

Brussels, 31 May 2010

Winners of European Enterprise Awards successful at creating small businesses in times of crisis

For its creative approach in attracting business start-ups in this rural region of central France, European Commission Vice President Antonio Tajani awarded today the Auvergne region's "Entrepreneurs in Residence" the Grand Jury's Prize at the 2010 European Enterprise Awards ceremony. The high-level jury representing business, government and academia, selected the project of the Regional Development Agency for its impressive results in helping entrepreneurs to set up their residence and business in this volcanic landscape and creating over 200 businesses generating 600 jobs not only in the tourism sector, but also in trade and services. Five other initiatives from Austria, Germany, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden, also received awards in the ceremony which was jointly organised by the European Commission, the Spanish EU Presidency and the Committee of the Regions. The event closed the second European SME Week, the European Commission's pan-European campaign to promote entrepreneurship and small businesses (SMEs) in Europe.

European Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani, Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship, said: "*Small business needs the right soil to grow. The European Enterprise Awards winners are a living testimony of how the public sector can help plant the seeds for business creation and growth. The key to this success is building strong public-private partnerships that create win-win situations for companies and communities.*"

Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso, 1st Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions said: "*As the difficulties of the EU economy, and the Euro-zone in particular, are being discussed all over Europe these days, it is vital to acknowledge that encouraging entrepreneurship at local and regional level is a key ingredient for the success of any plan to exit the current difficult economic situation.*"

The six winners of the European Enterprise Awards 2010 edition are:

Grand Jury's Prize

*The "Entrepreneurs in Residence" project (France) by the Agence Regionale de Developpement des Territoires d'Auvergne has attracted entrepreneurs to set up their businesses in a region that is perceived as rural and remote. Offering participants individualised start-up support and funding has resulted in more than **300 new residencies**. More than **200 businesses have been set up, employing over 600 people**. The region of Auvergne has already started to expand the programme to the medical professions.*

Promoting the Entrepreneurial Spirit

Self-employment in the creative industry (Austria) - a university-based seminar focusing on preparing art students to become entrepreneurs has helped more than **300 participants** develop **40 business ideas** over the past 5 years.

Investment in Skills

Företagsamt Halland (Sweden) – a strategy that is instilling entrepreneurship among children and young people through business-oriented learning, thus almost doubling the number of children who would like to become **entrepreneurs from 26% to 44%**.

Improving Business Environment

Programme of Providing Support to Entrepreneurs Aimed at Reducing the Closure Rates of Businesses (Slovenia) – a public-private partnership that has helped to **decrease the number of business closures from 57% to 9%** within two years through free support to potential or current enterprises in the first stages of their company lives. Originally only operating in the Ljubljana area, it has already been progressively expanded throughout the country.

Internationalisation of Business

EGI Euregional Start-up Initiative (Rhein-Maas-Nord, Germany and the Netherlands) – a jointly established programme to promote **cross-border activities** of local young enterprises with an international focus that has resulted in **64 new businesses** and that has led to several interesting collaborations.

Responsible and Inclusive Entrepreneurship

Construction of Houses by Means of a Training System for Unemployed People (Nysa, Poland) – a municipal project that has provided **on-site-training for 176 formerly unemployed** people by having them build social housing and therefore **tackling two problems at the same time**.

The Jury's special mention has been awarded to:

"Time for Ethics", Nuremberg, Germany – which aims to keep up **ethical standards in business** even during times of change or crisis by developing a strong network of volunteer experts who provide local entrepreneurs with coaching and advice on leadership ethics.

The European Enterprise Awards were launched four years ago to recognise and reward initiatives that support entrepreneurship at a regional level. This year 338 national, regional and local authorities – including towns, cities and regions, as well as public-private partnerships – competed for nomination to the European competition for which each country can select up to two candidates.

The twelve nominees which were shortlisted for the awards were showcased as part of a conference on **"Getting SMEs on the road to recovery"** in Madrid. The conference provided a forum for exchange of best practice in implementing the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA) and highlighted a series of inspiring examples at national, regional and local levels from across the EU. The event marked the official closing of the second European SME Week 2010, a pan-European campaign of more than 1000 events across Europe that aim at informing

entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs about the available support as well as recognising the role of entrepreneurs in society.

For further information, please visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/best-practices/european-enterprise-awards/categories/index_en.htm "Small Business Act" for Europe
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/small-business-act/index_en.htm

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