



Summary Report
on the Consultative workshop on
A Monitoring Process for the implementation of EPAs

21 February 2007, Brussels
Sofitel Hotel

In the context of negotiating ACP-EU Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) there have been repeated calls for a monitoring mechanism. In 2005 EU Member States have committed themselves to closely monitor EPAs so they help achieve development objectives and to “establish and implement an improved monitoring mechanism against development objectives within the EPA process” (Council of the European Union, 2005).

Responding to these calls, the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) and the German Development Institution (DIE) have launched a joint activity that aims to elaborate options for monitoring the implementation and impacts of EPAs with key stakeholders from Europe and ACP countries. This activity is co-financed by the German Ministry for Development Cooperation. More information regarding the project is also available on the website: www.ecdpm.org/trade/epamonitoring.

As part of their consultation process, ECDPM-DIE organised a one-day consultative workshop with ambassadors, officials, trade and monitoring experts from the ACP and Europe in Brussels on the 21st of February 2007. The purpose of this workshop was to discuss objectives, key features, methodological and institutional options of an EPA monitoring mechanism.

Summary

The discussion focused on the importance of identifying a clear process for monitoring EPAs. Different potential purposes of the monitoring process were explored, including:

- compliance with EPA commitments,
- the capacity of the ACP to implement the agreements, to effectively take advantage of the new opportunities they offer and thus to undertake appropriate reforms and adopt side adjustment policies and measures, and
- their impact on development, poverty alleviation and regional integration.

The question is to design a monitoring mechanism that informs on these issues in a timely manner and guides further adjustments in a way as to ensure that EPAs and supporting measures are effectively delivering on their stated development objectives. In order to ensure the maximum use and usefulness of an EPA monitoring exercise, it appears essential that the ACP and the EU jointly agree on:

- the scope, process, focus, and format of the monitoring process;
- the constraints and capacity requirements of the ACP and to address those related to EPA monitoring;
- on finding a way to ensure that the results of monitoring can effectively influence subsequent policies to ensure the necessary pre-conditions are being met before tariff liberalization (i.e. how to change actions if EPAs are not delivering the desired impacts).

If a consensus can emerge on these key dimensions during the EPA negotiations, it will facilitate the monitoring process and enhance its usefulness; in particular, it will make the identification of trade and development EPA-related benchmarks and indicators and the gathering of appropriate data and information easier and more transparent. As a result, the EPA monitoring exercise will become less politically charged or biased and more result-oriented.

Indeed, monitoring becomes more effective and functional if it is anticipated and specified to the greatest extent possible in the agreement itself. This also provides for:

- a better institutionalisation of the monitoring process and;
- its results to inform decision making on the implementation of EPAs, accompanying measures and policies, development assistance and possible remedies;
- the outcome of the monitoring to feed into periodic reviews that would be provided for in the agreement.

Given the importance of this integration of the monitoring process in EPAs, the monitoring issue should be addressed during the EPA negotiations, rather than later on. In order to ensure an effective impact of monitoring on the implementation, the contracting parties, i.e. EU and ACP countries and regions, need to be actively involved at the governmental, parliamentary and stakeholder level. However, in order to ensure greater ownership, proposals for monitoring principles should come from the ACP and it should be ensured that the monitoring process does not become dependent on EU experts and expertise. Furthermore, it should be noted that monitoring can be envisaged both at the national and regional levels, keeping in mind that to be meaningful, regional monitoring should build on specific national considerations. Careful attention should be given to who should be involved in the monitoring process, what should be the approach and priority focus of monitoring (i.e. identifying the most pertinent dimensions for the country and region concerned), and how to carry out the monitoring (including in terms of methodology, but also capacity and financing of monitoring).

An agreement on monitoring, by clarifying and spelling out trade & development objectives, and the way to reach them, could also facilitate the EPA negotiations. The issue is currently being discussed in the EPA negotiations with the Caribbean, notably with the proposal to put in place a Joint EPA Council.

ECDPM and DIE are currently consulting stakeholders and working on a study to further explore and specify the issues of monitoring mechanisms for EPAs.

To share views on possible monitoring systems for EPAs and for more information on this joint ECDPM-DIE project, please contact:

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