides upstream assistance as well as assistance during and after the setting up of a business. They run the business incubator, encourage exchanges between the various businesses and promote the work of the incubator. They organize meetings and conferences on given themes, and are backed up by a network of experts with whom they can put business creators in contact [bankers, accountants, lawyers, heads of institutions, etc.].

They surround the business creator with a network of skills with which they put the latter in contact and help business creators establish relations with regional and departmental networks involved in assisting business creation.

Beneficiaries

New business creators.

A Few Figures

ELAN follows up 2000 new businesses and accompanies 8000 projects a year

References and Web Sites

■ <http://www.pepinieres-elan.org>

1.1.3 Other Business Incubators

A. Union of Business Incubators

Definition

The Union of Business Incubators groups together a number of players desirous of helping to promote social solidarity. These business incubators are pilot incubators which concentrate on business creation 'trials' and play an active part in assisting people in the initial stages of trying to get an economic activity off the ground. This enables would-be business creators to test the feasibility and economic viability of their project in the context of a formal agreement and receive training in the role of entrepreneur.

Status

A non-governmental association governed by the 1901 act

Address and Geographical Cover

14 rue DELAMBRE
75 014 PARIS
Metropolitan France and Overseas Départements

Objectives and Missions

The Union of Business Incubators' missions are as follows:

- To federate
- These business incubators dedicated to giving projects a trial run view themselves as to some extent business 'nurseries', playing a role that is complementary to that of the networks dedicated to accompanying and financing business creation initiatives.
- To professionalize the players:
 - By mutualizing practices,
 - Disseminating tools
 - In the context of a pre-determined referential,
 - By training,
 - By implementing quality measures.
- To represent its members and defend their interests by
 - Being a credible interlocutor with the various authorities
 - Seeking ongoing financing
 - Organizing the circulation of information, know-how and good practices
 - Ensuring respect for the local business environment
- To spread the practice of business creation

By assisting the emergence of new structures throughout France and in other European countries

By developing the communication tools necessary for the expansion of this new metier.

Two innovative concepts

- Virtual business incubators make it possible to monitor would-be entrepreneurs in the 'trial' phase by means of externalized tools
- Pilot business incubators promote the business creation concept, provide members with training and disseminate tools and know-how.

Beneficiaries

- Job-seekers
- Those on minimum income support
- Anyone on a low income who wishes to create their own job or set up their own business,
- Any individual or structure planning to set up a new neighbourhood service that will meet a social need,
- Businesses or associations geared to promoting social solidarity.

A Few Figures

The network:

- 16 pilot business incubators,
- 28 reception points,
- Present in 18 départements.

The teams

- In 2003 there were 43 employees working for the 'pilot' business incubator network
- In 2003: 404 would-be entrepreneurs were interviewed, 134 businesses were created, of which 67% were successful
- Since the setting up, in 2000, of this network of experimental business incubators: 1060 would-be entrepreneurs have been interviewed, and 340 businesses were created, of which 74% have proved successful

Length of trial period

- 6 to 9 months on average, maximum 24 months

Characteristics of the Members

11 'generalist' business incubators, 4 specialist business incubators

- Artists
- Cultural projects
- Activities contributing to the social economy and social solidarity
- Sectors: fashion, métiers associated with the arts

References and Web Sites

- <http://www.uniondescouveuses.com>

Legislation

Act concerning economic initiatives, Articles 20 and 21

1.2 State-run Structures

1.2.1 Consular Chambers

Chambers of Commerce and Industry [CCIs]

Status

Public establishments with an administrative vocation, France's Chambers of Commerce and Industry [CCIs] were introduced by the Act of 9 April 1898.

There are 159 Chambers of Commerce and Industry established throughout France, varying greatly in size. The authorities view them as 'bodies representing commercial and industrial interests in their particular territory.'

Although CCIs operate chiefly in their own particular territory, they may also, either on their own or in partnership, initiate actions outside these boundaries.

Address and Geographical Cover

Objectives and Missions

To represent and promote business interests.

The act of 9 April 1898 stipulates that 'Chambers of Commerce and Industry represent commercial and industrial interests in their particular territory vis-à-vis the authorities.'

They have two objectives:

- To ensure that the interests of businesses are taken into account when public policies are being drawn up; to participate in the latter process;
- To facilitate relations between businesses and national and territorial authorities

Beneficiaries

Shopkeepers: men and women who exercise a commercial activity

Support Criteria

The Assembly of French Chambers of Commerce and Industry [the ACFCI], is a national establishment which federates and implements initiatives on the part of the various Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

A Few Figures

A network of local, regional and national public establishments,

- 159 local Chambers of Commerce and Industry [CCIs],
- 20 Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry [CRCIs]
- The Assembly of French Chambers of Commerce and Industry [the ACFCI] maintains 80 French Chambers of Commerce and Industry abroad, known as CCIFEs.

References and Web Sites

- <http://www.acfci.cci.fr>

Legislation

Public establishments with an administrative vocation, France's Chambers of Commerce and Industry [CCIs] were introduced by the Act of 9 April 1898.

Chambers of Trade [CMs]

Status

Chambers of Trade are public establishments run by local tradesmen and artisans elected at five-year intervals by universal suffrage. Introduced by an Act passed in 1925, Chambers of Trade represent the general interests of tradesmen and artisans.

The APCM, which is governed by the provisions of statute no. 66-137 of 7 March 1966, is a national public institution responsible for federating France's Chambers of Trade. Thanks to the work done by its various Commissions and the Annual General Meeting, the APCM summarizes and implements proposals submitted by the different Chambers of Trade.

Address And Geographical Cover

There are altogether 106 Chambers of Trade in France and its overseas départements and territories.

Objectives and Missions

- Chambers of Trade are responsible for representing tradesmen and artisans in their local political, economic and social environment
- They work in conjunction with departmental councils and local authorities on projects of interest to local tradesmen and artisans.
- Each Chamber of Trade maintains close contact with local tradesmen via local branches or representatives.

Beneficiaries

Tradesmen and artisans of both sexes exercising a commercial activity.

A Few Figures

106 departmental Chambers of Trade, 22 regional Chambers, a Permanent National Assembly

References and Web Sites

■ <http://www.apcm.com>

Legislation

Chambers of Agriculture

Definition

Every département and region has a Chamber of Agriculture which plays a dual role:

- It acts as spokesman vis-à-vis the authorities for people working in agriculture and/or living in rural areas,
- It plays an essential role as a service-provider for farmers and agriculturists

Address

APCA – 9, avenue George V
75008 Paris
Telephone: 01 53 57 10 10
Fax: 01 53 57 10 05

Status

Chambers of Agriculture are public professional establishments which, like France's Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Chambers of Trade are consular bodies. All the members of the agricultural world are represented within the Chambers of Agriculture, by 10 electoral colleges and the administrators of the CRPF [representing forestry interests]

Address and Geographical Cover

In all there are 116 Chambers of Agriculture in France and its overseas départements and territories.

Objectives and Missions

- To act as a spokesman for people working in agriculture and/or living in rural areas
- To act as a representative: the Chambers of Agriculture act as an interlocutor vis-à-vis the French and European authorities and also vis-à-vis local authorities. They are consulted concerning their position whenever major decisions that will affect the agricultural sector and rural areas have to be taken.
- They have a seat on the relevant commissions involved in organizing the economy, planning, teaching and research, town planning, land development and land-use planning tourism, the rural environment/rural settlement, town-planning, health questions and social questions.

Beneficiaries

- Agricultural enterprises
- Structures associated with the agricultural world.

References And Web Sites

E-mail: accueil@apca.chambagri.fr

1.2.2 State-run establishments

ANVAR: the Agence Nationale de Valorisation de la Recherche, also known as the 'Agence française de l'innovation', the national agency for the promotion of research

Definition and Status

The Anvar is a state-run establishment with an industrial and commercial vocation. It is decentralized [25 regional delegations] and placed under the tutelage of the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry, and more especially under the supervision of the Deputy Minister of Industry, the Minister responsible for SMEs, and the Deputy Minister of Research

Address and Geographical Cover

The head office of the ANVAR is unable to handle all incoming calls; they are automatically rerouted to the regional branches, whose addresses can be found on the www.anvar.fr site.

Objective and Missions

In concrete terms, the ANVAR's main mission is to support the creators of innovative businesses and innovative SME-SMIs and research laboratories, with special emphasis on assuming part of the inherent financial risk associated with technological transfer, or fine-tuning a new product, process or service of a technological character.

The Agency steps in in situations where it is particularly difficult to raise financing because the potential risks are so great.

Thanks to its know-how, the Agency is able to give customized assistance:

- expertise and support in terms of project management, finding partners, promoting innovation;
- financial tools for the purpose of sharing risks: advances granted at zero interest rates, refundable in the event of success, or financing from own funds [BSA], in conjunction with the private sector;
- made-to-measure actions: for the development of new products, processes or services, the creation of an innovative business, recruitment [R&D personnel], technological transfer, the mobilization of financing [the new market, FCPI, etc.] and European and international partnerships [e.g. PCRD, EUREKA].

Beneficiaries

For the last 20 years, the ANVAR has been supporting:

- business creators with innovative projects of a technological character with genuine prospects of successfully marketing a product or service either within France and abroad.
- business creators with innovative projects that either come into the previous category [a strong technological barrier] or are concerned with improving new techniques with a view to new uses or to maintaining competitiveness and saving jobs.
- the business creators in question may be SME-SMIs, laboratories, or private individuals.

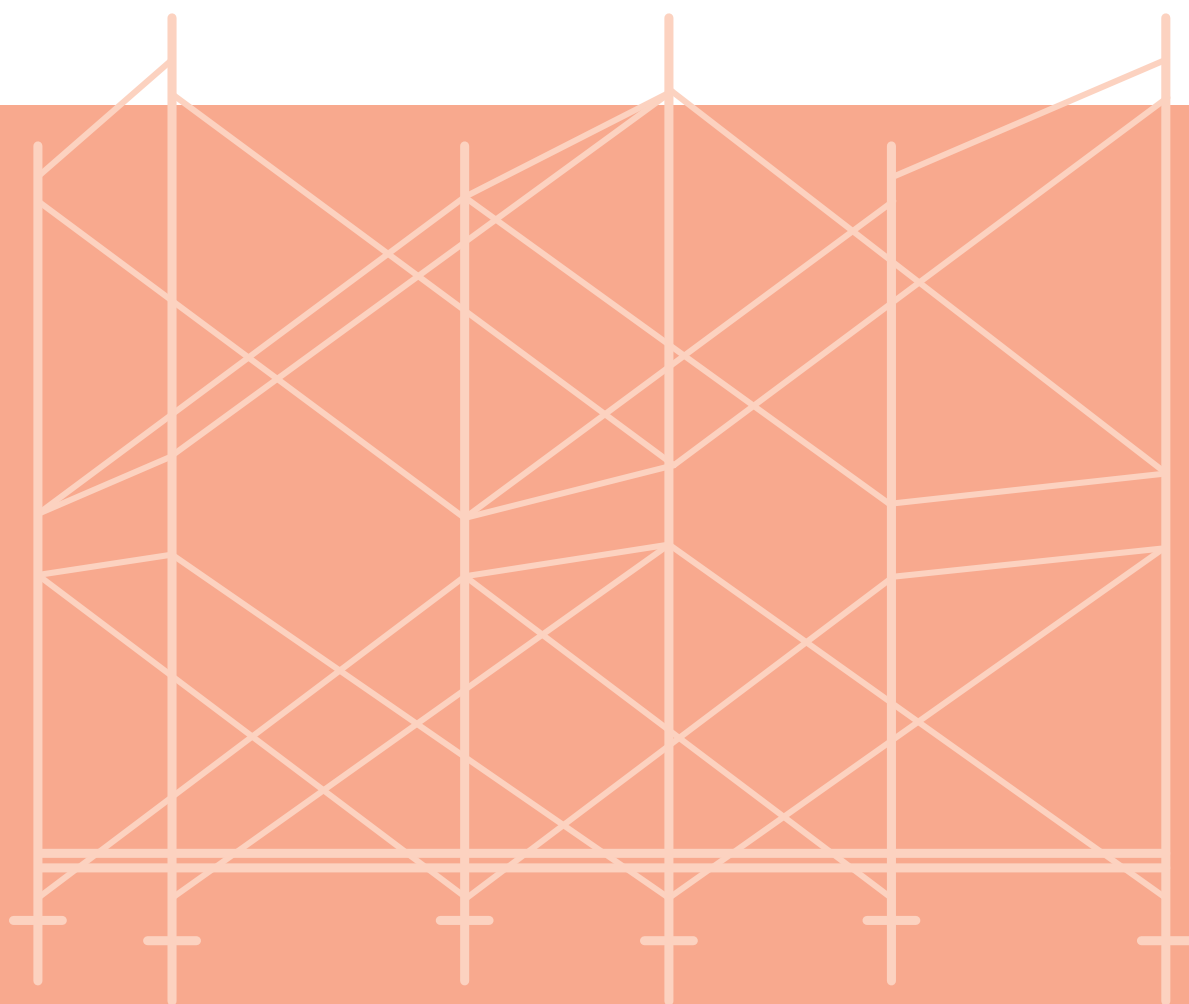
A Few Figures

Assisting and advising some 600 businesses out of the 6000 innovative businesses which are set up every year in France.

References and Web Sites

- <http://www.anvar.fr/>

A2 Portugal



2.1 Private Structures

2.1.1 Financial Structures

A. ANDC

Definition

The ANDC – National Credit Association – is a non-profit making association, founded in 1998. The ANDC exists to help people to obtain loans in the banks who don't have credit in the bank but want to develop an economic activity and have the personal capacities and fulfil the conditions necessary for this.

Establishment and Geographical coverage

The ANDC covers all the national territory

Objective

The ANDC helps people in situations of poverty and exclusion to initiate their own economic activity through obtaining a loan that enables the development of economic projects, promoters of self employment or the creation of a micro-enterprise

Supports and Incentives

ANDC gives the credit directly to the entrepreneur, up to a maximum of €5000, for a period of 3 years, for a rate interest of 5%, refunded in constant monthly contributions.

References and relevant websites

■ <http://www.microcredito.com.pt>

B. FAME

Definition

FAME [Micro Enterprises Support Fund] is an innovative support instrument that consists in an investment fund available to enterprise managers and entrepreneurs, to promote productive investment.

Establishment and Geographical coverage

Evora, Redondo, Ferreira do Alentejo, Mertola and Montemor–o-Novo, in the region of Alentejo and supports investment projects in the fields of industry, commerce, tourism and services.

Objective

The objectives of FAME are:

- To promote competitiveness on the part of micro-enterprises in order to give them more capability for quality support services
- To promote investment in the fields of quality, environment, hygiene and safety, with the following eligible expenses:
 - Adaptation, remodelling and maintenance repairs
 - Basic equipment
 - Special equipment
 - Informatics equipment
 - Telecommunication equipment
 - Hygiene and security equipment

Supports and Incentives

FAME supports small micro-enterprise projects, up to the level of the eligible amount of €50,000. The support rate is given under the eligible investment and assumes the form of a loan, with a maximum term of 6 years, and the possibility of one year without paying.

In the case of existing businesses, the financing of projects will be shared on a 50%-50% basis by the Municipality, at a 0% interest rate, and a bank [the Banco Espírito Santo], at a preferential interest rate. In the case of new enterprises, the municipality will contribute 25% of the eligible expenses and the bank will contribute another 25% [in this case the project promoter must assume 50% of the investment using their own capital].

References and relevant websites

- www.adral.pt

C. SIM

Definition

SIM is a micro credit system for self employment and enterprise creation promoted in partnership with a bank – Caixa de Crédito Agrícola Mútuo and the GLOCAL Development Partnership project, promoted by Superação Consultoria, Lda; NERVIR _ Associação Empresarial; Voz do Marão Cultural Cooperative, CRL; Alto Fuste, Lda and UTAD, the University of Trás-os-Montes and Haut-Douro.

Establishment and Geographical coverage

SIM covers the area of Douro Norte Valley.

Objective

This system consists of making a finance credit line available for enterprises created in the context of the GLOCAL project. It is intended for promoters who want to have the advantage of special financing for business creation for micro- and small enterprises and find an appropriate and speedy financing solution.

Thus, they want to:

- Find flexible finance solutions that match the specificity of each enterprise
- Accelerate the decision-making process
- Overtake the barriers represented by the need for guarantees, in finance support
- Promote the creation of enterprises and employment
- Establish enterprises in the municipalities in the Douro Valley region

Supports and Incentives

- The maximum amount of credit is 75% of the total investment in the enterprise, with a ceiling of 25,000.00 Euros;
- The operations have a reimbursement term of 5 years, with the possibility of adjustments in the light of the company's financial flows, and a period of non payment of 6 months
- Loans are repaid by means of monthly payments
- The interest rate is the 6 months Euribor rate, with a 2% spread

References and relevant websites

- www.spa.pt
- http://www.empglocal.com/newsletter/index1.php?var_page_newsletter=3&PHPSESSID=0ab852474a499323935c0257241f7435

2.1.2 Support and Incubation Structures

A. BICs/CEEs

Definition

CEEs are European Business and Innovation Centres or EC BICs. European Community Business Innovation Centres are business support structures to assist enterprises and entrepreneurs. They are recognized by the European Commission via a quality certificate – the 'EC BIC' label. They are of public interest and are created by the main economic agents of a region. They offer integrated services comprising the orientation and follow up of innovative SME projects, and contribute to regional development. BICs belong to a European network, EBN, the European BIC Network.

Legal Status

Limited companies

Establishment and Geographical coverage

There are 8 Business and Innovation Centres [BICs] in Portugal, as follows.

- The Santarém BIC
- The Algarve Huelva BIC
- CEISET – the Setúbal Business and Innovation Centre
- The Madeira BIC
- The CPIN – *Centre Promotor de Inovação et Negócios* [Centre for the Promotion of Innovation and Business]
- The CIEBI – *Centro de Inovação Empresarial de Beira Interior* [a Business and Innovation Centre]
- NET – New Enterprises and Technologies –Porto BIC
- Innovation Office–Minho BIC

Objective

The main function of the BICs is to promote an adequate application of the public measure in favour of SMEs, through the development of the local industry, namely:

- To support the creation of new and innovative enterprises
- To assist with the modernization of existing enterprises, with innovation, and with the development of their activity

The Business Innovation Centres offer integrated services consisting of the detection, selection, and strategic orientation of innovative projects and their accompaniment:

- Integrated services, because they are oriented to the global process of the enterprise and innovation process;
- Orientation services, about the viability of the projects and answering the needs of local and regional development
- Accompaniment services, to support projects since the creation until the development

They also are an interface between the needs of SMEs and the offer from specialized services, so that the enterprises can have the benefit of a diagnosis of their real needs before going to those services.

The speciality of the BICs is to give individual and personalized support to entrepreneurs who wish to develop an innovative project. The Centres also promote initiatives to stimulate the economy.

Target Groups

- Project promoters with professional experience in industry, services or commerce
- Creators of innovative enterprises from universities, research centres or professional schools
- Existing enterprises with innovative projects for diversification, development and modernization
- Public authorities and other economic development agents

The majority of the enterprises supported by the BICs are small production or service companies, industrial or craft companies or cooperatives, interacting with large, medium and small enterprises.

References and relevant websites

- European Commission [2000]. European Business and Innovation Centres.
An instrument at the service of regional development. Belgium: European Communities
- www.europa.eu.int
- www.ebn.be
- www.cordis.lu

2.2 Public Structures

2.2.1 Financial Structures

A. Mutual Guarantee Societies

Definition

Mutual guarantee societies are financial institutions with a vocation to assist micro and small and medium enterprises which promote the improvement of working conditions, or the improvement of business investment, development, restructuring and internationalization, through financial guarantees

Establishment and Geographical coverage

In Portugal there are 3 Mutual Guarantee Societies:

- GARVAL
- NORGARANTE
- LISGARANTE

GARVAL – Sociedade de Garantia Mútua, S.A.

Rua Conde da Ribeira Grande, Lote 2

2000-017 Santarém

Phone: 243 356 370

Fax: 243 356 379

NORGARANTE – Sociedade de Garantia Mútua, SA

Rua Professor Mota Pinto, 42 F, 2º andar, salas 2.05 a 2.07

4100- 353 Porto

Phone: 22 6165280

Fax: 22 6165289

LISGARANTE – Sociedade de Garantia Mútua, SA

Rua Hermano Neves, 22 – 3º A.

1600-477 Lisboa

Phone: 21 7520760

Fax: 21 7520769

Objective

The Mutual Guarantee Societies allow the creation of conditions for the reduction of the financial costs of enterprises, specially SMEs, and a better equilibrium for their financial structure, by the obtaining of guarantees that allow them access to loans with adequate terms and the investments necessary for their development.

The objectives are the following:

- To facilitate the obtaining of bank credit
- To maintain or liberate bank ceilings
- To free enterprises and entrepreneurs from having to provide personal and real guarantees
- To enable the receipt of incentives given by the PRIME programme via an advancement system
- To obtain better interest rates
- To improve the financial structure
- To guarantee technical compromises or a good performance of the projects

Target Groups

- Small and medium enterprises
- Micro-enterprises

Supports and Incentives

The Mutual Guarantee Societies can provide guarantees for all operations where these are required from enterprises or entrepreneurs by the conventional financial system, freeing them from the need to provide real personal guarantees, namely:

- Medium- and long-term loans, associated with the financing of investment plans or restructuring of passive finance
- Short- and medium-term finance
- Financial Guarantees
- Technical Guarantees
- Special credit operations

The sum guaranteed is a percentage of the finance made available by the mutual society, of the loans allocated or the guarantees asked by other institutions. In bank finance, the SPGM has guaranteed 50% of the operations value.

Legislation

Statute no. 19/2001 of 30 January 2001

Statute no. 211/98 of 16 July 1998

References and relevant websites

- <http://www.spgm.pt>
- <http://www.norgarante.pt/>
- <http://www.lisgarante.pt/>
- <http://www.garval.pt/>
- <http://www.iapmei.pt/iapmei-art-03.php?id=820>
- http://www.min-economia.pt/port/guia_inv/port/mostra_faq_php_qual-492.html
- http://www.ifturismo.min-economia.pt/resources/download/btl/tabelas_sgm_ABRIL2004.html
- http://www.ifturismo.min-economia.pt/acc_ift_conteudo_01.asp?lang=pt&canal=6&slot=16&artigo=13208

2.2.2 Support Structures

A. IAPMEI

Definition

The IAPMEI [Support Institute for Small and Medium Enterprises and Investment] is a public institution with administrative and financial autonomy, operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Economic Activities and Labour.

Establishment and Geographical coverage

IAPMEI has a decentralized structure and has offices throughout Portugal

■ Porto head quarters:

Rua Direita do Viso, 120

4269 – 002 Porto

Telef.: 22 615 64 03

Fax: 22 615 64 96

E-mail: info@iapmei.pt

■ 14 Areas Enterprise Client

■ 7 Enterprise Formality Centres

Objective

The IAPMEI assumes the role of public policies agent, with responsibility for all actions vis-à-vis micro, small and medium enterprises, promoting and executing the support policies concerning entrepreneurial development, and contributing to the modernization and innovation of the industrial, commercial and services sectors, excluding tourism.

Legislation

■ Statute no. 186/2003 of 20 August 2003

■ Statute no. 35-A/2003 of 27 February 2003

■ Statute no. 129/99 of 21 April 1999

■ Statute no. 387/88 of 25 October 1988

References and relevant websites

■ <http://www.iapmei.pt>

■ <http://www.cfe.iapmei.pt/>

■ http://www.min-economia.pt/port/ministerio/p_iapmei.html

B. ITP

Definition

The ITP [Portugal Tourist Institute] is a public institution, with a legal personality, administrative and financial autonomy and its own assets; its activity is developed with the support of Economy Ministry.

Establishment and Geographical coverage

The ITP covers all the national territory and has head quarters at:

Rua Ivone Silva, lote 6

1050-124 Lisboa

PORTUGAL

Tel: 217 810 000

Line for promoters: 808 209 209

Fax 217 937 537

info@itp.min-economia.pt

Objective

The ITP has as its main objectives:

- To provide direct or indirect support for the strengthening, modernization and development of enterprise structures in the tourism sector
- To promote infrastructure development and investment in the tourist sector, as well as the internal and external promotion of Portugal as a tourist destination

Target Groups

- Tourist Sector enterprises

Legislation

- Statute no. 77/2004 of 31 March 2004
- Statute no. 308/99 of 10 August 1999

References and relevant websites

- <http://www.ifturismo.min-economia.pt>
- <http://www.itp.min-economia.pt/>

C. IEFP

Definition

The IEFP [Professional Training and Employment Institute], created in 1979, is a public body supported by the Economic Activities and Labour Ministry, with the remit concerning employment and professional training policies, defined and approved by the government.

Establishment and Geographical coverage

Its head-quarters are located in Lisbon

- Av. José Malhoa, 11
1099-018 Lisboa
Phone: 00351 21 861 41 00
Fax: 00351 21 722 70 13
- Rua de Xabregas, 52
1949-003 Lisboa
Phone: 0035 121 861 41 00
Fax: 00351 21 861 46 12

The IEFP has 5 regional delegations, and is present throughout the country and in all the regions, with Regional Development Coordination Commissions which run

- 86 Employment Centres
- 31 Professional Training Centres with direct management
- Centres offering professional training in direct management
- 1 Professional Rehabilitation Centre
- 8 Enterprise Creation Support Centre

Objective

The IEFP has the following objectives:

- To promote employment programmes
- To organize the employment market
- To promote information, training, orientation, professional rehabilitation and the allocation of workers
- To promote greater competitiveness
- To support initiatives that contribute to existing businesses or enterprises that are in the process of being created
- To cooperate in the conception, drawing up, definition and evaluation of the global employment policy

Support and Incentives

At enterprise creation level, the IEFP offers the following support and incentives:

- ILE – Local Employment Initiatives – support for projects that create new entities and that originate the job creation, and help dynamize local economies through the realization of small dimension investments
- Family Support ILE – this programme supports the creation of new entities that create jobs and contribute towards dynamizing local economies, in the field of family support services
- For those receiving unemployment benefit – support for projects promoted by unemployment beneficiaries, if they contribute to full employment for the promoters.
- Enterprise Nests/ECSCs [Enterprise Creation Support Centres]

See detailed information about CACEs
in this document

Legislation

- Statute no. 519-A2/79 of 29 December 1979
- Statute no. 247/85 of 12 July 1985

References and relevant websites

- www.iepf.pt

D. ADI

Definition

The Innovation Agency, a limited company, is supported by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education, via the Science and Technology Foundation, and by the Ministry of Economic Activities and Labour, via the IAPMEI and PME Investments

Objective

The main objective of Adl is to promote innovation and technological development by facilitating the relation between the research institutions and the enterprise system.

Supports and Incentives

Adl has a programme to support business creation known as NEST. The objective of the NEST Programme is to create, install and promote, the starting-up and sustainability of technological enterprises, which:

- Create or develop a relation with entities that are part of the national scientific and technological system
- Have achieved an acknowledged advanced technological level, in national and international terms

By enterprises of technological support is meant enterprises that depend on advanced technologies and recent development.

References and relevant websites

- www.adi.pt
- <http://www.adi.pt/Nest.htm>

2.1.3 Business Incubator Structures

A. ECSCs

Definition

Enterprise Creation Support Centres [ECSCs] are organic structures whose main objective is to foster the creation of new enterprises in their geographical area, for the creation of new jobs. To that end they have enterprise nests, created by protocol between the IEFP [National Institute of Employment and Training] and local development entities.

Legal Status

They are executive local institutions, with functional autonomy and with resources adequate to their goals, created by the IEFP, further to the deliberations of the executive commission and homologation of the minister responsible for this field.

Establishment and Geographical coverage

- The Vale do Ave ECSC
- The ECSC for the N.E. Trás-os-Montes region – Bragança
- Beira Interior ECSC – Seia
- The Setubal Peninsula ECSC – Setubal
- The Haut Alentejo ECSC – Portalegre
- The Algarve ECSC – Loulé
- The Vale do Sousa and Baixo Tâmega ECSC – Castelo de Paiva

Objective

The main objectives of the ECSCs are:

- To foster the creation of new enterprises in their area, through common support services and logistics
- To provide technical support for the development of enterprises
- To promote technical and information services related with the access and financial support
- To study and promote new business opportunities
- To promote studies and training courses in the field of project management, organization, management and valorisation of enterprise resources

Supports

- Organization and development of entrepreneurial training courses, for potential promoters
- Technical accompaniment in the start-up phase and development of entrepreneurial initiatives
- The provision of modulated space and logistics services for a period of 3 to 5 years, through drawing up a contract for the installation of the activity, free of charge

Incentives

- A non-reimbursable subsidy for each job created up to a sum representing in all the equivalent of 12 times the minimum national wage, to help the creation of the enterprise
- A non-reimbursable subsidy for each job created up to a sum representing in all the equivalent of 18 times the minimum national wage, for jobs for people over 45

Target Groups

- People over 18 years old
- Cooperatives
- Private entities with profit goals

Criteria for support

The enterprise creation project should have the following characteristics:

- Demonstrate economic, financial and technical viability
- Create qualified, long-term jobs
- Match the project to the ECSC objectives and the installations available

References and relevant websites

- www.pijva.gov.pt
- www.iefp.pt
- www.dre-algarve.min-economia.pt
- www.iapmei.pt

Legislation

- Ministerial decree no. 1191/97 of 21 November 1997
- Statute no. 445/80 of 4 October 1980
- Statute no. 437/78 of 28 December 1978
- Statute no. 247/85 of 12 July 1985

B. Business incubators, or ‘nests’

Definition

Enterprise Nests are physical spaces with infrastructures for technical and material support where young people can develop activities in the field of services. They are funded by the Youth Foundation and the main goal is to foster the creative capacity of young people, giving them the necessary support for the creation and development of their entrepreneurial project.

Legal Status

Promoted by the Ministry of Economy, through the IAPMEI [National Small and Medium Enterprises Support Institute], by the Ministry of Science and Technology, through the Foundation of Science and Technology and the Secretary of State for Youth, through the Portuguese Youth Institute, and by the National Association of Young Entrepreneurs.

This project has been run by the Youth Foundation since 1990.

Establishment and Geographical coverage

- Faro business nest/incubator
- Porto business nest/incubator
- Lisbon business nest/incubator

Objective

To foster the creative capacity of young people, giving them the necessary support for the purpose of business creation and/or development.

Target Groups

Young people between 18 and 35 with a university degree or specialist training, who want to create a business.

Criteria for support

The formalization of applications must be done by filing documents provided by the enterprise nest. The document will be analysed by a jury.

The enterprises must be formally created within 3 months. In the case of businesses that are already in operation, the business should not have been in existence for more than 6 months.

The information related with working and management models, as well as an application file, can be obtained in the Youth Foundation.

Working Model

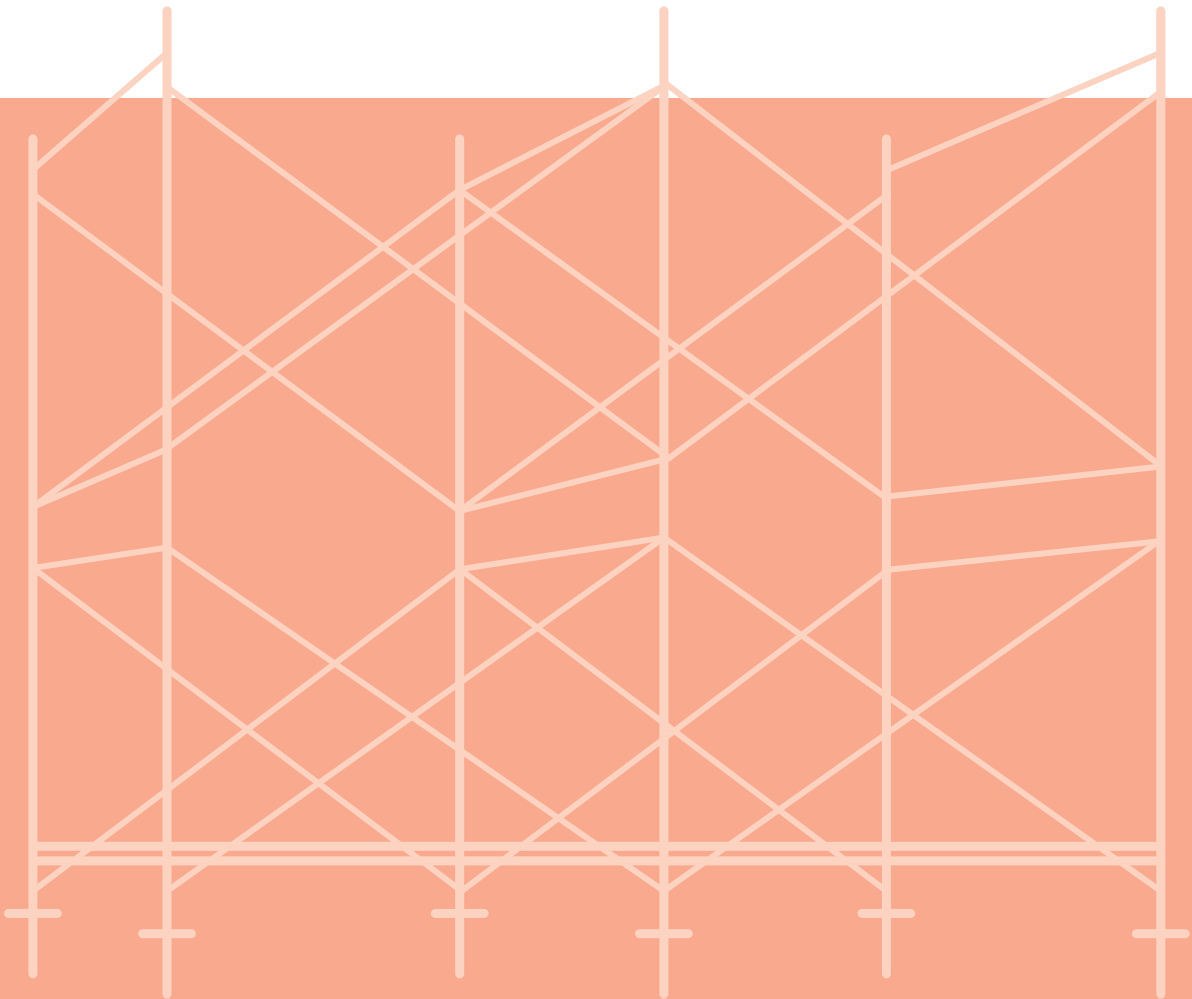
The enterprise nests offer:

- Offices, for a period of 3 years, and logistics services
[enterprises have to pay a token rent for the office]
- Specialized technical support made by entrepreneurs and managers of enterprises already established in several areas

References and relevant websites

- Ninhos de Empresas, Dossier de Apresentação [business nests and application files]
- www.dre-algarve.min-economia.pt
- www.iapmei.pt
- www.infocid.pt

A3 Italy



In Italy activities in the nature of accompanying and assisting business creation are coordinated by a national agency known as SVILUPPO ITALIA. There is a network of regional agencies at local level.

3.1 Private Structures

A. Local Action Groups

Definition and Status

Local action groups are found in the form of cooperatives, consortiums or associations.

Geographical cover

Local action groups are present in all rural areas.

Objectives and Mission

- Local development in rural areas.

Beneficiaries

Anyone with a business creation project

3.2 Public Structures

There is only one network, that of the national SVILUPPO ITALIA agency. This network affords accommodation/hosting for new businesses via business incubators or nurseries. The network is able to mobilize public financing on behalf of would-be business creators:

A. SVILUPPO ITALIA

Definition and Status

SVILUPPO ITALIA is a public company [a SOCIETA PER AZIONI]. The shareholders are:

- The ministry of finance
- The ministry of the economy

SVILUPPO ITALIA is present in twenty Italian regions.

Objectives and Mission

1 SVILUPPO ITALIA is there to offer assistance and advice in realizing your project

- Evaluating the feasibility of the project
- Making an economic/financial analysis of projects
- Preparing the file for financing requests

2 SVILUPPO ITALIA offers you the most appropriate financing for your particular project:

- Financing for the creation of a personal business of up to 25,000 euros, with 40% in the form of a grant and 60% in the form of a loan at 30% of the official lending rate.
- Financing for the creation of a company involving several people: from 100,000 to 2,500,000 euros. Of this 50% will be in the form of a grant and 40% in the form of a loan at 30% of the official lending rate. There is one condition attached: the majority of the company's partners must be under 35.

SVILUPPO ITALIA is currently experimenting in projects to accommodate fledgling enterprises.

Beneficiaries

Most people with business creation projects are under 35.

The projects selected from among those presented were as follows:

- individual projects 75%
- projects presented by existing companies: 15%

A few figures

- 35,606 businesses
- 106,048 jobs created
- 62% of businesses still in existence after 3 years.

B Suggestions for disseminating best practices



Exchange of Information

An exchange of information is a very useful means of exchanging experiences and knowledge, promoting practices, reinforcing transnational solidarity, and initiating partnership. Experiencing a new environment can be a useful professional development opportunity enabling you to bring back new ideas.

By exchanging information you can:

- Understand, develop and apply information
- Gain professional experience and knowledge
- Develop professional and personal relationships with professional in the same field
- Benefit from the personal enrichment that comes from contact with another culture, meeting new people and discovering different ways of doing things

Training courses followed within the Structures

These consist of a one-week training course followed within a structure, which is important in order to see, in situ, how the organization works and be in contact with the projects and activities developed by the organization.

Networking

Networking is establishing, maintaining and utilizing broad network of contacts, in order to keep a pulse on public, political and internal issues and to make informed decisions. It includes identifying who to involve, as well as when and how to involve them in order to accomplish objectives and minimize obstacles.

By networking you can:

- Develop new relationships, solidify deals and share experiences
- Bring people together and focus their attention on key issues, for debate, deliberation and resolution
- Request, engage and involve the participation of technicians

Exchange of Technicians

Exchanges of technicians are important because they provide access to information and exchanges concerning practices which allow new ways of doing things to be identified and enable them to change some processes in force in their organization, if necessary.

Exchanges allow technicians to see in situ different practices, processes, organizations and swap information in the areas they work.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking is the process of identifying, understanding and adapting practices to help organizations improve their performance.

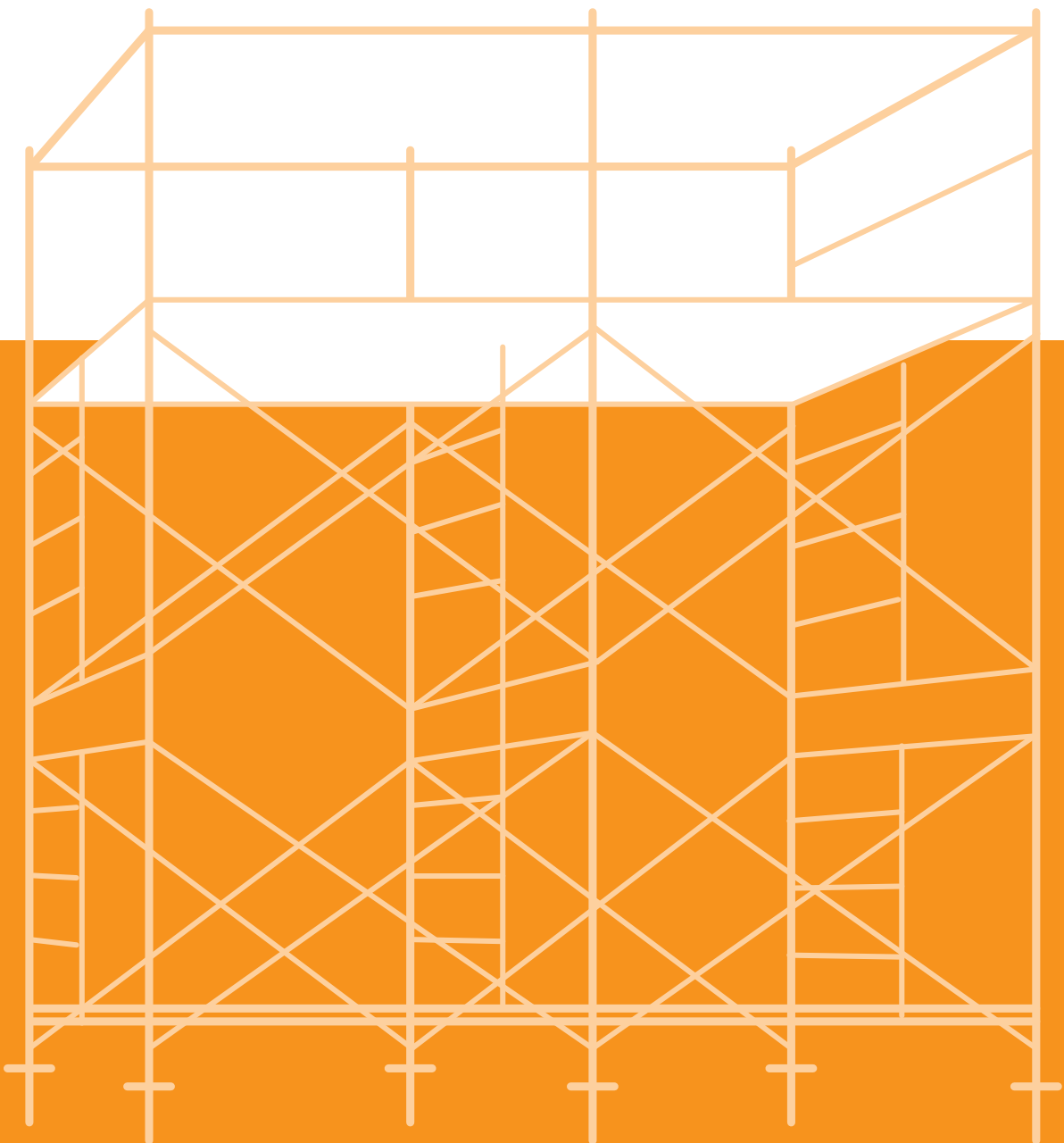
By benchmarking you can:

- Make comparisons with other organizations to identify and subsequently implement strategies for improving your organization
- Improve your own performance, by comparing yourself to others and adapting what you learn to improving how you perform

Example

In the EEC project, all the partners exchange information and that information benefits all the partners. For instance, ADRIMAG exchanged information about incubators and 'nurseries' with Progestion Partner and decided to promote another EQUAL project, trying to adapt the idea and process of business incubators or 'nurseries' in France, to ADRIMAG's territory in Portugal.

Conclusions



These experiments, carried out in the context of the EQUAL scheme, have enabled us to note that recently, for the first time ever, women in general have been actively working to empower their return to working life by creating their own job, which in many cases was done via a project to create a micro-business.

Reflecting on the structures with a vocation to accompany, accommodate and finance business creation is a way of making it possible to release the brakes caused by lack of access to information. We felt it essential to identify the various support structures for micro enterprises. In doing so we found that many of these structures played a triple role comprising accompaniment, accommodation and financing.

It is important to note that all the support structures in question have a mission to provide assistance and advice for people with business creation projects, a mission which is a metier in itself. Our experiences within our own countries have made it clear that in order to remove the brakes on entrepreneurship holding back women it is a matter of priority to insure that they are afforded assistance and advice. While they are undoubtedly highly motivated and eager to create their own businesses, unless they receive meaningful assistance and knowledgeable advice they are virtually bound to fail. The assistance provided by the various professional support structures cannot be reduced to a body of predetermined services provided within a set framework. Measures to assist the disadvantaged must take into account personal, and even private details: it is essential to establish a relationship of mutual trust between the provider of assistance and the person being assisted.

Our joint objective when reflecting on this subject was to make it easier to understand the specific functions of the various national business support structures networks and their respective missions. In France seven networks have come together to exchange information concerning their practices with regard to accompanying would-be business creators and professionalize their own skills and services.

The figures are known, [153,739 people with business creation projects and 750 business creation support structures in France, source: Networks report for 2000 and 2001], but it is clear that in the light of the number of businesses created throughout the territory as a whole, there is still a need for more people/structures to assist and accompany business start-ups.

It would be very worthwhile to introduce improvements in the approach to business creation to enable every potential business creator to be assisted via one of the networks that have been identified in order to increase the chances of success of new businesses and ensure their long-term survival.