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CESES is an important platform for contact with one another and Europe

A quiet summer?

There is a myth prevalent among our members that the world goes to sleep in July and August. The European Commission is supposed to shut the doors and just leave an emergency crew to answer (sometimes) the telephones. And volunteer organisations shut up shop.

Far from it! CESES has been operational the whole summer and we have found a contact point in the Commission during the whole period. Our members too, although sometimes short staffed, have maintained communications the whole time. In this, the modern world of communications has been a real asset, with people accessing their mail remotely and maintaining a "presence" from some unlikely places. And the missions have gone ahead during July and August despite the temptations of the summer weather. Or perhaps because the lack of them?

In any case, thanks to all our members for their continuing support during a period when they were rumoured to be relaxing!

Richard Blow, Project Manager



An interview with Thijs van Praag, CEO PUM (Netherlands).

Thijs van Praag was appointed CEO of PUM Netherlands senior experts in February 2007. He has since become acquainted with the possibilities of CESES.

According to Mr van Praag, CESES is in a favourable situation for further development:

«CESES could eventually fulfil the same role within Europe that an organisation like PUM currently does in the Netherlands, if the European Commission were to recognise CESES as a valuable addition to the development aid spectrum. Our organisations operate in the small and medium-sized business sector, which is difficult to access.»

“Suitable contacts are crucial in gaining the Commission’s recognition. CESES has an excellent lobby. It is, after all, thanks to CESES that reference was made in the 2007 budget to engaging experienced seniors. I think I am correct

in saying that no other organisation has ever achieved this. The Director General of EuropeAid, Koos Richelle, also forthrightly supports our efforts.”

Method

“One major point is that the Commission allocates its funds in the form of regional tenders. CESES and its members are not yet used to the approach required to gain the maximum benefit in this area. Europe is therefore failing to make the most of our volunteers. However, we can hardly expect the Commission to change its practices, it makes more sense to devise ways of

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adapting to this method. I am convinced that there are opportunities for us to do so.”

“The contract in Latin America shows that we operate far better there, as we can work according to our own system. What does appear, however, is that a great deal depends on the local EU representative.

As our projects are relatively small and inexpensive, they run the risk of becoming bogged down among the large ones .”

Service provider

“We are not rivals to commercial agencies, but rather a complement to them. If contacts with the commercial consultants’ association are close, one can explain CESES’ position to pre-empt possible objections. CESES is intended particularly for businesses that do not really require a commercial consultant. I consider CESES highly capable of presenting itself as an independent partner in tenders, as a service provider. This provides the European Commission with far greater coverage.”

Our missions in Latin America

The second Latin American contract is progressing steadily with ten missions already implemented; seventeen more have already started or are about to start.

Implemented:

One mission has been carried out in Argentina («Mercolácteo» – see article on page 3 of this Bulletin), two in Ecuador («Fruit Logística» and «Tech Piel y Cuero»), two in Mexico («Piel y Calzado» and «Artesanías Latinoamericanas») and five in Peru («Cite Textil Camelidos Huancavelica», «CONCYTEC», «Brisas del Titicaca», «Cite Artesanía Ucayali» and «Cite Vitivinícola ICA»).

In progress:

Two missions are being carried out or about to start in Bolivia («El Portillo» and «Bosques Tropicales»), two in Colombia («FUNDALCO» and «FUNDASET»), two in Ecuador («AgriAsesoría» and «Silvernet»), one in El Salvador («Marañón»), four in Mexico («Crece Yucatan», «Comecapri», «CEDIC» and «Imprentas Jalisco»), three in Nicaragua («CPML», «APENN» and «Honey»), one in Paraguay («Tourism»), one in Peru («Cite Vid Selección Clonal») and one in Venezuela («Chocolate»).

“Special Consultative Status”:

NGO's in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations may designate persons to represent them at offices of the United Nations. Such representatives may in turn be appointed to the United Nations Headquarters in New York, Geneva and Vienna as well as the five regional commissions.

NGO's in consultative status must submit every fourth year a brief report of their activities.

Member Associations:

SECOT

Seniors Españoles para la Cooperación Técnica (SECOT) was founded in 1989 and has been a member of CESES since its creation in 2000.

More than 900 experts execute around 800 missions each year in Spain, essentially assisting local SME's, non-profit institutions, young entrepreneurs, etc.

SECOT's activities abroad are very limited at the moment, since SECOT has no representatives in foreign countries.

The action undertaken by the seniors is possible and made more effective thanks to the cooperation initiatives and the efforts of many other organisations.

Foremost among them are the public and private institutions that have signed cooperation agreements with SECOT.

At the beginning of 2007 SECOT created its monthly electronic bulletin “Senior OnLine” and started distributing it electronically.

It also started to operate the facility “consult online” through its website and 615 requests for consulting assignments have been received to date.

SECOT pays particular attention to the enhancement of its quality standards. It is ISO 9001 certified.

In July 2006 SECOT was granted “Special Consultative Status” by the Economic and Social Council the United Nations (please see box).

*Teresa Torres,
SECOT International Area*

Note from the General Secretary

With the holiday period behind us it is time to look ahead and focus the efforts on the challenging tasks confronting CESES.

The Latin America 2 project is progressing, with over half of the planned missions completed or firmly established (see more on opposite page). It is up to us now to identify in the shortest time the remaining missions and ensure a timely completion of the entire programme.

It becomes now a priority to extend the range of CESES activities to Asia and Africa. Needless to say, the input and the agreement of the EU Delegations is pivotal and we call on every Member Association to share with us any contact they may already have or could

develop in support of the CESES approach.

Thanks to the sustained efforts of our Member Associations, in particular SECOT and SES (to which we express our deepest gratitude), it has been possible to strengthen the support of the European Parliament for the financing of the activities of senior volunteers associations.

The Secretariat intends to develop a continuous improvement programme aimed at identifying subjects which CESES could address, developing solutions and implementing initiatives to enhance its capabilities to represent more incisively and effectively its Member Associations.

Also, one of the concerns of the Secretariat has constantly been to have CESES known by a broader and ever growing audience. Over 100 new addresses have been added to the distribution list of the Bulletin and suggestions on new additions are heartily welcome.

An interview with the President published in the Neue Zuercher Zeitung enabled him to portray the activities and benefits of senior volunteer associations.

The attendance by the President and Thjis van Praag at the 13th International SES conference was at the same time a source of interesting concepts and possible contacts with overseas organisations.

Guido Bognolo, General Secretary

Our whey man in Argentina

Assigned in response to a request from Eurocentro Bolsa de Comercio de Santa Fe under the CESES support to the Al-Invest III programme, PUM dairy expert Henk Kerkhof ran a seminar on use of whey (a by-product of the cheese-making process) and visited more than ten plants in the Santa Fe region of central Argentina in May 2007 to give specific advice.

Mr Kerkhof explains:

“I started off with a two-day seminar, which proved to be a particularly one-sided affair, therefore not what I am used to. At a certain point, I simply ran out of things to tell them. That was the end of the seminar. Afterwards, I visited twelve dairy plants to find out what sort of equipment they had.”



“Most of the companies were cheese factories, either cooperatives or privately-owned enterprises. Many of them had their roots in arable farming. Those farmers let cattle graze among the crops, thus producing sufficient quantities of milk to enable them to set up a small dairy business with one another.”

Although some of the businesses were quite wealthy, Mr Kerkhof nevertheless managed to do worthwhile work. “There were companies equipped with pretty modern machinery, but which didn't really know how to make the most of it. I also visited large businesses with rather out-of-date plants, but with sufficient funds to buy whatever machinery they wanted, if they could only decide what.” Some of them might prove attractive business partners for Dutch dairy producers.

Mr Kerkhof reports that the Argentinians were particularly pleased with the advice and insight he had offered.

CESES received very positive feedback from the Eurocentro and is working with EuropeAid to find a way to fund a follow-up.

The page of CESES Member Associations

The missions executed by Senior Volunteers of the CESES Member Associations are an amazing kaleidoscope of subjects covered, training provided and geographical presence. Unfortunately this richness sometimes goes unnoticed because it does not get the appropriate display and focus. We believe it is important to offer our members a forum to present their achievements.

Here is a short selection from articles published in our members' newsletters detailing some of the most recent missions completed in Asia and Africa. We want to emphasize that this is just an illustrative and partial snapshot which can not possibly cover the entire spectrum of missions.

Flowers from Kenya

PUM senior expert Aad van Dijk, a Dutch flower, fruit and vegetable producer, helped Paul Mwangi, a young Kenyan flower exporter, to select and grow varieties for export to the Netherlands.

During the last 25 years Kenya has become the first flower exporting country in Africa. Today 30% of the flowers sold to international buyers in Holland come from Kenya.

Three times a week Paul Mwangi's flowers are delivered to the airport, to be auctioned eight hours later in Aalsmeer, Holland.

Says Paul Mwangi: «knowing what my clients want is very important. High quality and regular deliveries are essential to success».

The young entrepreneur is now experimenting with Ornithogalum bulbs which have been provided by PUM's Hans Blankert-fonds: his plans are to revisit old varieties and breed new ones.

Waste recycling in Madagascar

AGIR expert François Proust carried out an audit mission in Moramonga on the recycling of domestic waste.

The expert's recommendation was that, rather than being dispersed to the environment, organic matter could more efficiently be collected, treated and cost-effectively converted into fertilizers for the agriculture.

Beside the immediate benefits to the Moramonga farmers, the solutions envisaged by the expert are original and could be used in other parts of the world.

Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) for pharmaceutical industry in Mongolia

In response to the request for improvement of manufacturing methods PUM had received from a Mongolian producer of cattle vaccines, expert Balram Bissumbar offered simple, inexpensive advice: to have all rooms and equipment cleaned and disinfected on a daily basis. Only then could GMP be implemented and a training organised in Holland for the Mongolian vaccine producer. Thanks to a very simple piece of advice, the enterprise had become GMP-conscious and made drastic changes to its attitude and production conditions.

Ecology and standardisation in Ghana

SENIORES expert Elena Piutti, in cooperation with ICED (International Center for Enterprise and Sustainable Development), provided ecological advice on the development of natural parks and tourism.

PUM expert Mirjam Floor-Bellen introduced dye standardisation to a group of small textile entrepreneurs of the Volta Region, and was impressed by their eagerness to learn and improve their techniques.

Follow up on Tsunami emergency aid in India and Sri Lanka

In March 2006 SENIORES expert Sergio Franchino analysed the outcome of 13 projects funded by the Piemonte Region in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerale (India) and Sri Lanka. These projects covered various types of post-Tsunami recovery programmes, for example to build homes and shelters for fishermen and small farmers, reclaim flooded land, restore a cocoa plantation, etc.

Apart from a few comments on organisation aspects, the analysis concluded that the projects were very successful.

CESES is an international not-for-profit association of 25 organisations from the member states of the European Union. The first such legal entity of its kind in Europe, it encompasses the skills of over 24,000 volunteers. It combines the vast resources of its Member Associations to offer professional, voluntary, short-term assistance and advice to SME's, cooperatives and institutions.

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