

EU companies consider chamber of commerce

Vitor Quintã | 21/01/2013 | in Economy

The EU representative in Macau says a new version of a business-matching programme is on the way

The city may soon have a European Chamber of Commerce, according to Vincent Picket, the head of the Office of the European Union to Hong Kong and Macau.

"We will try to set up a European Chamber of Commerce to help not only the firms already operating in the market but also newcomers in areas that are relevant for the region," Mr Picket told Business Daily.

Hong Kong has a European Chamber of Commerce but there are few business organisations in Macau, including the British Business Association of Macao and the France Macau Business Association.

Mr Picket, a Dutchman, said he had a meeting with a number of European chambers in Macau on Friday and had talked about a single chamber.

"It was they who launched the discussion, which is still at an initial stage," he said.

He also said there might be a successor to the European Union Business Information Programme (EUBIP), which began in 2009 and ended last year.

Mr Picket's predecessor, Maria Castillo Fernández, told Business Daily in August that funding for the programme would not be renewed.

But in October the vice-chairman of the European Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, Jens-Erik Olsen, said there had been talks with the European Union about extending the programme for another year at no extra cost.

Mr Picket said: "We hope during the course of this year to launch another project, much in the spirit of EUBIP, to continue the work of strengthening business information and representation."

He said the budget for the new programme would be "a little bit smaller".

It was "important to see business representation as more than just a function of the availability of EU funds", he said.

European outreach

"My biggest challenge is to explain to potential partners that Macau is bigger than it seems because it has a large outreach to mainland China," said Mr Picket, who took over the EU office in September.

He said Macau offered a "very welcoming environment" for European companies, with solid support from the Trade and Investment Promotion Institute.

With Europe "coming out of the financial crisis", economic recovery would depend on "European firms engaging in regions where there is strong growth, particularly Greater China," he added.

He is confident they will succeed and said they would create "specialised industry and services based on high value-added and high knowledge".

Mr Picket spoke at a seminar on the outlook for the European Union this year, sponsored by the EU-funded Jean Monnet Chair at the University of Macau.

He said people in Hong Kong and Macau understood that austerity measures had given Europe "a more stable framework to return to what it's all about: growth and job creation".



Vincent Picket has been head of the Office of the European Union to Hong Kong and Macau since September

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Vincent Picket, head of the Office of the European Union to Hong Kong and Macau

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