

ARAB-EU

Business Facilitation Network

Report of the 3rd Working Group Meeting in Algiers, Algeria, September 12-13, 2012

Summary of the meeting

Following the second working group meeting of the Arab-EU Business Facilitation Network that took place in Beirut on June 4-5, the 3rd working group meeting kindly hosted by Forum des Chefs des Entreprises in Algiers finalized the best practice papers on Education, SMEs and Trade in order to create a practically usable tool for all members of the network in their works with policy advocacy *and* member services.

The meeting furthermore analyzed and described the implementation of advocacy strategies for the best practices and position papers. Particularly, the annual meeting as well as a high level conference in Brussels in on December 4-5th 2012 was agreed to serve as a key means of implementing the policy advocacy campaign towards changing certain EU legislation. Finally the meeting discussed a formalization of the network, with a rotating presidency and secretariat.

Besides the working group session, the meeting also had a kick-off session with a key note intervention from the World Bank delegation to Algeria and from members of FCE.

Objectives of the meeting

The objective is to have finalised the best practise papers and the position paper, and have drafted an advocacy strategies for 2013 as well as identified the content of the high level conference in Brussels in December coinciding with the annual meeting of the network.

Deliverables

- Final best practice catalogue
- Final policy position papers
- Advocacy strategy, including stakeholder mapping
- Content of annual meeting and high level conference in Brussels
- Decision to further formalize the network, including the launch of a quarterly newsletter as well as the set up of a secretariat in the MENA region and a presidency of the Arab-EU Business Facilitation Network

Key note intervention by World Bank country representative, Mr. Moukim Temourov

Mr. Moukim Temourov from the World Bank office in Algiers made a key note presentation highlighting the current state of affairs for the private sector in Algeria. Mr. Temourov gave a brief introduction to the World Bank Group and its five specialized agencies (IBRD, IDA, IFC, MIGA and ICSID). It was highlighted how the World Bank has moved more and more towards becoming a knowledge providing institution. In collaboration with Algeria, the World Bank has developed a list of 142 recommendations for improving the private sector environment. A particular issue that was highlighted was good corporate governance and the fight against corruption. An environment without corruption is a more enabling environment for the private sector, but barriers such as an overly bureaucratic public sector remains substantial.

Best Practice Catalogue and Policy Position Papers

The best practices of the eight participating organizations of the network within the three topics of 2012 were compiled in the second meeting in Beirut. Together with the corresponding policy position papers, they will make up the 2012 annual report. This report will thus serve as both a means to share knowledge and best practices as well as being a powerful policy advocacy tool. The report will be finalized before the 2012 annual conference in Brussels and will thus serve to present EU decision makers with concrete suggestions for improvements within the chosen topics. The report will also be a means for each individual organization of the network to use domestically for presenting a united voice of business in the MENA region towards their respective governments. At the meeting the different issues for the best practice papers were highlighted and discussed as well as a mapping of stakeholders took place.

Formalised network

DI proposed to formalize the network by nominating a rotating presidency of the network that could function as a representative towards regional stakeholders and media. It was agreed that the presidency should rotate every 6 months and that it should be in alphabetical order starting with Algeria.

Furthermore, DI proposed to establish a secretariat of the network in one of the partner organisations. This secretariat as well as one full-time staff would be funded completely by DI and should be within the building of one of the member-organizations. All participants found this to be a good idea and Jordan and Algeria both welcomed the secretariat within their premises. A decision on when and where the secretariat should open and be placed will be discussed in Brussels, but organisations are welcome to propose that they can host it.

DI also proposed to facilitate a quarterly newsletter with relevant information from the region, including trade statistics, events, political issues etc. The presidency of the network would be writing an editorial for the Arab-EU Quarterly newsletter, the first issue of which will be published on October 15th 2012 in French, English and Arabic when relevant.

Visa – Joint declaration

It was decided to make a joint declaration to facilitate the visa application system for business people from the MENA region to the EU. Attached is a proposed letter. DI will seek support from Business Europe and relevant European business organisations.

MENA small business act

10 principles to guide policy makers when making new legislation in the MENA region were agreed upon and are attached to this report (annex 2).

Follow up:

- Please reserve the 4-5th December for the High Level Conference and Annual Meeting in Brussels. Each organization is invited to participate with up to three delegates. One of the delegates must have decision making powers on behalf of his/her organization.
- Visa invitation letters will be drafted as soon as we have the names of the delegates

- Each organization of the network must nominate one person to be the primary contact vis-à-vis the network and DI and report back to DI with this name.
- It was decided to introduce a rotating presidency of the network. Each organization will have a 6-month tenure of the presidency according to alphabetical order of the country. Hence, Algeria and the Forum des Chefs des Entreprises will have the first tenure of the presidency from now until the end of 2012. FCE should decide on a person to take this role and submit the information back to DI.
- Each organization should submit to DI no later than October 1st what they wish to have in the newsletter. DI has made a template for information that is attached. The information will be published in the newsletter on October 15th.

Annex 1: Required input from members of the AE-Network to the “Arab-EU Quarterly” – the quarterly newsletter of the network

Required input from your organizations		
Type	Contributor	Standard length
Mandatory contributions for each newsletter		
Editorial	The President of the AE-network	400 words
Business news from the region	Each organisation	300-700 words from each organisation
Major events	Each organisation	List of events with some keynotes on each event
Supplementary contributions		
Latest legislation (perhaps including commentary on impact on companies)	Each organisation (if there is something worth mentioning)	Up to 300 words
New analyzes, facts or articles	Each organisation	Up to 600 words
Member surveys	Each organisation according to given subject	Overview of responses which will then be put together by the editors (DI)

Annex 2: Proposal for “MENA Small Business Act”

10 principles which should guide the design and implementation of policies and laws in the MENA region

1. Create an environment in which formal businesses can thrive and are rewarded
2. Policies should promote good corporate governance and fight corruption and improve transparency
3. Encourage and support SMEs in the MENA region to benefit from European Market
4. Facilitate SMEs’ access to finance and develop a legal and business environment supportive to timely payments
5. Fixed dates for when business regulation will come into force
6. Design rules according to the “Think Small First” principle
7. Promote the upgrading of skills in SMEs and all forms of innovation
8. In case of force majeure, provide honest entrepreneurs who have faced bankruptcy a second chance
9. Adapt policy tools to SME needs to facilitate SMEs’ participation in public procurement
10. Implement good corporate governance in the entire procurement cycle, from needs assessment to contract management

Annex 3: Programme

12th of September

	Time	Theme & Purpose
Morning, September 12 th	09:00-09:10	Welcome - FCE
	09:10 – 09:15	- Introduction and presentation of programme by DI - Key Note speech by Mr Moukim Temourov, World Bank, Algeria country resident - EU Delegation in Algeria, tbc - Algerian SME representative, tbc - Q and A
	09:15 - 09:45	
	09:45-10:15	
	10:15-10:45	
	10:45-11.00	
	11:00-11:15	
	11:15-11:30	- Presentation by DI on state of play for the best practise papers
	11:15-12:15	- Presentation by DI on tools to use for advocating position papers: Case on SMEs and Education
	12:15-12:45	- Presentation by FGCCC on Conference in Qatar in September 2013 on SMEs (case for advocacy activity)
Afternoon, Sep. 12th	12:45-14:00	Lunch
	14:00 – 15:30	- Consolidating and approving the best practise papers
	15:30 – 16:00	Coffee break
	16:00 – 17.30	- Consolidating and approving the best practise papers cont.

20.00: Welcome dinner

13th of September

	Time	Theme & Purpose
Morning,	09.00-09.15	Recap of day 1
	09.15-11.15	Advocacy strategy - Ambition

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Barriers - Stakeholder mapping - Activities
	11.15-11.30	Coffee break
	11.30 -13.00	Annual meeting in Brussels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High Level Conference - Working Group Meeting
	13.00-13.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conclusions and way a head
	13.15-14.15	Lunch
Afternoon, Sep. 13th	14.30 – 18.00	Social programme

20.00: Farewell dinner