



BS/SME/WG/R(2009)1

**REPORT OF THE
MEETING OF THE BSEC
WORKING GROUP ON SMES**

Thessaloniki, 20-22 May 2009

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group (WG) on SMEs was held in Thessaloniki on 20-22 May 2009.

2. The Meeting was attended by the following BSEC Member States:

Republic of Albania
Republic of Armenia
Republic of Azerbaijan
Republic of Bulgaria
Georgia
Hellenic Republic
Republic of Moldova
Romania
Russian Federation
Republic of Serbia
Republic of Turkey

3. The representative of the International Network for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (INSME) also participated in the Meeting as an Organization having sectoral dialogue partnership with BSEC.

The list of participants is attached as Annex I.

4. The Meeting was co-chaired by Mr. George SOUFLIAS, President of the Hellenic Organization for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises and Handicraft (EOMMEX); and Ms. Veni KLEONAKOU, International Relations Expert, EOMMEX.

5. The draft agenda of the Meeting was discussed and adopted. The agenda, as adopted by the WG, is attached as Annex II.

STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION RESOLUTIONS, DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS RELATED TO SMES

6. The WG considered the implementation of the Decisions of the 17th and 18th Meetings of the BSEC Council related to SMEs sector, particularly with reference to the establishment of BSEC Quality Award for SMEs and the implementation of the Action Plan of the SMEs Working Group.

7. The WG noted that the issue of BSEC Quality Award has been discussed at the previous meeting of the WG as well as under Agenda item 4 of the present Meeting.

8. The WG acknowledged that the Action Plan is being implemented under the guidance of the Country Coordinator and with the participation of the relevant institutions of the Member States.

PRIORITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP ON SMEs

9. The WG took note of the information concerning the activities of the BSEC Project Development Fund (PDF), including the new Manual of Operations of the Project Development Fund adopted by the 19th BSEC Council in Tirana on 23 October 2008.

10. In conformity with instructions of the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials (Tirana, 21-22 October 2008) the WG decided to define the following priority project areas according to the Action Plan of the Working Group:

- SMEs networking and promotion of best practices and experience in the BSEC Member States;
- Acquisition and dissemination of innovative methods and knowledge.

11. The WG suggested that these priorities shall be taken into account while considering the project applications to the BSEC Project Development Fund.

QUALITY PERFORMANCE COMPETITION FOR THE COMPANIES FROM THE BSEC COUNTRIES

12. In conformity with the instructions of the Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (Istanbul, 21-22 January 2009) the WG considered the issue of establishing the BSEC Quality Award and organization of a quality performance competition for SMEs from the BSEC Region.

13. The WG took note of the information concerning the organizational aspects of a similar competition organized by the Ukrainian Association for Quality for companies from the Central and Eastern Europe, including regulations for such a competition and other aspects related to the process of application, nomination, selection and assessment of participants.

14. The WG noted that the organization of quality performance competition will not imply any financial expenses from the BSEC Budget or from the BSEC Member States.

15. Recalling the decision of the 17th Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Kyiv, 17 April 2008) by which “*the Council, acknowledging the system of quality performance competition for companies from Central and Eastern Europe, recommended to the BSEC Business Council and the BSEC PERMIS to extend to the BSEC countries and organize a similar competition among the companies of the Black Sea countries*”, as well as the willingness of the Ukrainian Association for Quality to organize the quality performance competition for companies from the BSEC countries, the WG decided to submit the following draft decision to be approved by the next Council of Ministers:

“The Council agreed to establish the BSEC Quality Award for SMEs from the BSEC Region based on the Total Quality Management (TQM) principle and in accordance with the standards of European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM).

The Council requested the Ukrainian Association for Quality to elaborate the competition regulations and initiate the respective administrative and organizational procedures of the competition starting from 1 January 2010.”

16. The Russian Federation stated that the assessment of the candidates for the BSEC Quality Award should be performed by a competent body representing all BSEC Member States. In this regard, the Russian Federation finds unacceptable the nomination of the Ukrainian Association of Quality as the institution entrusted with elaboration of competition regulations and organization of the competition.

CURRENT SITUATION AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE BSEC INNOVATION DATA BANK

17. The WG took note of the information presented by EOMMEX concerning the compilation of data from the Member States and establishment of the BSEC Innovation Data Bank.

18. The WG agreed that “GENESIS” would be the name of the BSEC Innovation Data Bank which would be used for SMEs from the Member States and other interested organizations for establishing links with their counterparts in the respective areas of their activities.

19. The WG suggested that the Member States which did not submit the information to EOMMEX on the innovation poles, incubators and research institutions, to do so as soon as possible, so that the BSEC Innovation Data Bank could be completed with the information collected from all the BSEC Member States.

20. The WG suggested that each relevant institution in the Member States could place a link on their websites to the BSEC Innovation Data Bank.

PROJECT PROPOSAL ON “VISITING INCUBATORS/TECHNOLOGY PARKS AND EXCHANGE OF BEST PRACTICES, KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE AMONG THE BSEC MEMBER STATES”

21. The WG took note of the project proposal entitled “Visiting Incubators/Technology Parks and Exchange of Best Practices, Knowledge and Experience among the BSEC Member States” elaborated by Small and Medium Size Industry and Support Directorate (KOSGEB) of the Republic of Turkey.

22. The WG noted that the proposal aims at exchanging knowledge and experience concerning business incubators/technology parks in the BSEC Member States and the overall objective of the proposal is to contribute to the development of the Member States through information sharing.

23. The WG suggested that KOSGEB in close cooperation with other two or more interested institutions from the Member States submits a PDF application to BSEC PERMIS in order to receive funding for the implementation of this project proposal.

24. The WG also took note of the possibility to submit the project proposal to the Black Sea Joint Operational Programme (2007-2013) established by the European Union.

25. The WG took note with interest of the willingness of the Russian Federation to participate in this project proposal. Furthermore the WG invited the other interested parties to submit their interest for participation to KOSGEB, which as a leading partner, will cooperate with the institutions to be included in the joint application to PDF.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

26. The Secretary General of INSME delivered a presentation on the activities of INSME, its mission, mandate, areas of interest and cooperation.

27. The representative of the “Synthesis Albania” made a presentation on the activities of his company related to the promotion of the European projects on training and innovation to the benefit of the Republic of Albania.

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

28. The exact date and venue of the next meeting of the WG on SMEs will be communicated by PERMIS to the Member States at a later stage.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

29. The WG adopted the present Report for submission to the next Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials of the BSEC Member States.