Flash Report

12th Meeting of Platform 2 on Economic Integration and Convergence with EU Policies

12th November 2014

The 12th Meeting of Platform 2 on “Economic Integration and Convergence with EU Policies” took place on 12th November 2014 in Brussels. The meeting was chaired by DG ENTR as the coordinator of Platform 2.

Discussions were very fruitful and the various presentations and interventions demonstrated that the Panels, projects and actions under the umbrella of Platform 2 are delivering concrete results that contribute to achieving the objectives of the Platform to stimulate growth and jobs. Despite the increased differentiation of partner countries as regards their possible path towards European integration, Platform 2 continues to promote exchanges between partner countries, Member States, European institutions and other partner organisations. The importance of the work of the Platform is also demonstrated in its broadening scope – exemplified by the approval of a new Panel on Statistics. The Platform also encourages Member States to increasingly work with partner countries on concrete projects within the framework of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) multilateral track. In this respect, Poland hosted a Customs and Trade Facilitation Workshop and The Netherlands (CBI – an agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) organised a Training for Commercial Attachés in close cooperation with EU colleagues.

The meeting commenced with a key note speech (EEAS) on the main political events in 2014 and the priorities for the period ahead. This was complemented by an overview of key EaP events during the Latvian EU Presidency. Platform 2 participants particularly took note of the Business Forum, organised on 21st May 2015 prior to the next Eastern Partnership Summit (21st and 22nd May) in Riga. Participation of business from both partner countries and Member States in the Business Forum is strongly encouraged. Furthermore, colleagues from DG Trade and DG DEVCO outlined the state of play of DCFTA implementation and introduced the recently established DCFTA Facility which will assist the private sector, in particular SMEs, in partner countries. The DCFTA Facility will provide access to finance and technical assistance to business to be able to make the most of the opportunities offered by the DCFTA. The EU side also committed to further increase the visibility of support measures (such as the DCFTA Facility) – for instance through the planned website assembling information on all cooperation projects under the SME Panel. The general session on economic integration was concluded by a presentation (DG ECFIN) on the main macroeconomic challenges in partner countries. This intervention provided the opportunity to benchmark with fellow Eastern partners and some ‘food for thought’ on how to concretely improve the economic situation in partner countries.

The afternoon session was dedicated to presentations and debates of new or proposed initiatives.

The EEAS/Commission in cooperation with representatives from Belarus and Lithuania presented the state of play of the planned Harmonising Digital Markets (HDM) Initiative – including the outcome of

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1 Despite the fact that Azerbaijan was not represented at this Platform 2 meeting, Azerbaijan has been actively contributing to various Panels and projects under the Platform over the last months.
past workshops and the dedicated study (undertaken under the Study Facility) aiming at identifying key areas for cooperation. The Chair explained that the existing work area on information society in the Work Programme may be upgraded to a new Panel by autumn next year, as part of the planned process of revision of the Platform 2 Work Programme. Participants will be further consulted on the Terms of Reference and the detailed Work Programme for a future Panel over the coming months. In this respect and in line with the priorities of the incoming Latvian presidency, a dedicated session on ICT and the harmonisation of digital markets is included in the preliminary programme of the EaP Business Forum in Riga, followed by an EaP Ministerial Meeting on these issues in June 2015.

ETF presented the new Skills Matching Initiative which has the objective to raise awareness on and improve skills anticipation and matching in Eastern partner countries through exchange of practice, peer-learning as well as the establishment of a dedicated network of skills matching experts. Further workshops and events under this initiative as well as continuous (online) exchange among experts will ensure the necessary traction of this initiative. The work of the initiative is based on the results of a study commissioned under the Study Facility. This new initiative demonstrates that the EU can deliver and follow-up on the needs of partner countries.

The EU’s capacity to respond to partner countries’ needs and economic trends was further demonstrated by the successful establishment of a Panel on Statistics which will contribute to improved policy making and sound economic governance. Given the critical needs of comparable, reliable data from partner countries, the idea of a Statistics Panel had been developed over the past few months following the initiative of Eurostat and based on the jointly agreed EaP Strategy for this field. Partner countries and Member States – which had been informed about this initiative and received the necessary documentation in advance of the Platform – were fully supportive of the establishment of a Statistics Panel. The first meeting of the Statistics Panel is envisaged for the first quarter of 2015 and will focus on business statistics.

The next Platform 2 meeting is scheduled for May 2015 (shortly before the Riga Summit) and will focus on environment and climate change.

Michaela Hauf
Coordinator of Platform 2