Lack of finance is not the only obstacle to the development of micro-enterprises and SMEs in the Mediterranean region. The development of the professional capacity of financial institutions as well as of the management skills of entrepreneurs is an essential condition for ensuring micro-enterprise and SME growth. Entrepreneurial and management capacity building encompasses all the means through which a start-up enterprise or an existing micro-enterprise or SME gathers and strengthens its knowledge and competencies, having an impact on the firm’s profitability.

International trade and investment contribute to reinforcing the competitiveness of Mediterranean micro-enterprises and SMEs, which need to reposition themselves in global markets and to find new strategic models of internationalisation. Among these, the development of the e-commerce model could allow local SMEs to access new markets and increase the efficiency of the supply chain. The Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise has established a common policy, encouraging the Mediterranean partner countries to take adequate measures to support enterprises.

Programme

14.00-15.30  Session 2: Promoting Entrepreneurship and Management Education
Moderator: Madlen Serban, European Training Foundation, EU Agency
Keynote Speaker: Alexandar Williams, Director, Strategy and Policy Division, Dubai SME, Dubai
Speakers:
• Hassan Azzazy, Professor, American University in Cairo, Egypt
• Maher Kallel, President, Tunisian Business Angels Association
• Soukeina Bouraoui, Executive Director, Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), Tunisia
• Wafa Makhlouf Sayadi, President, Young Entrepreneur Association (CJD), Tunisia
• Moncef Cheikh Rouhou, Member of the National Constituent Assembly, Tunisia

Questions & Answers

15.30-16.00  Coffee break
16.00-17.30  Session 3: Enhancing the International Competitiveness of Mediterranean Enterprises
Moderator: Senén Florensa i Palau, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Government of Catalonia; President of the Executive Committee, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)
Keynote Speaker: Marc Schublin, Director, European Investment Fund
Speakers:
• Lino Cardarelli, Senior Deputy Secretary General, Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean
• Tawfik Jelassi, Dean, ENPC School of International Management, France
• Karim Trad, Executive Director, Tuninvest, Tunisia
• Abdellatif Hamam, Chief Executive Officer, Tunisian Export Promotion Centre (CEPEX)
• Moulay Hafid Elalamy, Honorary President, Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc (CGEM)

Questions & Answers

17.30  Conclusions
• Antonio Tajani, Vice-President, European Commission
• Philippe de Fontaine Vive, Vice-President, European Investment Bank

Closing remarks
Hamadi Jebali, Head of the Tunisian Government

Cocktail

10th FEMIP Conference
Thursday 8 March 2012 – Ramada Plaza Tunis Hotel

Mediterranean SMEs: ready to break new ground
Welcome to the 10th FEMIP Conference
Mediterranean SMEs at the heart of growth and employment

It was with determination that the European Investment Bank, in association with the Tunisian Ministry for Investment and International Cooperation and Promos, organised this regional Conference in Tunis to support Mediterranean SMEs. The topic it deals with is intended to meet people’s expectations of stronger, more evenly distributed growth.

Small and medium-sized enterprises, together with micro-enterprises, are a crucial part of the economic fabric and the key to growth and job creation.

For ten years, FEMIP – the EIB’s vehicle for partnership with the Mediterranean countries – has made development of the private sector an economic and social priority, for only the private sector, in particular Mediterranean micro-enterprises and SMEs, can create the jobs needed by a young and growing workforce, which is increasingly educated and enterprising. These businesses must also expand to help improve international competitiveness.

To achieve this, a number of challenges must be addressed.

The first is to improve and diversify the financial services intended for them. Access to credit remains difficult and the non-bank financial sector is still at an embryonic stage. FEMIP is involved in operations to expand and modernise the local financial sectors. It provides support, in the form of loans or equity participations, to micro-finance bodies and investment or venture capital funds. It will therefore be particularly interesting to receive feedback at the Conference from the people concerned.

The second challenge is to promote an entrepreneurial spirit and managerial and technical training for the business community, including local financial institutions. The more the entrepreneurial spirit is shared and prepared, the greater the ability to innovate and the more sustainable businesses will be. This will of course influence their profitability and hence their attractiveness to investors and financiers.

FEMIP, via technical assistance operations, has set out to improve this key structural qualitative framework, as is shown by its cooperation with the Association Tunisienne des Investisseurs en Capital (ATIC).

The final challenge is to strengthen the international competitiveness of businesses. In order to be more efficient internationally, they will have to innovate and improve their methods of production and distribution. Thus electronic commerce (or e-commerce) provides a source of employment that will contribute to the emergence of a large Euro-Mediterranean consumer market.

I should like to thank all the speakers, whose actions and ideas will enable us to make progress in this direction. I hope that this Conference will provide an opportunity for initiating fruitful and lasting human contacts between the participants that will support growth and an entrepreneurial spirit in the Mediterranean partner countries.

I hope that you all enjoy your stay in Tunis.

Philippe de Fontaine Vive, EIB Vice-President

Questions & Answers

The Arabic spring revealed new perspectives for Mediterranean countries in the long-term challenge of ensuring the economic stability and development.

The Conference will focus on the challenges faced by Mediterranean micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in terms of access to finance, capacity building and competitiveness.

This Conference follows the FEMIP Conference on Research, Development and Innovation, held in Tunis in March 2010.

Access to diversified and competitive sources of financing remains limited in the Mediterranean region and constitutes a primary obstacle to the development of the private sector, in particular for micro-enterprises and SMEs. The non-bank financial sector plays a limited role in financing and the banks are not able to answer all the needs of local SMEs.

Micro-enterprises and SMEs in the region have less access to bank loans than micro-enterprises and SMEs in other emerging markets. Since the largest and more structured SMEs have relatively less difficulty in their access to financing in the countries with an efficient banking sector, the next levels of SMEs, micro-enterprises and start-ups are the ones which require most support.

The conference will be chaired by Stephen Cole, former BBC and current Al-Jazeera news anchor and moderator.

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The final challenge is to strengthen the international competitiveness of businesses. In order to be more efficient internationally, they will have to innovate and improve their methods of production and distribution. This requires new areas of action such as e-commerce which will enable us to make progress in this direction.

I hope that you all enjoy your stay in Tunis.

Philippe de Fontaine Vive, EIB Vice-President

Programme

8.00-9.00  Registration and welcome coffee

9.00-9.45  Words of welcome
  - Riadh Bettaieb, Minister of Investment and International Cooperation, Tunisia
  - Philippe de Fontaine Vive, Vice-President, European Investment Bank
  - Bruno Ermolli, President, Promos – Milan Chamber of Commerce

9.45-10.30  Opening Session
  - Juan López-Dóriga Pérez, Director, Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)
  - Daniel Feypel, Chief Inspector, Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Luxembourg
  - Mohamed Dhaoui, Director, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

10.30-11.00  Coffee break

11.00-12.30  Session 1: Improving Financial Services for Mediterranean Micro-Enterprises and SMEs
Moderator: Carlo Monticelli, Head of International Relations and Member of the EIB Board of Directors, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Italy
Keynote Speaker: Hanaa El Hilaly, Director General Planning and International Cooperation, Social Fund for Development, Egypt
Speakers:
  - Nasser Saidi, Chief Economist, Dubai International Financial Centre, United Arab Emirates
  - Khalil Ammar, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Bank of Financing Small & Medium-Sized Enterprises (BFPM), Tunisia
  - Robert Wagener, Chairman, Appui au Développement Autonome (ADA), Luxembourg
  - Essma Ben Hamida, Chief Executive Officer, ENDA Inter-Arabe, Tunisia
  - Khater Abi Habib, General Manager, Kafalat, Lebanon
  - Basel Hussein Rosdhy, Chief Investment Officer & General Manager, Nile Capital & IT Ventures, Egypt

Questions & Answers

12.30-14.00  Buffet lunch
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Questions & Answers

15.30 - 16.00
Coffee break

16.00 - 17.30
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17.30
Conclusions
- Antonio Tajani, Vice-President, European Commission
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