

## **Working Group 2 on Economic Integration and Convergence to EU Standards**

### **Annual Report**

Working Group 2 continued to effectively influence on policy sphere in 2012, as well. WG 2 members have been working to ensure policy recommendations prepared by the WG that approved by partner countries.

WG 2 has started to discuss international donors to develop index of Economic Integration is an index of economic integration level of the EaP countries. The index shows the level of the economic integration among countries and the level integration of the countries to EU. The main purpose by defining the level of economic integration is to identify the level of the integration among of partner countries, and to achieve economic independence of the countries. The index will enable to evaluate the effect of EaP influence on the partner countries. This index can be used both by partner countries and EU. The partner countries will be able to see transparency of the economy, advantages and disadvantages of the level of the integration to other countries; as for EU it is important to define the economic situation in partner countries and the level of integration.

While preparing this research, the methodology will be formed at the first phrase. One expert from each partner countries will be involved in preparation this methodology. Later the preparation of the index based on above mentioned methodology will start. The process will include surveys and desk researches. It is intended to present the results at the International Conference and to publish a book.

WG members have been attended following meetings;

- ✓ **Seventh Meeting of the Eastern Partnership Platform 2: Economic Integration and Convergence with EU Policies taken place on May 31<sup>st</sup> in Brussels**

The seventh meeting of the Eastern Partnership Platform on “Economic Integration and Convergence with EU policies” took place on 31 May 2012 and was chaired by the Head of Unit “International Affairs” Christian Siebert (DG ENTR). It focussed on a discussion on cooperation in the field of labour market and social policies and cooperation in the field of information and communication technologies. The Platform was informed about the state of play regarding the ongoing work of the Panels on “Trade and Trade Related Regulatory Cooperation linked to DCFTAs”, “Transport”, “SME Policy” and “Environment and Climate Change”. Finally, Platform 2 was informed about the outcome of a seminar on excise policy and on the European Neighbourhood Programme for “Agriculture and Rural Development” (ENPARD).

### Cooperation in the Field of Labour Market and Social Policies

At the previous autumn Platform 2 meeting, DG EMPL and the European Training Foundation (ETF) suggested establishing a Panel on “Labour market and Social Policies” followed by a

comprehensive Platform discussion. The Platform had then agreed to revert to this subject at its next meeting. At this meeting, DG EMPL and ETF shortly introduced a work programme with regard to a multilateral dialogue in this area of work. The proposed Panel was welcomed by the Partner Countries with the exception of Georgia. It was finally agreed to regularly organise a multilateral dialogue on “Labour Market and Social Policies” back to back with the meetings of Platform 2.

#### Platform Discussion on the State of Play of Panel Meetings

As regards the Trade Panel, DG TRADE reported briefly on the outcome of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Trade Panel meetings on “Services, Investment and Capital Movements” as well as on “Trade in Goods” which took place on 20 October and 6 December in 2011 in Brussels.

DG MOVE presented the outcome of the first two Transport Panel meetings held on 14 October 2011 and on 21 February 2012.

In addition, DG ENTR and DG DEVCO debriefed Platform 2 participants on seminars and conferences related to the SME Panel that had taken place on 24-26 April 2012 in Kyiv.

Finally, DG ENV informed Platform 2 participants about the preparations for the Rio+20 Conference.

#### Cooperation in the Field of Information and Communication Technologies

DG INFSO and DG DEVCO gave a comprehensive presentation on the Platform 2 work programme related to information and communication technologies followed by a short Platform discussion. The Chair concluded that the Platform would come back to this topic at the next Platform meeting focussing on the workshop of Eastern Partnership electronic communication regulators to take place on 11 September 2012 in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova.

#### Enhanced Cooperation in Field of Taxation and Public Finance

DG TAXUD informed Platform 2 participants about the outcome of a seminar on excise policy held in Brussels on 22- 23 May 2012.

#### Cooperation in the Field of Agriculture and Rural Development

DG AGRI gave a short presentation on the European Neighbourhood Programme for “Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD)” followed by preliminary comments by Platform 2 participants. DG AGRI underlined that the Commission would envisage establishing a Panel in this area of work and would electronically forward additional information with regard to this activity to participants of Platform 2. The Chair concluded that Platform 2 would revert to this subject at its next meeting for a more comprehensive discussion.

✓ **Third Eastern Partnership Transport Panel take place on 09 July 2012 in Brussels**

The Eastern Partnership (“EaP”) Transport Panel held its third meeting on July 9, 2012 in Brussels, Belgium and was chaired by Mr. Patrick Goudou, the Executive Director of the European Aviation Safety Agency. Approximately 70 participants attended the meeting, representing the European Commission, EU countries, EaP countries, the European Investment Bank, and other European institutions. The meeting was divided between providing progress reports on transport cooperation between the EU and EaP countries in the rail, maritime, and aviation sectors and discussing next steps, including technical assistance and identification of key areas for rapid deliverables.

The specific objectives identified for reinforcing cooperation among infrastructure managers was as follows:

- Smoother flexible path allocation process;
- Common punctuality targets & sufficient priority for freight trains, even in case of disturbances;
- Traffic performance monitoring;
- Customer satisfaction surveys;
- Integration of terminals in traffic management and infrastructure planning;
- Technical harmonization of infrastructure; and
- Coordination of investment and maintenance works to reduce disruption during maintenance (which requires cross-border coordination)

The goal is first to establish 6 corridors by 2013 and another 3 corridors by 2015 and then develop the corridors on an ongoing basis. Potential opportunities for EaP countries to work on the corridors include: (i) short-term cooperation and exchange of experience and skills with RFC organizations (executive boards liaise at the ministry level and rail infrastructure managers liaise at the management level); (ii) mid-term participation as observers on governance bodies of RFCs, which would require separate agreements with the corridor organizations in question; and (iii) mid- to long-term full participation in RFCs after the Association Agreements enter into force.

✓ **Civil Society Forum in Cyprus on October 16-18, 2012**

CYINDEP, the Cyprus Island-wide NGO Development Platform, in partnership with the Peace It Together Network hosted an Annual Inter-Regional Learning Exchange Conference together with a Euro-Mediterranean ‘Souk’ (a civil society bazaar) from 9-12 October 2012 in Nicosia, Cyprus where representatives of WG2 attended. The conference focused on the role of citizens and civil society in stimulating social change during periods of transition and aims to provide a forum where participants from Europe and the Arab region can share their experiences and can learn from each other. The conference consisted of three pillars. Pillar 1 - Social Cohesion ,

Pillar 2 - Shaping the Policy debate and Pillar 3 - The right to be heard: community voice for representation.

✓ **Black Sea NGO forum in Romania, on October 24-25, 2012**

This year the main theme of the event was “*Participation and inclusion for responsible development*”. Vugar Bayramov, co-coordinator of WG 2 attended the Forum and had speech in the opening session. The discussions of the Forum were structured around 3 main topics:

- social entrepreneurship and community development in rural areas
- transparency and public integrity
- youth policies and youth development

The Black Sea NGO Forum was launched in 2008 by FOND (Federation of Romanian NGOs for Development) with the support of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Representation of the European Commission in Romania, in the framework of the Black Sea Synergy. The Forum aims at increasing the level of dialogue and cooperation among NGOs in the wider Black Sea Region, strengthening the NGOs capacity to influence regional and national policies and to increase the number and quality of regional partnerships and projects.

✓ **3rd meeting of the Eastern Partnership SME Panel, 30 - 31 October 2012**

SME Panel meeting strongly focused on the presentation and discussion of the "SME Policy Index 2012" - Report for the Eastern Partner countries developed by the European Commission, the OECD, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Training Foundation (ETF). In addition, the Panel will also allow for comprehensive discussions on the implementation of the SME Flagship Initiative, future activities in SME development support, major developments in EU SME policy and regional activities in the area of green economy.

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