

TradeCom II Support to the ECOWAS

Title of Project: “Support for the implementation of the West Africa-EU EPA and the implementation of a Dispute Settlement Regional Framework”.

Location: The geographical area to be covered by the Project is the ECOWAS member States: (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo) + Mauritania.

Date: Scheduled implementation starting date – January 2017

Duration: 9 months

Web: www.tradecom-acpeu.org

Background

TradeCom II is a Programme financed by the UE at the request of the ACP Group. It is designed to facilitate the integration of ACP Countries in the global economy and value chains by improving, *inter alia*, their capacity:

- to formulate and implement suitable trade policies,
- to participate effectively in multilateral trade negotiations under the WTO and to implement the trade agreements to their benefit, and
- to strengthen their competitiveness.

TradeCom II Programme has translated the needs of ACP beneficiaries into a number of relevant and implementable projects.

Support to the ECOWAS

“**Support for the implementation of the West Africa-EU EPA and the implementation of a Dispute Settlement Regional Framework**” is a project designed by TradeCom II Programme in collaboration with the ECOWAS commission. It is designed to support the ECOWAS Commission to strengthen their capacity to implement the West Africa - EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

The EPA negotiations between West Africa and the European Union started in October 2003 and were concluded in February 2014. The Economic Partnership Agreement with West Africa covers goods and development cooperation. The EPA also included the possibility to hold further negotiations on sustainable development, services, investment and other trade-related issues in the future. The EPA will help West Africa to integrate better into the global trading system and will support investment and economic growth in the region.

The entry into force of the Agreement will ensure a harmonized trade regime between the European Union and the West African region, thereby supporting regional integration and the implementation of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff.

In July 2014, the ECOWAS Heads of State endorsed the EPA for signature. The signature process is currently ongoing at the national level. While all EU member states have completed the ratification process, only 13 out of 16 countries in ECOWAS have appended signature and undergoing the ratification process at national level. The major issue to be addressed is the ownership of the EPA by the main stakeholders, in particular the parliamentarians who have to ratify the agreements before it comes into force.

This project is very timely and will clearly support the West Africa region in the swift implementation of the EPA.

Project outputs

The Project contributes to:

- Strengthen the capacity of the ECOWAS / WAEMU experts to raise awareness to the community citizens and monitor the effective implementation of the West Africa - EU EPA;
- Strengthen the capacity of the ECOWAS parliamentarians to improve the ownership of the EPA in order to fast-track the ratification process;
- Establish a regional legal framework for settling trade disputes.

Intervention areas

The first purpose of this project will lead to a better understanding of the EPA and its ownership by all the stakeholders (parliamentarians, ECOWAS / WAEMU experts, private sector and the civil society). Under this purpose, the activities will promote:

- development of EPA training modules to be used by the ECOWAS/ WAEMU experts to sensitize the community citizens on the agreement;
- capacity building of ECOWAS/WAEMU experts, the civil society and the parliamentarians.

The second purpose is to establish a regional legal framework in dispute settlement for resolving trade disputes and to ensure that agreements are enforced and settled. Under this purpose, the activities will promote:

- development of a manual of procedures governing the settlement of disputes in West Africa;
- establishment of a legal framework for a proper implementation of trade agreements in the region;
- capacity building of legal officials of the ECOWAS commission, jurists and lawyers in order to create a pool of expertise in dispute settlement in the region.