

SMALL ENTERPRISE STIMULATION NETHERLANDS ANTILLES

In June 1998 the European Commission in Brussels decided to co-finance the “Small Enterprise Stimulation Programs in the Netherlands Antilles” (SESNA) within the 7th European Development Fund (EDF). The Financing Agreement, N.5814/NEA was signed on July 22, 1998 in Brussels and on August 21, 1998 in Curaçao. The National Authorizing Officer (NAO) had the Financing Agreement translated into the Operational Implementation Plan to provide guidance for the islands to participate in the SESNA Program.

The Small Enterprise Stimulation Netherlands Antilles (SESNA) is a tailor-made Economic support programme designed and implemented in full partnership between the:

- Central Government of the Netherlands Antilles
- Island Government of Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Maarten
- Private sector on all 5 islands and
- European Union represented by the European Development Fund (EDF)

The overall programme objective is to strengthen the contribution of the Small Business sector to economic growth throughout the five islands of the Netherlands Antilles. The SESNA programme is focusing on the creation of new jobs by promoting the incubation of new business ventures, the fostering of business and product innovation and the preservation of existing jobs in established business entities.

The SESNA programme consists of two main service components:

1. The SESNA Non-financial Services, which provides direct business advisory Services, training and information to the small businessman and woman through a SESNA Advisory Unit on each of the 5 islands.
2. The SESNA Financial Services, which provides to small businesses on all 5 island a loan facility for both working capital and capital investment purpose. This Financial Services is channeled through a local financial/credit institution.

The above stated two Services are logically linked, but the organization and management are strictly separated from each other.

2.1 Centrum Klein Bedrijf

The Executive Council of Bonaire has established centrum for Small Businesses also named Centrum Kleinbedrijf Bonaire (CKB) by executing the Memorandum of Association of a Foundation by the offices of Notary Public A.P.Knuf on 20 April 1999. The Island Council approved the establishment and financing of the Foundation on 22 December 1998. The objective of the CKB is to promote and to stimulate the micro and small business sector on the Island of Bonaire.

The CKB is a tri-partite 5- year project, which is financed by the European Community, the Bonaire Government and the Private Sector. The Government and the Private Sector. The Government has taken the financial steps to ensure that the European funds will be released for the financing of this project.

The Centrum has a fulltime manager, and a fulltime assistant manager who reports directly to a board comprising of members from the local Government and the Private Sector.

The services that the CKB renders are Training and Advisory related. The CKB provide hands-on tailor made advice to the different groups on an individual basis. Classroom sessions are provided to the Micro and A small Enterprises (MSE) at an affordable cost. The training and advisory services are high quality control driven in order to create willingness among the MSE to pay for the services rendered by the CKB.

The intention of providing training services is to equip entrepreneurs of micro and small businesses become more successful and professional in their business. The selection of training topics will be based upon feedback received from the MSE. This will lead to a better knowledge and awareness of the MSE sectors needs.

The CKB will not always be capable of rendering all sorts of specific information services to Micro Small Enterprises, but the CKB will use its network contacts to provide information on where to get the requested advice. The CKB will also grant advice upon request to the Island Government, in particular to the Department of Economic Affairs. Advice rendered to policy makers will, nevertheless, be solely in regards to MSE promotion. The advice given will be based on “field experience”.

According to its Memorandum the foundation will realize its objective by:

- implementing the SESNA Programme on Bonaire;
- providing training and business advice in the form of individual advice and group training courses;
- to act as an advising unit concerning the Island Government micro-and small businesses sector policies;
- Co-operating with other organizations and persons, with the same objectives.

2.2 Centrum Klein Bedrijf and Think Tank

The island of Bonaire is in the process of formulating a small and medium size enterprise policy framework under which in future the MSE community will be able to conduct their business venture in a more favorable sector environment.

To help them realize their objectives the CKB has invited a group of persons who can provide effective support in the development of MSE Strategies in Bonaire. A group of expert from both the public and the private sector has come together in a joint initiative to develop a specific programme for the MSE-sector. They named the initiative MSE Strategy Think Tank; the members of the Think Tank have been dealing with topics of better small and micro-sized enterprises (MSE) developments for years in various functions.

Their main aim is to:

- To identify concrete and precise bottlenecks and development obstacles
- To better coordinate existing programmes
- To better inform about existing possibilities and
- To stimulate more participation of small entrepreneurs and people who want to become entrepreneurs
- To enable suitable decision making of the Government.

Their goal is to:

- Create a business environment that helps existing small and micro companies to enter the medium sized arena.
- Encourage people to take initiative rather than waiting for others to take on initiatives.
- Generating a climate where entrepreneurial initiative is encouraged, respected and pro-actively supported

Their guiding principles:

- education and development of entrepreneurial spirit on all levels
- inexpensive and quicker start ups
- better and effective administration
- better availability of knowledge and skills
- better internet access
- development of e-government
- tax system honoring performance and initiative
- better access to the capital market
- improved technology transfer and access to MSE technologies
- better micro and small enterprises networks
- support of micro and small enterprises lobby-groups

Against this background the Think Tank and CKB is looking for creative solutions. Bonaire uniqueness has to be respected at all times.