



Bilateral relations through common research and innovation – challenge or joy?

*by Evija Pudane**

Small and medium enterprises are the cornerstone and driver of Latvian economy and their global competitiveness which is based on simple management structure, ability to respond quickly, make flexible decisions. Small domestic market is a major challenge for the most of Latvian companies, directing them to become more global and to take up the challenge and compete in global economy.

What makes the Latvian companies and organisations competitive in the world? It is the positive attitude and the desire for new challenges, ability to take the responsibility, creativity in solving different problems and the will to open up new horizons. Talented, creative, analytical and ambitious are the crucial characteristics of successful business owners in a small economy like Latvia.

The effectiveness of bilateral relations is determined by a mutual wish to learn, build good relationships and structure future cooperation opportunities. Everyone of us wish to do our international activities in a proper manner and in a highly effective way, gaining valuable and appropriate contacts, meeting open minded people and exploring new perspectives on global economy. Successful collaboration is based on complementary knowledge of the involved parties.

“To get more value than expected” is the highest aim for any our activity, but how to achieve this? What we should do to meet people sharing the same life values, business culture and commercial interests? In our CLEANTECH LATVIA team we are delighted to sharing our interests on new global business development, open innovation promotion and industrial competitiveness. We can support partners on *global expansion* by finding ways to expand to new international markets; *product innovation* by promoting collaboration opportunities on product design and development process and *strong partnerships* by creating new international partnerships and knowledge transfer.

CLEANTECH LATVIA have identified that common research, education and innovation activities are a good starting point for building new and trustful relations with LAC countries. Latin America and Caribbean countries are on their fast development way and over the next years they will require more and more competitive technologies and solutions to stay on the top of the most growing and stable economies in the world.

Today we see that the new knowledge of our research and education institutions and SME's practical experience together with LAC research and education institutions



and big industrial companies can be a good platform for activities on design and development of innovative products and technologies. Latvia's knowledge and LAC ability to apply this knowledge in large scale industrial projects is a fruitful collaboration base for both sides.

Key industries nominated as the priorities in a smart specialisation strategy of Latvia also is the main industries for collaboration between Latvian and Latin American & Caribbean countries. Collaboration can cover topics of advanced and nano materials, technologies and engineering systems; bio-medicine, medical technologies, bio-pharmacy and biotechnologies; smart energy, electronics and ICT, and also mechanical and electrical engineering, and it will also include such highly important aspects as education, science and business overall.

Collaboration opportunities are also proved by our main academic partner and one of the leading universities of Latvia – Riga Technical University. Earlier this year the Latin American and Caribbean Centre was established. Students from Peru, Brazil, Mexico, Honduras and Panama are ready to study in Riga, mostly choosing the technical sciences. More collaboration options like summer schools with tailored programme on environmental issues are on the negotiation process.

The discussion on activities for deepening the bilateral relations between Latvia and LAC countries is on the schedule of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They regularly organize political consultations with the Latin American countries, expanding the non-resident ambassador range, planning to open first embassy in the region - Brazil - until 2020, expanding the legal framework. There have been appointed honorary consuls in almost all of Latin America countries, and the Parliament has established parliamentary co-operation group for partnership activities with some Latin American countries, but one of the most important aspects for all the previous mentioned activities is relatively large Latvian diaspora in Latin America, especially in Brazil.

Year 2015 is the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU and will be a good platform to increase collaboration on political and economical aspects.

So let's support EU-LAC foundation initiative and implement activities that allow us:

- 1) to build a trust and Human to Human relationships;
- 2) to share information, experience and knowledge;
- 3) to find common aims;
- 4) to get to know each other more;
- 5) to create a strong network of triple helix parties between EU and LAC;
- 6) to implement common projects as result of factors mentioned previous.



***Evija Pudane** is international relations manager at CLEANTECH LATVIA. CLEANTECH LATVIA was launched to foster and promote Latvian cleantech companies, organisations, joint ventures, research and educational institutions collaboration locally and globally. Cluster is meant to provide a centralised location to support co-operation between members, arranging workshops, seminars, trade missions to the key foreign markets and joint research projects to develop new technologies, products or services. CLEANTECH LATVIA is committed to growing a vibrant clean technology industry and business community in Latvia by using regional strengths through innovation, research, new technology development and facilitation of international business opportunities. In other words raising awareness about green industry issues important to entrepreneurs and society for the better future.

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