



Spanish GBV Helps Boost Corporate Gross Book Value

CATALONIAN BUSINESS 'ANGEL' OPERATES IN BUDAPEST

BY TAMAS S. KISS



SPANIARD Francisco Moreno, has come a long way, to Hungary for a simple reason - to build bridges between Hungary and Spain. He is a private investor who contributes money and experience to early stage investments, commonly dubbed "Business Angel" among private venture capitalists. "I visited Hungary a few years back and saw that there was still so much potential and ripe opportunities for venture capitalists that I decided to set up my own company to help businesses in Hungary and Spain," the Andalusia-born executive says. He compared the Hungarian economy to the Spanish economy of 20 years ago. "We are seeking Spanish investors for Hungarian projects and Hungarian investors for investment projects in Spain. I see the same trends in Hungary that I saw in Barcelona in 1986. Hungary has excellent opportunities because of its favorable geographic location, dynamically developing logistics and transport sectors." He sees that Hungary is a lot like Spain, but admitted, however, "it is a little more bureaucratic." As a business Moreno says currently his company is based in Barcelona and Budapest and he wants to consolidate his business in Hungary in 2007 before expanding to neighboring countries in the Central and Eastern European region. "There is a lot of investment potential in Romania and Ukraine as well," he said. GBV is dealing with several sectors, but is also concentrating on specific investments like bio-ethanol, property and thermal tourism. The business is active in finding investment opportunities and consulting in the marketing and Communications,

Services, Industrial, Property, Art, IT and High-technologies and the Human Resources sectors. It carries out market research and feasibility studies. "If there is an enterprise or investor who has an idea, but no knowledge of how to realize their idea, then GBV is the company for them," he said. "We specialize in several corporate areas and are able to help others expand or improve productivity and profitability." According to the general statistics Spanish investors are some of the slowest investors, he says. "In Hungary Spanish investors compose about 5-6% of all foreign investments, but this could easily be increased to at least 15% as Hungary is still a virgin market for Spanish investors," he said. "It is true that a lot of Spanish investors are concentrating on



▲ **STRONG AND DYNAMIC:** Francisco Moreno would like to see Spanish investments increase from 5-6% to at least 15% of all foreign direct investments (FDI) present in Hungary.

opportunities in China, but Hungary and the Central and Eastern European region still has a lot of potential and is closer." Moreno believes Hungarian companies will understand that the high taxation and stringent austerity measures, implemented by the current government are requirements for the country to overcome its difficulties in the area of public spending and social securities. "A lot of things will change for the better, once issues like the high budget deficit are stabilized," he said. The executive sees Budapest has a lot more potential for attracting business and investments from Spain in many areas. "Hungarian infrastructure is developing very fast, but to further develop corporate investments, I think Budapest needs large conference centers and establishments that can be used for multi-purpose functions. He said, "Investors generally seek opportunities in the capital city and secondly in the major rural cities."

A lot more could be done in Budapest to attract tourists and businessmen alike, he says. "The city is a little too dirty, with several dilapidated buildings and few urban green spots. Despite Hungary having a strong higher education system Moreno sees that a lot of businesses bring a lot of their workforce from the neighboring countries because it's hard to find blue collar skilled workers.

"Maybe Hungarian education has too much theory and too little practical for the needs of foreign investors," he said. GBV is in close cooperation with the Hungarian investment development agency ITD Hungary. Moreno revealed that he is helping to bring Spanish jewelers and watch-makers to Hungary for a major trade exhibition between Oct 8-10. "There will be about 30 corporate exhibitors of the Spanish jewelry and watch-makers' association." 🌟