



BS/SME/WG/R(2008)2

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

Athens, 15-16 October 2008

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group (WG) on SMEs was held in Athens on 15-16 October 2008.
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
 - Ukraine
3. The representative of the Commission of the European Communities participated in the Meeting as a BSEC Observer.
4. The representative of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) participated in the Meeting as a Guest.

The list of participants is attached as Annex I.

5. 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.

6. The draft agenda of the Meeting was discussed, amended 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

7. The WG discussed the ways and means of implementation of the Decision of the 18th Meeting of the BSEC Council related to SMEs sector, particularly with reference to the implementation of a 2-year Action Plan of the Working Group.

8. The WG stated that a number of activities in the form of seminars and workshops have been organized in the Member States, including the Workshop on “High Technology, Innovation and SMEs, Technology Parks and Incubators” that is being held in Athens on 15-17 October 2008.

9. The WG acknowledged in general terms 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.

CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORT ON “STRATEGIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE SME SECTOR IN THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION REGION”

10. Following the instruction of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Kyiv, 17 April 2008) the WG considered the report on “Strategies of the Development of Entrepreneurship and SME Sector in the BSEC Region” prepared by Entrepreneurship Research and Education Network (ERENET) under the auspices of Konrad-Adenauer- Stiftung (KAS) in Turkey.

11. The WG expressed the view that the recommendations and suggestions of the report may be taken into account in the process of implementation of the governmental policies on SMEs in the BSEC Member States.

QUALITY PERFORMANCE COMPETITION FOR THE COMPANIES FROM THE BSEC COUNTRIES

12. The WG took note of the information concerning the willingness of the Ukrainian Association for Quality to organize the quality performance competition for companies from the BSEC countries.

13. In order to organize the competition, the WG recommended to establish the BSEC Quality Award for SMEs from the BSEC Region based on the Total Quality Management (TQM) principle and according to the standards of European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM).

14. In this regard the WG also suggested that the Association elaborates the competition regulations and proceeds with administrative and organizational aspects of the competition starting from 1 January 2009.

PILOT PROJECT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REGULATORY REFORM PRINCIPLES CONCERNING THE FACILITATION OF BUSINESS ACTION IN THE AREA OF SMES

15. Implementing the instruction of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Kyiv, 17 April 2008) the Working Group continued deliberations on the Pilot Project for the implementation of the regulatory reform principles concerning the facilitation of business activities in the area of SMEs.

16. The Working Group took note of the intermediate report on the implementation of Pilot Project presented by the representative of the General Secretariat of Public Administration and eGovernance from the Hellenic Ministry of Interior.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

17. The WG took note of the Final Report on the implementation of the PDF Project "Identification of barriers of trade that small and medium enterprises of BSEC member countries face in intra BSEC trade, submitted by Romania as the leading partner, the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Bulgaria.

18. The WG recommended that the proposals and specific measures for the elimination of trade barriers might be considered within the framework of other subsidiary organs of the BSEC.

19. The WG noted that in the 2-year Action Plan of the WG on SMEs, there are a number of goals to be fulfilled, starting by this Workshop. EOMMEX, as the designated organization of the Country-Coordinator of the WG on SMEs, intends to organize other events in Greece as well, in order not only to exchange information but to jointly participate in projects and programs.

20. The WG took note that EOMMEX initiated the creation of the BSEC Innovation Data Bank in cooperation with PERMIS and contact points in each Member State. The focal points have to be set in each country in order to be able to cooperate more efficiently. At this stage, EOMMEX has uploaded detailed information concerning the Research and Technology Structure in each country, which can be accessed at the web-site of EOMMEX.

21. The representative of EOMMEX stated that it had envisaged taking its cooperation a step forward by:

- Formulating this Innovation Data Bank in a way where any interest party can find potential partners; and

- Creating a virtual market place for Institutions that supply research in various areas and SMEs that demand research products, patents for commercialization in different economic sectors.

22. The representative of EOMMEX emphasized that without the contribution of the BSEC Member States the goals set in the Action Plan would not be able to be fulfilled. This is why all Member States should provide their support for the planned activities.

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

23. 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

24. The Working Group adopted the present Report for submission to the next Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials of the BSEC Member States to be held in Tirana on 21-22 October 2008 prior to the 19th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States (Tirana, 23 October 2008).
