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APE**

Flash news from EU Trade



EU and West African experts hold technical workshop on Services and Investment in Praia (Cape Verde).

EU and West African representatives met in Praia, Cape Verde, on 17-18 March 2010 to discuss services and investments in the framework of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), currently being negotiated. Around 60 participants from national governments in the West African region discussed with European Commission experts issues relating to trade in services and investment in the context of an EPA. The workshop aimed at providing technical insights and allowed exchanging ideas outside the formal negotiation context. It helped clarify, for instance, that services commitments in the EPA can be tailored to meet the needs of individual countries and do not have to be uniform throughout the region.

The EU shared its own experiences with participants as regards regional integration, regulation and liberalisation of services both within the EU and in the context of free trade agreements. A particularly important finding was that an agreement like the EPA would not deprive West African countries of their regulatory power and would not impede further regulatory regional integration in services or even harmonisation across the region despite commitments for liberalisation.

The host Cape Verde presented its national approach to services and investment in a country that has recently graduated from LDC status and acceded to the WTO. The presenter stressed the importance of this agreement for furthering competitiveness in services and for achieving better access to the European market as well as attracting investment.

Above all, the EU stressed that the extensive work already undergone in some countries to map out strategies for services and investment should continue and highlighted the risks of postponing the negotiations on services and investment for too long.

EU and WA negotiators meet this week in Brussels to continue talks on the comprehensive EPA. Only two West African countries, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, initialled bilateral "stepping stone" (or "interim") EPAs with the EU at the end of 2007. The interim EPA with Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire) was signed on 26 November 2008.

For more information:

<http://ec.europa.eu/trade/wider-agenda/development/economic-partnerships/negotiations/>

