

Simplification and digitalization of international trade procedures Regional hybrid event – September 26, 27, 2022 in Marrakech

KEY HIGHLIGHTS AND TAKEAWAYS



REGIONAL DIALOGUE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PORTNET

The MED MSMEs Program organized from **26 to 27 September 2022** two days of exchange of experiences in the fields of simplification and digitalization of international trade procedures in coordination with Maroc PME.

The workshops and meetings organized were attended by high-level delegations consisting of representatives of Ministries of Trade and Industry, customs administrations, national single windows-(NSW), SME agencies and associations of private sector exporters from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia.

In brief...

40+ high level participants

15 practices shared

18 bilateral meetings

6 roundtables

40+ national & regional recommendations

A total of **27 institutional and private representatives** from the above-mentioned countries took part in the event as panellists (Egypt, Jordan and Morocco) or as speakers, sharing their experience as regards digitalization of trade and allowed an intense technical dialogue among practitioners.

The event was organized on the side of the 26 - 28, 2022 **PORTNET International Conference and Exhibition on Single Windows** (Marrakech), an event that brought together more than 200 participants from 22 countries. The event MED MSMEs' participants had therefore the opportunity to exchange with peers beyond the region.



DIALOGUE - Day 1 (September 26, 2022)

The morning of September 26 was devoted to participating in the **opening session of the International Single Window Conference** - organized by PortNet in collaboration with the African Alliance for Electronic Commerce - and to visiting the exhibition stands organized on the sidelines of the Conference.

For **visibility purpose**, the Med MSMEs also set up a stand throughout the duration of the Conference and, following the opening session, received the visits – inter alia - of the Minister of Equipment of Morocco, the DG of the National Agency of Ports and the CEO of PortNet.

On this occasion, a brief presentation of the Program and its contribution to the Conference was provided by the expert team leader.



The afternoon of September 26 was dedicated to the presentation and exchange of experience concerning policies and reforms related to the **simplification and digitalization of international trade procedures, and in particular their impact on the exporting SME.**

Following the presentations and the exchanges between the speakers, it appeared that all the countries are committed to the simplification of foreign trade procedures, both the countries that have signed the TFA / WTO and the countries that have not yet signed.

All acknowledged the fact that the simplification and digitalization of international trade procedures are fairly complex subjects that require the **implementation of reforms to the legal and regulatory frameworks**, the rationalization of certain administrative services, the making of technological investments and the development of skills

To do this, **public-private dialogue and inter-**

institutional coordination are essential elements for the development and implementation of programs to modernize and strengthen the business environment, including the **operational environment of exporting SMEs.** This coordination takes concrete form within the framework of



the national coordination commissions in charge of trade simplification established in almost all the partner countries of MED MSMEs under the supervision of the Ministry of Trade.

DIALOGUE - Day 2 (September 27, 2022)

The morning of the 27th was dedicated to the presentation and exchange of experiences on the establishment and operation of **digital single window for international trade procedures**.

Following the presentation of the genesis and development of the **PortNet NSW** in Morocco (the most advanced in the region), « Trade Direct » presented the trade finance solution that is embedded in the PortNet digital platform that allows the electronic payment of all transactions related to foreign trade operations.

Other NSW testimonials were provided by representatives of the **Jordanian and Egyptian delegations**.

The debate between the participants demonstrated the key role played by the customs administration, which several years ago began the process of document dematerialization and digitization of procedures,

During the afternoon, a one hour panel was moderated by **ITC officials in charge of the EuroMed Trade Help Desk** via online access to the platform which allowed participants to know the operating methods of this instrument and available information on the foreign trade of 10 Southern Mediterranean countries.



The platform raised a great interest among participants.

Successively more than **twenty bilateral meetings** were organized between the representatives of the 6 delegations and the ITC.

This allowed to deepen the exchange of information relating to the subjects treated during the two days and to consolidate the contacts between the peers.



FINDINGS

The Marrakech regional meeting around the simplification and digitalization of international trade procedures was greatly valued by the participants as it enabled them in particular to:

- *Get an overall view of the state of the art of policies, reforms and instruments for simplifying foreign trade, as well as the difficulties encountered in their deployment in 5 of the South Med countries.*
- *Confirm the need for the elaboration and steady execution of national policies (e.g. TFA / WTO) and sectoral policies (e.g. digital strategies) in order to be able to successfully simplify and digitalize international trade procedures.*
- *Share and discuss among peers the impact of such reforms on the export capacity of SMEs, in terms of ease of access to information, responsiveness, reduction of time and cost of international trade operations and, moreover, of their competitiveness.*
- *Be inspired by EU (ITC), Asian and South Med practices as regards digital platforms in terms of access to information, streamlining import/export and transit processes and procedures, as well as trade finance. As well as NSW contribution to the internationalization of*





the economy and the improvement of the business environment.

- Confirm the need to develop the interoperability of single windows in the region in order to improve the exchange of information and processing times for international trade transactions. In this perspective, regional cooperation plays a key role.

CONCLUSIONS

- The high level of expertise mobilized by the Programme and the templates/tools allowing harmonized presentations was recognized by regional peers.
- The mobilization of high-level practitioners from specialized institutions (customs, export SME/agencies, ministries) allowed for an efficient and qualitative dialogue.
- One to one meeting allowed building operational bridges between peers from different South Med countries and discuss concrete issues.
- The organization of the event back-to-back with the PortNet event allowed exposing participants to their peers in Africa (notably) and generated high visibility.

- The coordination with





MED MSMEs

Policies for inclusive growth

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ITC and the tool presented raised a great interest, notably as regards the potential of exports by sectors, products and destinations that resulted in enlarging the list of prospect beneficiaries of the EuroMed Helpdesk.

NEXT STEPS

- *The identification of the needs at national level will be shared with EU Delegations as an input to potential future or ongoing bilateral initiatives.*
- *At regional level, the project will consolidate the common needs identified to suggest future actions specified in the technical report. Already, it can be spotted that the following actions would be of great interest:*
 - *feasibility study and dialogue support on the establishment of a regional SM electronic trade SW*
 - *peer-to-peer exchange in developing trade finance through NSW platforms*
 - *peer-to-peer exchange on governance and interinstitutional coordination*
 - *Training of customs department in digitalization*
 - *Further promotion / awareness raising of the EuroMed Helpdesk.*

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