

# Encouraging economic opportunities in Turkey

*New economic opportunities – in the European Union and in the enlargement countries – can be created by encouraging small businesses and entrepreneurs. The EU is expanding a network of business centres in Turkey that helps start-ups and smaller firms there to become more competitive. Increasing regional competitiveness is a central aim of the chambers of commerce and industry that are the hosts of the ABIGEM centres. ABIGEM is short for EU Turkish Business Centres – “Avrupa Birliği İş Geliştirme Merkezleri” in Turkish.*

## TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY

These business advisory services provide professional training and consultancy to smaller firms. The result is better performance in the national market and internationally, with increased contributions to the local and national economy. Only in 2013, these ABIGEMs have provided business consultancy to help more than 2,800 small and medium enterprises in 19 provinces, and offered more than 600 training programmes to some 24,000 participants. They also run programmes specifically for entrepreneurs who are considering or have just launched a start-up, and some 3,500 participants have benefited from nearly 150 such programmes.

## AN EXPANDING NETWORK

The EU gave funding for the first three ABIGEMs a decade ago in Gaziantep, Kocaeli and İzmir – each hosted by a local chamber of commerce. In view of their success – they have since become self supporting – the EU funded a further 12 centres. These are located in Adana, Afyon, Çorum, Denizli, Erzurum, Eskişehir, Kayseri, Konya,

Malatya, Tekirdağ, Trabzon and Uşak.

And recently the EU has invested in further centres in Sivas, Hatay, Batman and Van – providing coverage right across the country. ABIGEMs are staffed by business service managers with hands-on professional experience in the private sector and the particular issues that smaller firms must deal with. The services of each ABIGEM respond also to the specific characteristic of its region and the needs of firms in the area. They are also helping to develop regional pools of expertise, with qualified local consultants. An evaluation of the initial project found that for every €1 invested in the project, €3.5 was generated in the regions.

The cosmetics producer Verdaa in Hatay is just one example of many businesses which have



## Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)

## Turkey

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benefited from EU Turkish Business Centres. According to Ms. Gülay Gül, the company's CEO, working with ABİGEM experts "has improved our company's competitiveness, marketing skills and strategies; as well as increasing our brand awareness. They helped analyse our current products' sales performance and revenue and the effectiveness and performance of our points

of sale, and to build new business development strategies. We added new products to our range, and took steps to sell our products in Germany, Saudi Arabia, Libya and the United States. Our company has also won the Special Jury Award of the Anatolian Brands Competition. Our cooperation with ABİGEM has been going on for two years now, and it will continue, too".

### PROJECT DETAILS – ABİGEM project

#### Partners:

Local authorities in Adana, Afyon, Batman, Çorum, Denizli, Erzurum, Eskişehir, Hatay, Kayseri, Konya, Malatya, Sivas, Tekirdağ, Trabzon, Uşak and Van

**Total cost in €:**  
40.5 million

**EU Contribution in €:**  
32 million (ABİGEM 2)  
8.5 million (ABİGEM 3)

**Start date:**  
2008

**End date:**  
2014

**Results:**  
16 business advisory centres across the country providing consultancy to smaller firms

**Techniques:**  
Grant aid

**Project website:**  
[www.abigem.org](http://www.abigem.org)

