

ARAB-EU

Business Facilitation Network

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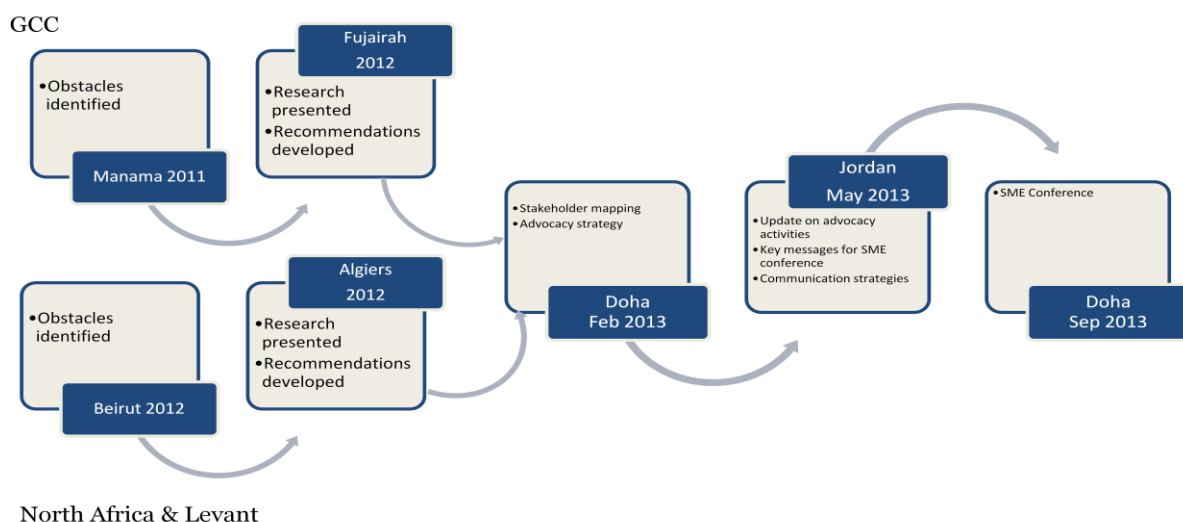
Report from the 1st Working Group Meeting in Doha, Qatar, February 27-28, 2013

Summary

The first working group meeting of 2013 took place in Doha, Qatar on February 27-28, 2013 and was kindly hosted by the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The working group meeting was the first of three in the 2013 project circle before the annual conference in December in Copenhagen in 2013. The working group discussion were focused on the continuation of the work undertaken in 2012 1) SME Environment and 2) Rules of Origin.

The outcome of the working group meeting was two strategies for policy advocacy and implementation based on the best practice papers and policy position for SMEs in the GCC and in North Africa and the Levant, leading up to a ARAB-EU SME Conference in Doha, Qatar September 17-19, 2013. Building on previous workshops and analytical work, the process of the workshops in the network is listed below.

Next phase



The meeting in Doha was launched by a presentation on how we use our body language in business and followed by two key note presentations on the state of play of SMEs in the GCC and the case of Bahrain and their efforts to stimulate SMEs and attract foreign investments. These presentations were followed by best practices from DI in Denmark on SMEs and Trade policy (food safety and labeling) as well as presentations from Egypt on their SME advocacy strategy and from Jordan on their advocacy strategy concerning rules of origin in the textile sector.

All interventions were very fruitful and underlined the many activities taken place in the partner organisations. The discussion also underlined, that many challenges facing SMEs are generic across borders and economic systems. Especially the lack of access to appropriate finance was a horizontal issue, even though many funds are available – especially in the GCC – many SMEs still found it difficult to access financial products. Secondly, the many different definitions of SMEs blurred the picture of how to address SMEs on a regional level or even national level.

In order to develop a more coherent and common position on SMEs, the GCC as a group and the North Africa and Levant as a group, defined common challenges, recommendations and stakeholders as well as strategies to implement the recommendations on national and regional level.

Both advocacy strategies are annexed to this report. Below is the agenda of the Doha meeting. All presentations are to be found on www.AE-network.com

Next steps

Based on the advocacy strategies, we need to have detailed activity plans and to start implementing the activities. At the next meeting in Jordan, Amman, we will work on the following issues:

- Update on advocacy strategy and activities per organisation
- Identify key messages for SME conference in Doha, September
- Define communication strategies and material

Yours sincerely,



Niels Tanderup Kristensen
Manager

Programme

	Time	Theme & Purpose
27th of February	09:00-09:10	Welcome Mr. Remy Rohani, General Manager, Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry Welcome Mr. Basil Aswami, International Director, FGCCC
	09:10 – 09:15	- Introduction and presentation of programme by DI
	09:15 - 09:45	- Presentation by Dr. Ashoor Ali. Structure on SMEs in the GCC countries and how GCC is promoting foreign investments
	09:45-10:15	- Dr. Leila Shahrour, Business Culture in the MENA region
	10:15-10.45	- Q and A
	10:45-11:15	Coffee
	11:15-11:30	- Presentation by DI on state of play for the position papers and advocacy strategies and efforts
	11:30-12:00	- Presentation by Dr . Abdel Gadir Warsama Ghalib. Case on how Bahrain have undertaken policy advocacy to change legislation and improve the business environment.
	12:00-13:00	- Presentation by DI expert on SMEs on DI’s yearly SME conference, Efforts to simplify rules and legislation to benefit SMEs, SME access to finance, Public-Private partnerships on SME growth, EU’s SME programme “COSME” and BusinessEurope SME efforts.
	13:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 14:15	- Presentation by Jordan Chamber of Industry. Case on how they have undertaken policy advocacy on Rules Of origin.	
14:15-15:00	- Presentation by DI expert on Food, Rules of Origin and EU food regulations. Particular emphasis on state of play and particular advocacy strategies and efforts in EU, industry’s	

		role in health and nutrition, including public-private partnerships.
	15:30 – 16:00	Coffee break
	16:00 – 17.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation by FGCC on Conference in Qatar in September 2013 on SMEs (case for advocacy activity) - Role of the Network in the Conference – presentations, speakers, round table, panel or? - Q and A
	20.00-22.00	- Welcome Dinner, hosted by the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Time	Theme & Purpose	
28th of February	09.00-09.15	Recap of day 1 and split into two groups (GCC working with SMEs and Maghreb and Levant working with Rules of Origin)
	09.15-11.15	Advocacy strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ambition - Barriers - Stakeholder mapping - Activities
	11.30-11.45	Coffee break
	11.45 -12.30	Advocacy Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of draft strategy by both groups - Q and A
	12.30-13.00	Conclusions and way ahead
	13.00-14.15	Lunch
	14.30 – 18.00	Social programme
	20.00-22.00	Farewell Dinner