

Medium and Small Enterprises in the South and East Mediterranean countries: Another building block in a Regional Seminar in Barcelona

The EU-funded MED MSMEs Programme (2018-2023) operating in eight South and East-Mediterranean countries (Morocco, Tunis, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine¹, Israel, Lebanon, and Syria²) is contributing at regional level to the improvement of policies and regulations for MSMEs through knowledge production and sharing, good practice dissemination, peer-to-peer learning and dialogue at national and regional levels. Supported by DG NEAR (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations), the Programme is serving the objectives of the EU New Agenda for the Mediterranean and of the Work Programme of the Union for the Mediterranean Regional Platform for Industrial Cooperation (2021 – 2024).

The dissemination of the outcomes of the 2021 Programme activities and the implementation of the 2022 activities call for an informed and intense dialogue with stakeholders, starting with the National Small Business Act (SBA) Coordinators and public and private working group members, but also the EU Delegations and other regional Programmes.

Since March 2020, due to the sanitary situation, this coordination has been ensured by regular virtual meetings. Now that the overall situation has improved and that some countries are relaxing their sanitary measures, a hybrid meeting was organized in Barcelona at the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) premises and with their support, on 23-24 June on technical subjects articulated around two pillars: MSME Access to Finance and SME Internationalization and to discuss the orientations and follow-on activities.

The event gathered over 40 participants including National SBA Coordinators, representatives of the Access to Finance and Internationalisation national working groups, DG NEAR, and the team of experts. Technical contributions were shared and discussed notably by Egypt (Central Bank of Egypt - CBE, Industrial Modernization Center - IMC, Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency - MSMEDA), Israel (Ministry of Economy and Industry), Jordan (Jordan Enterprise Development Corporation - JEDCO), Lebanon (Lebanese Guarantee Company - KAFALAT and the Ministry of Industry), Morocco (Agence du Développement du Digital du Maroc - ADD, Central Bank of Morocco, Agence Nationale pour la Promotion de la Petite et Moyenne Entreprise - Maroc PME), Palestine (Ministry of Industry, and the Palestinian Monetary Authority), Tunisia (Agency for the Promotion of Industry and Innovation - APII and the Ministry of Commerce), the International Trade Center- ITC.

¹ * This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

² ** Cooperation with Syria is temporarily suspended until further notice from the European Commission.

Liisa Tanttari, EU International Aid / Cooperation Officer, DG NEAR stated that “The regional programming of the European Commission for 2021-2027 will reinforce resilience and prosperity with the objective of an “Economy that works for people” and deliver on decent job creation and on tackling inequality”.

The first day was dedicated to the discussion of the Access to Finance activities; the second day was dedicated to the SME Internationalization and the presentation of the Community of Practice (CoP) platform including a Road map for the launching and development of this platform.

The topics discussed during the various sessions included the best ways to generate sustainability by serving the objectives of the EU and the UfM Regional Platform for Industrial Cooperation; presentation of the overall objectives of the CoP under development including the creation of a regional coordination tool (in the form of a sustainable and interactive e-platform) to raise awareness among policy makers and regulators, to facilitate the sharing of experiences, exchange of views and best practices on policies and tools supporting the development of MSMEs in the South Med region; the presentation of a communication plan where the platform will contribute – at technical level – to stakeholders’ enrolment and their active contributions, to the dissemination of the Programme’s and third-party’s knowledge serving the CoP members and to peer-to-peer dialogue oriented towards actionable solutions.

In his speech, **Christophe Malherbe, MED MSMEs Programme Team Leader** affirmed: “The two days in Barcelona marked an important date in the Programme. We all deployed special efforts to keep and grow the momentum. These efforts contribute forging a Community of Practice that will inspire and provide the tools needed by policy makers to improve the business environment of SMEs. It's a chance to work in this field, it's an opportunity, but it's above all a responsibility: we can bring our share to building a better world for tens of millions across the region”.

ABOUT the MED MSMEs Programme www.medmsmes.eu

The MED MSMEs Programme (2018-2023) is funded by the European Union and aims to convene stakeholders and support dialogue at regional level to inspire policies and regulatory reforms for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), in particular on the internationalisation and access to finance dimensions.

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