



Economic Development and Integration Division Economic Governance and Planning Section

Expert Group Meeting on “Supporting the 2030 Agenda: Enforcing Competition Policy in the Arab Region”

Tuesday, 25 and Wednesday, 26 October 2016, ESCWA (Level B1, Conference Room 1), Beirut

Concept Outline

A year after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN Member States are undertaking the complex process of incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into their national development planning policies. Considering the challenges and opportunities of Arab countries, economic governance is a crucial area where improvements would lead to significant development gains. Applying effective regulatory frameworks, including competition policy, can help countries to achieve the SDGs. For example, by promoting foreign investment, removing barriers to entry for small and medium-sized enterprises, enhancing technological innovation and efficiency, protecting and empowering consumers, and promoting overall economic growth.

For these benefits to materialize, laws need to be well designed, implemented, and effectively enforced. To continue regional efforts to that effect, the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) is scheduled for 25 and 26 October 2016 in Beirut (draft agenda below). Within the regular work programme of the Economic Governance and Planning Section at UNESCWA/EDID, the EGM is part of a series of activities on the topic of “Measuring Economic Governance in the Context of National Development Planning”.

The content of this EGM builds on the outcomes of earlier ESCWA EGMs in June 2014 and December 2015. Based on ESCWA’s analysis of the status quo and strength of competition regimes in the region, the previous discussions considered the formulation and implementation of competition related legal frameworks, therefore this meeting focuses on enforcement and advocacy in the broader context of the 2030 Agenda.

The objectives of the meeting include:

- Explore how the effective application of the tools of competition policy in the Arab region - from legal frameworks to advocacy - can support the achievement of national and international development goals;
- Discuss key challenges associated with the enforcement of effective competition policy and regulation regimes in the Arab region and how they relate to achieving development gains;
- Share experiences, international and regional good practice examples, and lessons learned on practical aspects of competition policy enforcement.

For additional information or questions, please do not hesitate to contact:

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<https://www.unescwa.org/events/supporting-2030-agenda-enforcing-competition-policy-arab-region>

Agenda

Day 1 – Tuesday, 25 October 2015:

8:30 - 09:00 **Arrival and registration**

09:00 - 09:30 **Opening Session of the EGM**

Opening remarks from Mohamed El Hacene, Director, Economic Development and Integration Division, ESCWA on “Supporting the 2030 Agenda: Enforcing competition policy in the Arab region”

09:30 - 11:00 **Session 1: Competition towards development**

The introductory session of the EGM sets the stage by taking stock of the outcomes of previous EGMs on the topic, focusing on the links between competition policy and sustainable development in the Arab region in the framework of national development planning. With a view to exploring how the economic and social benefits of competition serve the achievement of the SDGs, case studies from the region and beyond will be drawn upon to discuss good practices, and deliberate on what elements need to be in place within a competition framework and enforcement strategy to ensure the achievement of these development goals.

Presentations

- Adib Nehme, Agenda 2030 Unit, ESCWA
- Sean Ennis, Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs, OECD
- Hassan Abu Aouf, Ministry of Trade, Sudan

11:00 - 11:30 **Coffee break**

11:30 - 13:00 **Session 2: Competition and Competitiveness**

Competition forms a central part of national competitiveness, thus the purpose of the session is to identify the links and associated challenges (e.g. enhanced competition can address some of the competitiveness challenges that arise in many Arab countries, for example, women’s low participation in the labour force can be improved by facilitating SMEs’ access to new sectors, and skill gaps and lack of innovation can be partially addressed by improving attractiveness to foreign investors). This session aims to address how enhanced competition and an improved regulatory enforcement can help Arab countries address some of their specific challenges to competitiveness.

Presentations

- Jad Kobeissi, Kobeissi & Frangie
- Tom Ovington, Frontier Economics

13:00 - 14:00 **Lunch**

- 14:00 - 15:30 **Session 3: Legal enforcement of competition policy**
Drawing on the insights of legal experts, this session invites participants to discuss options to ensure effective enforcement of competition policy. Highlighting the role of the legal community, and taking into account the unique challenges of developing and emerging economies, this session will identify modalities for reinforcing the cooperation between stakeholders to translate from the theory of the law into the practice of the business environment.
- Presentations*
- Dina Waked, Professor, Global Economic and Comparative Law, Sciences Po
 - Patrick L. Krauskopf, Attorney-at-law , Agon Partners
- 15:30 - 15:45 **Coffee Break**
- 15:45 - 17:00 **Session 4: Overcoming institutional challenges to enforcement in the Arab Region**
Taking into consideration the different stages of development and implementation of competition frameworks across the region, as well as the wide range of governance arrangements (including the role of competition agencies), there are several potential challenges associated with the effective enforcement of antitrust measures and competition legislation. This session considers the elements and tools of a successful enforcement strategy that balances administrative requirements with compliance. The discussion will explore enforcement challenges across different sectors to maximize sustainable development gains.
- Presentations*
- Alissa Amico, GOVERN
 - Mona El Garf, Egyptian Competition Authority

Day 2 – Wednesday, 26 October 2016:

- 09:30 - 11:00 **Session 5: Creating a competition culture - stakeholder advocacy and capacity-building**
Starting with the identification of key stakeholders in competition enforcement, the purpose of the session is to define practical tools for advocacy to raise awareness of the benefits of competition policy, ensure stakeholder buy-in, and promote a culture of competition that fosters a healthy competitive environment in Arab countries. The discussion may consider the capacity-building needs of different stakeholders with an eye to ensuring that they are able to contribute effectively to enforcing competition policy. Moving beyond the primary stakeholders, the session will also explore strategies for sensitizing the public/consumers to the importance of competition enforcement, and discuss how public engagement and consensus can benefit the enforcement process itself. Good practice examples from the region will serve as the basis for discussion.
- Presentations*
- Sean Ennis, Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs, OECD
 - Hetham Hany Abu Karky, Assistant Professor, Faculty Of Law, University Of Petra
 - Toufic Gaspard, Consumers Lebanon
 - Jamal Abu Farha, Ministry of National Economy, Palestine
- 11:00 - 11:30 **Coffee break**

11:30 - 13:00

Case Study Workshop: Creating an environment for effective competition policy in Lebanon

In an effort to modernize its legal framework on competition, the Lebanese government formulated in 2007 a “Draft Law on Competition”. However, the draft law has not yet been implemented. A renewed push for its completion and subsequent implementation is ongoing. Benefiting from the presence of regional and international competition policy experts, the workshop objective is to build the capacity of Lebanese stakeholders towards formulating an updated law, advising on an implementation strategy and supporting advocacy on the relevance of such a legal framework in Lebanon.

Taking into account recommendations from previous EGMs and the current one, the format and content of this workshop will present an opportunity for applying the tools and ideas discussed to the particular case of Lebanon. Through broad-based stakeholder involvement and drawing on a wide range of expertise and perspectives, the workshop aims to draw a concrete roadmap towards the implementation of the competition law.

Facilitator:

Dina Waked, Professor, Global Economic and Comparative Law, Sciences Po

13:00 - 14:00

Lunch

14:00 - 16:30

Case Study Workshop: Creating an environment for effective competition policy in Lebanon
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