



# AL-INVEST IV INFORMS

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## Special Issue on Corporate Social Responsibility

### LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

### Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a Competitiveness Factor

Corporate Social Responsibility should not be understood as philanthropy, but rather, as an organization's awareness of the impacts its decisions and activities have on society and the environment. It is necessary to create an ethical, transparent behavior to:

- Contribute to sustainable development, including the healthcare and wellbeing of societies.
- Always bear in mind the expectations of stakeholders.
- Build voluntary actions, beyond applicable legislation and collective agreements.
- Have CSR integrated in the organization chart and use it in all relations with stakeholders, both at public and private levels.

Despite the fact that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is gaining weight in the agendas of businesspeople and society, Latin America is not yet fully aware of how important this concept is as a source of financial profits and as a tool for business opportunities. Unfortunately, initiatives by SMEs and regional Governments in the field of CSR are still scarce, despite progress made in the last few years in several countries in this region.

The period of accelerated transformations we are currently experiencing poses a challenge to intermediary business institutions: becoming agents of change and looking for solutions, running greater risks and assuming commitments great in scope. The goal is for all companies, big, medium or small, to become the main drivers in the road towards sustainability in all industries of the economy.

Therefore, it is important to raise awareness among SMEs through structured initiatives and the vital role that business organizations play to develop, apply and support models and tools favoring local communities.

All of the above is a great challenge for the members of the AL-INVEST IV Program, who are responsible for finding systems to strengthen intermediary institutions in their task of supporting companies. As proposed during the Seminar on Corporate Social Responsibility in Latin America, which took place in Mexico last October, these are the main guidelines to follow:

- Design institutional policies committed to CSR.
- Define support structures including the public and the private sectors, stakeholders in education and civil society.
- Implement actions to raise awareness among SMEs and other players.
- Develop specific programs to implement CSR in SMEs through direct support, as coaching, technical assistance and following up on progress, among other things.
- Develop a networking platform to spread and share experiences.

To conclude, the Corporate Social Responsibility is a process to create more favorable conditions for the business viability of SMEs, increase competitiveness, create stable jobs and encourage more stable, fair and sustainable societies.

Joaquim Almeida Cordeiro,  
Coordinator of the Latin American Office

Coordination and Services Consortium  
AL-INVEST IV

AL-INVEST



Facilitating the internationalization of Latin America SMEs  
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## Seminar on Corporate Social Responsibility in Latin America

Since sustainability, responsibility and social cohesion are wealth and factor of competitiveness too, the AL-INVEST IV Program offered a seminar focusing on Corporate Social Responsibility last October. Against the backdrop of the Mexican capital city, many Latin American SMEs profited from sharing best practices and experiences and the best support tools.

The Seminar on Corporate Social Responsibility in Latin America took place last October 20 and 21, under the guidelines of the Coordination and Services Consortium of the AL-INVEST IV Program, the Iberoamerican Association of Chambers of Commerce (AICO by its



Attendants to the Seminar. Source: CS

Spanish acronym) and the EUROCENTER NAFIN. The event provided an opportunity to discuss different Corporate Social Responsibility models published in the Green Book of July 18, 2001, defining the Corporate Social Responsibility as “the voluntary integration of social and environmental concerns in corporate trade operations and relations”.

The Seminar provided food for thought, information, training, and the ideal context to define strategies and commitments to help all partners achieve the goals of AL-INVEST IV together. There were the perfect ingredients to ensure the consolidation of an exchange platform for Latin America, a foundation to strengthen relations with European Union Institutions.

For more information:

<http://www.al-invest4.eu/actividades2/actividades-consorcio-servicios/servicios-para-organismos-intermedios/seminarios-tematicos/responsabilidad-social-y-pymes>

## Central America, Mexico and Cuba

The steps taken to-date are as important as continuing to look to the future in the right direction. For the CAMC Consortium countries the lesson has been learnt and, both CADEXCO in Costa Rica and the CENTRARSE action in Guatemala will, undoubtedly stay on track.

### GUATEMALA

#### CENTRARSE Focusing on Corporate Thinking

Corporate Social Responsibility has been the perfect tool in Guatemala to promote the country's competitiveness and initiate a change in philosophy at a corporate level, hence generating great global benefits. But raising awareness is nothing new in this country.

In 2003 the Center for Action in Corporate Social Responsibility of

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Guatemala (CENTRARSE by its Spanish acronym) was started. Originally, there were 8 member companies. Now there are more than 150. It follows up on the Corporate Social Responsibility actions of these companies and gives yearly awards to companies excelling in leading this type of initiatives.

### COSTA RICA

#### Corporate Social Responsibility... and Environmental Responsibility Too

Despite accounting for just 0.03% of CO2 emissions worldwide, Costa Rica's ambition to preserve the environment goes above and beyond. The country is committed to becoming a carbon neutral nation by 2021.

The Chamber of Exporters of Costa Rica, through the support provided by the AL-INVEST IV Program, contributes to the task by encouraging SMEs to develop Corporate Social Responsibility programs bearing in mind environmental protection. The goal is to have a competitive advantage in international markets, but mainly, reach sustainable development beneficial for all.

The task is not always easy for Costa Rican business people. CADEXCO insists on the importance of complying with the regulation of European markets to be able to access them and the role Corporate Social Responsibility plays in doing so.

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## Mercosur, Chile and Venezuela

Respect, sustainability, environment and solidarity are some concepts that come to mind when we talk about Corporate Social Responsibility. Why not tourism? Eurochile shows us how to be eco-friendly while having some fun.

### CHILE

#### Eurochile Supports Sustainable Tourism

The British experience came to Chile brought by the AL-INVEST IV Program through the Eurochile Business Foundation, its agent in Chile. Allan Rhodes, an expert in sustainable tourism, was in charge of the seminars in five tourist destinations in this Latin American country: Coyhaique, Puerto Varas, San Pedro de Atacama, Pucón and Easter Island.

The global challenges in sustainability were the hot topic of the day. We discussed at length climate change, trends in green markets, Corporate Social Responsibility, responsible tourism and credentials to certify responsible corporate behaviors, such as Green Globe, Biosphere, Rainforest and Alliance.

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From right to left: Allan Rhodes; Ludovic Burns, Manager of OGD Easter Island; Cecilia Guldman, businesswoman, and Pablo Retamal, expert in Tourism from Eurochile. Source: MCV

## Andean Region

Eco-coaching, a Green Forum or an Award for Environmental Efforts are some tactics used by the Andean Region Consortium to share best environmental practices among its partners and participating companies. The goal is to make SMEs respectful with Nature.

### BOLIVIA

#### The National Chamber of Industry Protects the Environment

In 2010 and 2011, a total of 22 SMEs received comprehensive technical assistance on environmental management thanks to the support of the National Chamber of Industry of Bolivia, through the AL-INVEST IV Program. Companies learnt measures to prevent and mitigate environmental impact and their workers trained in-depth in environmental issues, industrial safety, and cleaner production.

The cherry on top will be the Award for Environmental Effort, in which the Foundation for Recycling FUNDARE will also participate, as well as the Empresa Servicios Integrales de Medio Ambiente y Labor Consultores & Asociados (SIMBIOSIS). The award recognizes the effort of SMEs and micro SMEs committed with the environment. Registering is free, and it can be done at AL-INVEST IV and FUNDARE's offices.

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### ECUADOR

#### Corporate Social Responsibility in the Food Chain Too

Last September, representatives from the main Ecuadorian food manufacturers met in Quito (Ecuador) to analyze what strategies to use when exporting abroad, namely to the EU.

This event, called Eco-Coaching: Sustainable Food Chains, is part of the initiatives in Corporate Social Responsibility by the Ecuadorian Federation of Exporters (FEDEXPOR by its Spanish acronym). There were lessons on Corporate Social Responsibility, sustainability, marketing, managing sustainable agriculture and fishing, among others.

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## BOLIVIA

### CAINCO Is Dressed in Green



The Chamber of Industry, Commerce, Services and Tourism of Santa Cruz, Bolivia (CAINCO) was in charge of organizing last December 8 the Green Business Forum, to promote green entrepreneurship and environmental management, specially focusing on waste management from household appliances and electronics.

The initiative was organized by the Foundation for Recycling 'FUNDARE' and the AL-INVEST IV Program and it took place in the Congress Center of CAINCO. The Peruvian Ministry of Environment attended to share its successful experiences with participating companies.

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## Interview to...

### Rafael Bonilla, Manager of Valentina Auxiliar Carrocera (Colombia)



What is your company's business?

We are a family organization in the business of manufacturing bodywork and accessories for freight transportation by truck.

Why do you consider Corporate Social Responsibility to be of importance?

Our philosophy focuses on generating a positive impact in our environment, and offering wellbeing to all stakeholders: clients, suppliers, collaborators

or shareholders. We believe Corporate Social Responsibility to be the only way to do so systematically, consistently and in an organized manner.

How did being committed to this idea help your company?

It brought us a huge competitive advantage. Our organization now stands out from the rest in the market due to the value links we have formed with our clients, a stronger supply chain, and human capital greatly committed to our organization.

How do you apply these principles? What techniques do you use to continue progressing?

We implemented a joint work plan with all our collaborators. This way, we have built our identity based on a sustainable, integral policy reaching all our activities and products.

Besides, we have implemented the Program ComprometerSE (committed), a methodology developed by Confecámaras and the Chamber of Commerce of Bogotá. It has been instrumental to adopt a co-payment model to establish goals, specific actions, in short, commitments.

You focus mainly on protecting children. Why?

Because we believe a better future is only achievable through programs that protect, dignify and offer more and better opportunities to children. We want to contribute to training better persons beings for a future world with more challenges. Any effort we make towards improving the quality of life of any person is a real and necessary contribution to reach a sustainable world.

Do you think applying this type of concepts in any Latin America SME seeking to sell abroad, mainly Europe, is necessary? Why?

Embracing Corporate Social Responsibility is a challenge that all SMEs must understand as a better opportunity to identify our strengths and weaknesses, work on them and build our own, self-identifying, value-added offer, stand out and be effective to become successful. This is the challenge for SMEs seeking to consolidate in an ever globalized, informed world, as it is today.

What are your next steps?

Continue to grow and improve. Realize our business and human activities are a reality affecting many people and environments in many ways. We are also striving to become more efficient and respond better to the needs of our interest groups, broadening the scope of our influence to more people, organizations and environments.

## PROFILE

Sector: Manufacturing bodywork for transportation vehicles

Director Rafael Bonilla

Number of employees: 60

Headquarters: Carrera 69P No. 75-31 Bogotá D.C. Colombia

Web: [www.mpgcarrocerias.com](http://www.mpgcarrocerias.com)

## Wouter Van Gulck, Federation of Belgian Chambers of Commerce



Why is Corporate Social Responsibility so important for the Federation of the Belgian Chambers of Commerce?

If we are talking Corporate Social Responsibility we are talking business. Besides, this is not a passing trend, it is here to stay. Therefore, it is normal that Chambers of Commerce, the most important business organizations, stress the significant role of Corporate Social Responsibility. Specifically in Belgium,

all Chambers of Commerce signed in 2009 a document showing their will to integrate this concept in all their commercial strategies.

How can Corporate Social Responsibility contribute to promoting a company?

When done right, Corporate Social Responsibility is a strategic exercise through which a company studies the impact of its activities from different points of view, as economic, environmental and social.

This way, the company may take steps to minimize negative impacts and multiply positive impacts. It is the only way for the business world to be more sensitive, strong and better prepared to face the challenges of globalization today. Those are the climate change, the exhaustion of natural resources, the ageing population and the financial crisis.

Do you think Corporate Social Responsibility is essential to the internationalization process of Latin American SMEs?

Currently, any company, be it from Europe, India, China or Latin America must report to its stakeholders and shareholders on everything it is doing: What are its sources of raw material, how the production process is organized, how are employees cared for, and so forth.

If Latin American SMEs want to export their products or invest in foreign markets, sooner or later they will have to face this type of questions.

What are the best techniques to develop Corporate Social Responsibility principles?

Corporate Social Responsibility is a time-intensive process, oftentimes starting with small actions. However, many companies, especially the smallest ones, do not know where to start. The training and coaching techniques may be a first step. This is where the Chambers of Commerce may help companies apply specific actions to improve their environmental performance, strengthen their governance and improve social balance.

What are the Learning Networks?

Learning Networks are one of the best services known offered by the Chambers in Belgium. It is a mix of training and networking, gathering groups of 10 to 15 businesspeople for a period of time of one to two years.

The goal is to offer attendants a platform to discuss issues and problems they face in the process of managing a company. The Learning Networks stem from the concept that finding solutions among colleagues, helped and advised by an external expert, is positive.

This approach has been implemented in Europe and will be exported to Africa, Egypt and Chile. Do you intend to extend it to other countries in Latin America?

We've realized that the concept of Learning Networks works anywhere with the right partner. For the time being, we do not have specific plans to implement new Networks in Latin America, but if the right opportunity comes up, we would undoubtedly consider it.

What are the future plans of the Federation of Belgian Chambers of Commerce regarding Corporate Social Responsibility?

We just started the fourth phase of QUADRANT, our Learning Network in Corporate Social Responsibility. Nine Chambers will overview the first steps of companies in the world of Corporate Social Responsibility.

The Federation will continue to spread the word about this concept in the Chambers of Commerce and train staff in these organizations. Additionally, we are committed to publishing a sustainability report by 2013 based on the Global Report Initiative.

## Activities



### Foreign Trade at its Best January 31 – February 3, Annecy, France

The Coordination and Services Consortium of the AL-INVEST IV Program has closed the application process to participate in the next edition of the program 'International Trade Academy', which will take place in Annecy, France, from January 31 to February 3, 2012.

For the last 45 days, the Program partners could opt to one of the six grants allocated to this training and benchmarking activity proposed by EUROCHAMBRES.

Representatives from European and international business orga-

nizations will receive dynamic training on international trade and globalization, and will enjoy an exclusive visit to the headquarters of the World Trade Organization, WTO, in Geneva, Switzerland. Besides, this event includes other optional courses on EU policies and access to its market, promoting investment and learning corporate strategies for internationalization, among others.

For more information: <http://academy.eurochambres.eu/upload/4e9d592728f04.pdf>

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## Renewing Strategies and Ethics Codes

### Mexico



One of the meetings of the workshop.  
Source: CAMC

The Mexican Cluster of Renewable Energies, seeking to promote their use, organized a workshop to update its internal management.

This event was offered in the framework of the AL-INVEST IV Program and called "Training and Technical Assistance in Strategic Planning, Ethic Codes and Rules of the Renewable Energies Cluster". A total of 10 companies participated. The event was useful to renew its strategic plans and ethic codes and to improve its business management, deals and, in short, the internal management of the Cluster.

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## Success Cases



### Confecámaras and ComprometeRSE

Ramón Morales, Head of the Project of the Colombian Confederation of Chambers of Commerce (Confecámaras), talked to us about the commitment of this association with Corporate Social Responsibility. "Confecámaras has been supporting Colombian SMEs since 2006 so that they include Corporate Social Responsibility practices in their business models.

Their tools focus on models of excellence and other international rules, and in technical assistance processes based on the ISO 26000 standard, which establishes the guidelines to follow in terms of Corporate Social Responsibility. For five years, the Confederation has

guided more than 450 companies in Colombia, trained more than 300 consultants and organized 4 international events on Corporate Social Responsibility.

The methodology used is totally free, and can be downloaded from their website. You will also find on their website the success cases of participating companies and other documents of interest.

In addition, Confecámaras is currently developing a cooperation agreement with the state oil company Ecopetrol to support 124 companies in 8 regions of the country".

For more information: [www.comprometerse.org.co](http://www.comprometerse.org.co)

## New lines of products for gift products, decoration and crafts

A total of 7 training sessions and 6 technical assistances is the balance of the integral project "Training and Technical Assistance to Develop New Lines of Products", developed between September 2010 and May 2011 in collaboration with Nacional Financiera, under the umbrella of the AL-INVEST IV Program.

The 27 companies participating designed new lines of products based on 2011 trends. Moreover, they improved their understanding of the market, learnt about marketing strategies, gained clients and increased sales. Also, they improved knowledge in their line of products and created an identity for their corporate image.

Many companies showed a sharp improvement in their sustainable management of natural resources and efficient financial and HR management. Regarding internationalization, companies increased their knowledge of exports markets and made significant progress in promotions, both through catalogues and websites and by participating in fairs.

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Crafts piece from one of the companies. Source: CS

## Events

Fair of Jobs that Promote Development.

November 2011 – January 2012 (CAMC)

Support Program to Access the European Market.

November 1 2011 – January 1, 2012 (CAMC)

LOC Business Round: Mission from European Buyers.

November 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011 (CAMC)

International Trade Academy, Annecy, France.

January 31, 2012 – February 3, 2012 (CS)

Business Mission CeBIT 2012, Hannover, Germany.

March 6, 2012 - March 10, 2012 (CS)

Business Mission "Alimentaria 2012", Barcelona, Spain .

March 26, 2012 - March 29, 2012 (CS)

More events: <http://www.al-invest4.eu/calendario/656>

## Contact

For more information visit our website

[www.al-invest4.eu](http://www.al-invest4.eu),

or Check our Facebook profile



<http://www.facebook.com/pages/AL-Invest-IV-Consortio-de-Servicios/175340069146180?ref=ts>



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Share your comments!

## Publications

Sector Analysis on "Renewable Energy":

<http://www.al-invest4.eu/minisite/renovables/europa/europa1.html>

"Exporting to Europe" Handbook:

<http://www.al-invest4.eu/guia-como-exportar-a-europa/1001-guia-como-exportar-a-europa/521-guia-como-exportar-a-europa>

Special Issue on the 2011 Annual Meeting:

<http://www.al-invest4.eu/attachments/Monogr%C3%A1fico%20Encuentro%20Anual%202011%20ENGLISH.pdf>

*¡El Consorcio de Servicios  
del Programa AL-INVEST IV les desea  
Felices Fiestas y Feliz Año Nuevo!*

*The AL-INVEST IV Services Consortium  
wishes you a Merry Christmas  
and a Happy New Year!*

*O Consórcio de Serviços  
do Programa AL-INVEST IV deseja-lhe  
Boas Festas e um feliz Ano Novo!*



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"The AL-INVEST IV Program is one of the most relevant regional economic cooperation programs of the European Commission in Latin America. The main goal of the IVth phase of the Program is to promote social cohesion by supporting Latin American SMEs in their consolidation and internationalization, sharing innovation and knowledge and creating economic relations with their European counterparts".