

**Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean ministerial meeting
on Euro-Mediterranean industrial cooperation**

The Ministers for Industry met in Brussels on 19 February 2014. This meeting followed on from the meetings held by the Union for the Mediterranean in Valletta in 2011 and Nice in 2008, and as part of the Barcelona Process in Rhodes in 2006, Caserta in 2004, Malaga in 2002, Limassol in 2000, Klagenfurt in 1998 and Brussels in 1996.

The conference participants agreed that:

- a stable and attractive business climate and regulatory framework are necessary conditions for the development of businesses which create jobs, the growth of investment at home and abroad, and the intensification of trade and partnerships between businesses;
- infrastructure works are a powerful motor for socio-economic development in the regions in question, as underlined by the conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean ministerial meeting on transport in particular regarding the GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite Systems)¹ held in Brussels in November 2013;
- the increased liberalisation of trade benefits from balanced economic development;
- young people, women and civil society in general have an economic role which should be fostered, as pointed out at the Union for the Mediterranean ministerial meeting on strengthening the role of women in the society, held in Paris on 12 September 2013;
- small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) require specific support from the public authorities, particularly those with potential for growth and job creation, whereas large companies have a knock-on effect on the integration of SMEs into global value chains and on facilitating technological transfer;

¹ 1285/2013 OJ L 347, 20 December 2013.

- Euro-Mediterranean industrial cooperation, including cooperation between SMEs, encourages each partner to accelerate reforms both horizontally and sectorally, with possible support from the EU institutions and Member States as well as from other sources of funding;
- the availability of a qualified workforce which can adapt to technological change is an essential precondition to the development of the activities of businesses. It is therefore important to invest in the modernisation of vocational and continuing training systems.

The meeting participants acknowledged

- the work coordinated by the working group on Euro-Mediterranean industrial cooperation since the eighth meeting of the Ministers for Industry on such cooperation, held in Valletta in May 2011.
- the work achieved by the Secretariat of the Union for Mediterranean to launch concrete projects in this area.

The meeting participants expressed the desire to

- continue this work and strengthen their cooperation in order to promote inclusive economic development² in both the South and the North of the Mediterranean, thereby creating wealth and distributing it through decent jobs, particularly for young people and women. The conclusions of the Council of Ministers of the European Union on industrial policy of 2 and 3 December 2013³ provide useful guidelines in this respect.

With this in mind, the meeting participants expressed their intention to

1. continue implementing the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise, adopted by the Ministers for Industry at the 5th ministerial meeting on Euro-Mediterranean industrial cooperation in Caserta in 2004 on the basis of the European Charter for Small Enterprises adopted in 2000, taking account of the results and recommendations in the 2013 evaluation of its implementation, conducted jointly with the Commission, the European Investment Bank, the European Training Foundation and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and drawing from the experience acquired in the EU and in the neighbouring

² COM(2011) 200; COM(2011)303.

³ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/intm/139845.pdf.

regions with the Small Business Act for Europe adopted by the Council of Ministers of the European Union in December 2008.

- (a) With regard to the actions to be conducted at **regional level**, the Ministers invite the national Charter coordinators to:
- select participants for regional seminars, to be organised in fields where common training needs are highlighted by the 2013 evaluation of Charter implementation;
 - ensure optimum complementarity between regional and national training and link these actions to projects and proposals by the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean, and the good practices and initiatives supported by the EU Member States and international financial institutions;
 - complete as a matter of priority the review of the Charter started in 2009, bearing in mind recent developments and the experience acquired with the "Small Business Act" for Europe and aligning the Charter with the latter;
 - explore with the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and other financial institutions the optimisation and more systematic use of available financial instruments.
- (b) At **national level**, the Ministers plan to:
- accelerate reforms by taking account of the recommendations addressed to the partners in the most recent evaluations of the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise and the Small Business Act for Europe;

- attach special importance to the needs of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Take account of the ten principles of the Small Business Act for Europe. Facilitate access to financing; simplify administrative procedures; encourage the spirit of enterprise, the setting up of own businesses and social entrepreneurship; encourage technological and non-technological innovation, access to markets and investment; improve information and support services for businesses, including incubators and clusters; promote exports and internationalisation; strengthen the quality and transparency of economic and business governance; reform the vocational training system and activate employment policies;
- intensify cooperation between ministries, agencies and the public and private sectors on the implementation of reforms; consult and involve in the reform effort all the stakeholders concerned in the public sector, the business world and civil society, including young people, women and the representatives of regions whose development is lagging behind;
- facilitate the dissemination of information, networking and training for the public and private regional stakeholders benefiting from public and private investment (construction of infrastructure, establishment of large companies) in order to intensify the knock-on effect of these investments on SMEs through the development of sub-contracting and the integration of SMEs into the global economy;
- improve the coherency of the aid provided by funding sources and make the best possible use of the instruments, programmes and resources available in order to contribute to the implementation of the Charter at national level;

- strengthen the role of national coordinators and ask them to:
 - organise training at national level to disseminate the results of the 2013 evaluation and the lessons from the regional training seminars, taking account of partners' specific needs and involving participants from regions whose development is lagging behind, women, young people, representatives of the social economy and the social partners;
 - encourage all stakeholders to propose and support the reforms needed for the growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, drawing inspiration in particular from the Small Business Act for Europe;
 - monitor implementation of the recommendations made in the 2013 evaluation, report on the progress achieved by drawing on modernised national statistical apparatus which offers an improved measurement of the impact of policies and programmes for SMEs, in particular as regards the creation of jobs for young people and women.

2. Strengthen and create synergy between networks of businesses of all sizes and the organisations which support their development, such as innovation centres and technical centres; use mentoring, coaching and exchanges to foster business partnerships, co-location, research, innovation and technological transfer. Market access must also be facilitated, possibly drawing on the opening of Enterprise Europe Network, the EU programme for competitiveness of enterprises and SMEs (COSME)⁴, and the EU framework programme for research and innovation (Horizon 2020) to neighbouring Mediterranean partners, subject to compliance with certain conditions and methods. It will also be important to learn all the lessons from pilot projects such as "Euromed – Innovative entrepreneurs for change" and to fully exploit their achievements;

⁴ 2011/0394 (COD) – PE-CONS 58/13

3. continue, taking account in particular of the specific characteristics and interests of SMEs, the construction of a large Euro-Mediterranean market for industrial products through the ongoing preparation and negotiation of the Agreements on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products (ACAA)⁵ and deep and comprehensive free trade agreements and the ratification and implementation of the regional convention on preferential pan-Euro-Mediterranean rules of origin⁶
4. support modernisation programmes with a view to sustainable development by targeting priority industrial sectors, in particular those where SMEs can provide maximum added value. For Mediterranean neighbouring partners, these sectors would be: textile/clothing, leather and shoes, creative industries, agri-food, information technologies, renewable energies, energy efficiency, logistics and green industries;
5. with the support of existing networks and instruments, exchange opinions and experiences and facilitate business partnerships in sectors of shared interest such as agri-food, renewable energies, energy efficiency, and other fields linked to green growth, logistics and the creative industries. Continue and strengthen activities under the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue on the future of the textile and clothing sector, launched at the 5th meeting of the Ministers for Industry on Euro-Mediterranean industrial cooperation;
6. implement the work programme (2014-2015) of the working group on Euro-Mediterranean industrial cooperation. The Ministers call on all the parties concerned, in particular the private sector, to contribute to the implementation of this working programme. They ask the working group to assume a thorough coordinating and monitoring role for the implementation of the 2014-2015 work programme, to remain attentive to the needs of industry and SMEs and, where appropriate, to update the work programme.

⁵ action plan for the free movement of industrial products, approved by the Euro-Mediterranean Ministers for Trade in July 2003 in Palermo

⁶ EU Official Journal L54 of 26.2.2013