



**WORKSHOP ON
“HIGH TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION AND SMES,
TECHNOLOGY PARKS AND INCUBATORS”**

(Athens, 15-17 October 2008)

Summary Proceedings

1. The Workshop on “High Technology, Innovation and SMEs, Technology Parks and Incubators” was held in Athens on 15-17 October 2008.
2. The Workshop 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.
3. The Workshop was attended by the representatives of 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
4. The representative of the Commission of the European Communities participated in the Workshop as a BSEC Observer.

5. The representative of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) participated in the Workshop as a Guest.

The list of participants is attached as Annex I and the Program of the Workshop is attached as Annex II.

6. Welcoming statements were delivered by Ambassador Murat SUNGAR, First Deputy Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS; H.E. Mr. Christos FOLIAS, Minister of Development of the Hellenic Republic; H.E. Mr. Theodoros KASSIMIS, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic; and Mr. George Al. SOUFLIAS, President of EOMMEX.

6.1. In his statement Ambassador M. SUNGAR stated that BSEC and EOMMEX had been long working together closely to raise public awareness in the BSEC region of the importance of SMEs. Through a series of jointly organized workshops and seminars, it had been possible to address various issues involved in the development of SMEs and reach guiding conclusions.

He stated that the Workshop was dedicated to high technologies and innovation, and to innovate, in his judgment, meant not just to invent. It entails doing something new and useful which would successfully enter the market. In the globalized world of today, the necessity to be innovative and competitive is dictated by the ever changing dynamics of the regional and world markets. However, he mentioned that besides fresh ideas, the process of innovation required financial support. In that context, he said it could be beneficial to work on the possibilities of the access of SMEs from BSEC countries to the Innova initiative of the European Commission and its programmes within the framework of BSEC-EU cooperation process.

Ambassador M. SUNGAR mentioned two promising and interesting projects that were being implemented within the BSEC. The first one - the Pilot Project for the implementation of the regulatory reform principles concerning the facilitation of business activities in the area of SMEs, coordinated by the Ministry of Interior of the Hellenic Republic, and the second - "Identification of barriers of trade that small and medium enterprises of BSEC member countries face in intra BSEC trade, as well as, proposals for country specific policy recommendations for the elimination of these barriers", submitted by applicants from Romania, Armenia and Bulgaria. He indicated that these two projects as well as many others that are financed by and implemented within the framework of BSEC might consolidate the project-oriented approach of the Organization.

The text of the statement of Ambassador M. SUNGAR is attached as Annex III.

6.2. H.E. Mr. C. FOLIAS stated that SMEs were the most vulnerable companies that may suffer from the financial crisis that is being unfolded at present. He said that the business community needed to stay calm in this crisis and the governments should adopt relevant measures in order to stabilize the banking system, building trust and reinforcing the confidence of people and companies in the stability of the banking system.

He also informed that BSEC region, according to data from Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, had a 6% growth. Referring to SMEs sector Mr. Folias said that SMEs contributed significantly to the employment of people but the small companies sometimes faced bureaucracy and other obstacles also from the governmental agencies. In Greece itself SMEs create 2/3 of employment opportunities and are important players of the Greek economy.

6.3. H.E. Mr. T. KASSIMIS reminded the participants that BSEC had been established upon the initiative of the late President of Turkey Turgut Özal and that the BSEC was seen as a regional instrument of cooperation accepted by the European Union. The European Commission has been granted the Observer status in the BSEC which denotes the importance the executive body of the EU attaches to the BSEC.

He also mentioned that the process of economic cooperation among the BSEC Member States helped to reduce tensions between some of the Members. Having mentioned the contribution of Greece by 2 mln. Euros to the Hellenic Development Fund established within the BSEC, H.E. Mr. T. KASSIMIS stated that the Hellenic Republic is willing to develop cooperation within the BSEC.

6.4. Mr. George Al. SOUFLIAS in his statement mentioned that Greece was appointed as the Country-Coordinator of the BSEC Working Group on SMEs for a period of two years and, according to the 2-year Action Plan of the Working Group, Greece was implementing the provisions of the said Plan, including the organization of the Workshop and the Meeting of the Working Group and will continue intensively in the future.

He stated that investing in research and technology made the economy more competitive and more resilient. That is why the investments in the research centers and technological parks in BSEC countries must be stimulated.

7. Introductory statements were made by Mr. Philippos TSALIDIS, General Secretary of Research and Technology Department, Ministry of Development of the Hellenic Republic; Dr. Eleftherios SKANDALIS, Managing Director, EOMMEX S.A.; and Mr. Antonios FYSEKIDIS, European Commission Unit ENTR/E2, Directorate E: Promotion of SMEs' competitiveness, DG Enterprise and Industry.

7.1. Mr. P. TSALIDIS informed the participants about the national research, technological development and innovation policies of the Hellenic Republic. He also briefed the meeting on the initiatives and the measures undertaken by the Hellenic Government in order to promote innovations in all sectors of the national economy.

The text of the statement of Mr. P. TSALIDIS is attached as Annex IV.

7.2. In his statement, Dr. E. SKANDALIS mentioned that the SMEs made a major contribution to the economic growth and employment in Greece where it is estimated that 800,000 SMEs operated. He also stated that the national governmental policy has put in high priority the competitiveness and productivity of SMEs. Public sector organizations, like

EOMMEX play an important role ensuring that planning and implementation of such policies and measures take into account the interests of SMEs.

The text of the statement of Dr. E. SKANDALIS is attached as Annex V.

7.3. Mr. A. FYSEKIDIS made a presentation on “Enterprise Europe Network (EEN): Europe’s Commitment to Small Business”. In his presentation he revealed the main EU sources of funding for SMEs activity, mentioning the three major structural funds available for SMEs development. He informed how the EEN would help and assist SMEs and pointed out the principles of the activity of EEN and its types of services.

The presentation of Mr. A. FYSEKIDIS is attached as Annex VI.

8. The Participants of the Workshop delivered statements and made presentations with regard to the high technology, innovation and SMEs, technology parks and incubators in the BSEC Member States. The available statements and presentations provided by the Participants of the Workshop are attached as Annex VII.

9. On 15 October 2008, the participants to the Workshop paid a study visit to the “Coralia” technology clusters initiative. Officially established in 2005, Coralia is hosted by Research Center Athena, under the auspices of the General Secretariat for Research and Technology of the Greek Ministry of Development and it implements programs that are co-financed by the European Union’s 3rd Community Support Framework, under the Operational Framework “Competitiveness”.

10. On 17 October 2008, the participants to the Workshop had the opportunity to pay a study visit to the Patras Science Park.

Prof. Petros GROUMPOS, Professor of University of Patras, President and CEO of the Patras Science Park S.A. made a presentation on the structure and the activities of the enterprise.

The presentation of Prof. Dr. P. GROUMPOS is attached as Annex VIII.

11. The participants expressed their sincere thanks and gratitude to the Hellenic Organization for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises and Handicrafts (EOMMEX) for the contribution to and organization of the Workshop, as well as for the hospitality extended to the Participants during their stay in Athens.
