



## **The Importance of Ecuador's participation in the *Polos de Competitividad* activity for the Bi-regional Integration Between the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean**

*by Juan Francisco Ballén\**

As an introduction, it is important to point out that for Ecuador the development of productive sectors with high levels of competitiveness, innovation and internationalisation are vital elements in the National Strategy for Productive Matrix Change (EN-CMP), promoted by the national Government as part of the National Plan for Good Living (NDP) 2013-2017, always with an emphasis on the establishment of a united, fair and inclusive economy, while operating on markets where the human being is always the axis and the end of Ecuadorian society.

This strategy is part of the changing times that encourages the Government of the Citizen's Revolution to pursue the replacement of Ecuador's economic development model based on natural resources, which by their nature are finite despite being renewable in some cases, by a model based on knowledge and human skills. The latter provides infinite and constantly evolving resources, for which the Government has established a programme of international scholarships for Ecuadorian youth that seeks to increase and enhance the skills with unlimited projection capability.

Evidently, this new model of economic development based on knowledge and skills should count on a scheme to promote and support productive and non-speculative entrepreneurship, formed by entrepreneurs and businesses characterised by an ethics based on respect for Nature, labour rights, commitment to quality and excellence in the products offered to the consumer, and responsible tax return practices as an essential element for corporate social responsibility.

In this context, the Government of Ecuador attended the Competitive Clusters' workshop, an event that in addition to the three discussion panels on Competitiveness, Internationalisation and Innovation Policy, has been preceded by a Benchmarking field trip to important companies such as AIRBUS, the Hamburg Port, the Hamburg Applied Aviation Research Centre, and the Hamburg Energy District. We have found that these initiatives are based on an effective public - private partnership, not only at the Central Government level, but especially at the municipal level, in this case Germany's Federal Government and the Free and Hanseatic City State of Hamburg.

Public - private collaborations are also being driven by the Government of Ecuador, which has recently issued an Executive Order establishing procedures to promote and to channel



this type of initiatives, also stressing that in the case of business or commercial proposals, the provisions of the Organic Code of Territorial Organisation, Autonomy and Decentralisation should be observed. This Code assigns responsibilities for productive development to autonomous governments at provincial and municipal level.

Under this framework Ecuador has established the creation of five Competitive Clusters in the sectors of agribusiness (cocoa and chocolate products, tinned fish, quinoa), tourism and goldsmith art as a creative industry, always applying decentralised and deconcentration criteria in the provinces of Guayas, Manabi, Los Rios, El Oro and Azuay, with the participation of the respective autonomous government, the Ministries of Industry and Productivity, and Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries, and productive private sector unions in those territories of Ecuador, who will participate in an organised way through the so-called Export Consortia, considering the recommendations of the Competitive Improvement Programme that has been prompted by the Ministry of Foreign Trade.

We are convinced that the EU-LAC Foundation initiative, through its Venture programme will allow Ecuador and Latin America and Caribbean countries who attended this workshop, to share and exchange views and experiences on cluster best practices in Europe and Latin America. We must stress the presence of European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis officials (ESCA) in this event, which may support the development of Clusters to act in a complementary way between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean. I am pleased to engage Ecuador, currently holding the Pro-Tempore Presidency of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) to this initiative, if it is recommended by the Plenary of this important event.

**\*Juan Francisco Ballén** is deputy-minister for foreign trade policies at the Ministry of Foreign Trade of Ecuador. This paper was prepared in the framework of the EU-LAC Foundation's conference of its project *Polos de Competitividad* of 30 April 2015. This is a translation of the responsibility of the EU-LAC Foundation; to read the original version in Spanish please follow the link:

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