

UNECE Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration

Bureau Meeting

31 May 2011, Rome, Italy

Report on the Meeting

Present:

Bureau: Mr. M. Pietarinen, Finland, Chair of CECI
Mr. A. Popov, Belarus, Vice-Chair of CECI
Mr. C. Reilly, United States, Vice-Chair of CECI
Mr. S. Zecchini, Italy, Vice-Chair of CECI

Secretariat: Mr. R. Dobrinsky, Director, ECID
Mr. G. Hamilton, Chief of Section, ECID
Mr. J. Palacin, Officer-in-Charge of Section, ECID
Mr. I. Adjoubei, ECID

Teams of Specialists: Mr. A. Smith, Vice-Chair of TOS on PPPs

Item 1 - Adoption of the agenda

1. The Agenda was adopted.

Item 2 - Review of programme implementation and briefing on important recent developments that have a bearing on CECI work

2. The Secretariat briefed the Bureau on the Status of programme implementation and important recent developments bearing on CECI work. The Bureau noted that the Report on the fifth session and the programme of work for 2012 – 2013 had not been adopted by the Executive Committee and is expected to be on its agenda at its meeting on 24 June 2011. It also noted that the budget and resources for the programme implementation were secured.

3. The Vice-Chair of the TOS on PPPs presented the major accomplishments achieved by the TOS since its establishment. The major services delivered by the TOS to stakeholders include training of Government officials, consultations with the Governments, assessment of country readiness for PPPs and preparation of guide books. The UNECE PPP Initiative envisages the establishment of an International PPP Centre of Excellence in Geneva and a number of specialized PPP centres that may be established by member States and which will be associated with the Geneva Centre. It was noted that there is discrepancy between the national capacity-building demands in PPP area, which are growing, and the resources required to satisfy those demands. The Secretariat noted that to support the PPP endeavours, some ad hoc resource re-allocation could be envisaged in the short-term (e.g. to organize the PPP days in 2012).

4. The Secretariat presented the activities of the TOS on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies, the major focus of which was the preparation of Innovation Performance Reviews for a number of member States. In addition, the secretariat has prepared six publications and has

developed specialized software, which could be used for distant learning and for structuring the discussion at capacity-building events. A toolkit on innovation policies is also being prepared. The Bureau welcomed these pioneering activities by the secretariat and asked it to duly coordinate its work in the area of innovation policies with other relevant international organizations to avoid duplication.

5. The Bureau took note of the status of programme implementation, and in particular in the areas of PPPs and innovation policies.

6. Under this agenda item, the Secretariat also briefed the Bureau on the UNECE review of its activities and the procedures of priority setting for the future programme of work. The Bureau noted that developing the new programme of work should involve a broad dialogue with the stakeholders and target justifiable results. Two key questions here are whether as a result of this exercise the Committee's mandate would need to be changed and how the results of the new programme implementation would be measured.

Item 3 - Preliminary results of the CECI Biennial Evaluation 2010-2011

7. The Secretariat briefed the Bureau on the contents and preliminary results of the evaluation. Overall the replies assessed the programme implementation positively, although there were also some negative reactions. In the future, a new survey of the constituency might be needed to find out its views on the future priorities of work. Targeted questions in the survey should reflect the views of the ExCom and be more focused and user-friendly to have a better rate of response. It is important that the performance criteria be uniform across various committees.

Item 4 - Brainstorming on the CECI Programme of Work in 2012-2013, taking into account the current situation.

8. Under this agenda item the Secretariat briefed the Bureau on the resource constraints stemming from the proposed budgetary cuts. The Bureau reflected on the ways and means of streamlining the programme to gain in efficiency.

9. Members of the Bureau noted that the mandate of the Committee focused on cooperation and integration in the region and therefore the activities under CECI benefit not only the economies in transition but also developed market economies. The latter are interested in free trade, improved conditions for FDI, cheaper labour force in the transition countries etc. A number of EU countries have gone through a similar process and have benefited from enhanced international cooperation in areas focused on economic development. Developed market economies and economies in transition are both interested in a broader exchange of knowledge and experiences. Therefore CECI work could be regarded as a "win-win" option for all member States whereby all countries are beneficiaries of its work.

10. Inter alia, the programme of the Committee should cover issues of enhancing the efficiency of interaction between the private and public sectors, as well as a better governance of the latter. Among the priority areas, the members of the Bureau noted areas such as PPPs, trade in services, public governance of economic institutions for development, and innovation as a driver of competitiveness. Innovation in the public sector is also a prospective area of common interest to both countries with economies in transition and developed market economies. Future CECI work could be more oriented towards developing practical tools and toolkits so that to address the daily needs of policy practitioners. The capacity-building toolkits should be much focused providing specific types of assistance.

11. A major challenge for the Committee is to find areas of common interest to different groups of countries. It would be advisable to focus future work on newly emerging issues that would be of interest to more member States, both economies in transition and developed market economies.

12. It was pointed out that CECI and the secretariat should continue to deliver efficiently. The strong extra-budgetary donor support to CECI work, including in-kind support (such as pro bono participation in CECI events) is an indication that donors have been generally satisfied with CECI work so far and this needs to be outlined in the review process.

13. Members of the Bureau also pointed out that in reviewing priority areas of current work and identifying possible new and emerging issues (which will be part of the review process) CECI should also draw from UN and ECOSOC resolutions that have relevance for CECI work.

Item 5 - Preparations for the sixth session of CECI, 30 November – 2 December 2011 - Provisional agenda for the sixth session.

14. The Secretariat briefed the Bureau on the status of preparations for the sixth session of the Committee. It is envisaged that the Substantive discussion Segment of the session would be split into two parts. The first one will be devoted to the Innovation Performance Review of Kazakhstan and the second one to the UNECE PPP initiative. The documentation for the session would include the review reports on the work of each Team of Specialists and of the subprogramme as a whole.

Item 6 - Other business

15. The Bureau agreed in principle with the proposed dates for the seventh session of CECI to be tentatively held on 5 – 7 December 2012. It also agreed to meet again before the sixth session of the Committee. This one day meeting could be held either on 15 or 16 September, or on 22 or 23 September 2011. The exact date of the next Bureau meeting will be decided upon in consultations between the secretariat and the Bureau.