

There are several places to turn for assistance in gathering information and new market ideas. Start with a list of companies with real potential for international partnerships and growth. Make this list available to community developers, business associations and government agencies in target regions. Ask them to suggest the names of companies in their region which complement the capabilities of your company. Then organize meetings at which your company can meet with potential partners.

Effective partnering depends on effective networking. This is especially true for smaller businesses. Formal and informal linkages are important ways of developing contacts, securing business information, initiating cooperative activities, accessing new sources of capital, and obtaining technology.

There are many sources of useful information in the EC. The European Commission has set up a task force to assist SMEs. The task force works through information centres, networks, and publications. The Business Cooperation Centre (BCC) helps foreign firms identify European partner companies. The EUREKA database lists EC companies looking for partners. Some 180 European Business Information Centres (Euro Info Centres) can provide information on local partnership candidates. Many EC regions have databases that can be of help. Search for regions that offer a good fit for your company. There are also numerous databases that are geared to small- and medium-sized enterprises.

In Canada, both the federal and provincial governments provide useful information, resources and networks. External Affairs and International Trade Canada has networks of trade, investment and technology counsellors abroad. Provincial governments also have people working directly with companies.

There are other networks available to you as well. Associations of industrial developers can serve as focal points for the exchange of information. Science parks have formed an international organization designed to compare strategies and devise ways of complementing each other's initiatives.

Explore opportunities for using consultants and specialists to scout potential partnerships and to set up new networks. Keep in mind that some venture companies with investments in a group of local firms may seek partnerships with companies that have invested in a complementary group of firms as a means of helping their clients expand and develop.



Examples of inter-regional organizations that are promoting strategic alliances

The "Four Motors of Europe" is an agreement that was formed to promote cooperation and the formation of alliances between the regions of:

- Baden-Württemberg, Germany
- Catalonia, Spain
- Rhône-Alpes, France
- Lombardy, Italy

Most EC regions have offices that can help you.

Ontario has entered into cooperation agreements with the Four Motors of Europe to promote strategic alliances.

Located throughout Europe, the European Business Information Centres (Euro Info) can provide you with unofficial access to information on possible alliance partners.