

newsletter



A message from the President

Dear ETPOA Members,

It is my great pleasure to present the
third ETPOA newsletter to you.

First of all, I would like to welcome our **new permanent assistant at the ETPOA Secretariat, Georgios-Ilias Belidis**. He starts working for ETPOA on June 14, 2021. We thank Enterprise Greece for their generous financial contribution to ETPOA to make our first permanent staff a reality.

The Board is working hard on creating an **ETPOA sustainable future strategy**. The consultant Logos, part of the MCI-group, is assisting us to create a sustainable business model for the organisation. Yes, even an association needs a business model! During the Spring General Assembly, we will reveal more and engage the members in designing the future.

As communication is the core of everything we do, the Board has also requested the content strategy agency com&co to create a professional and effective **ETPOA communication strategy** to strengthen our impact and further our growth. Thank you to all members, potential members and friends at the Commission who participated in the interviews. Your ideas make the difference in how effective we are.

On March 31st, we held our spring **ETPOA CEO call** with ITC on the digitalisation of TPOs.

Our **ETPOA Committees** have been active as well. You can find more about their activities in the next pages.

On June 18, 2021, we will hold our third ETPOA meeting with the European Commission. Make sure to free your agenda to learn about all the new programmes in the new multi-annual financial framework the Commission is launching related to internationalisation of SMEs!

I look forward to seeing you, in person or virtually, during the **Spring General Assembly** on **June 17, 2021** and to take ETPOA to the next level.

Tonia Van de Vyver

President

Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland is the trade and innovation agency of the Irish Government responsible for the development and growth of Irish Enterprises. Our priority is export growth and our team of 850 work hand in hand with 5,000 Irish Enterprises - from early-stage entrepreneurs, to established business owners and Irish multinational companies – helping them to start, grow, innovate, and win export sales. Supports are focussed on the success factors for market entry and scale - innovation, operational competence, skills, and finance.

At the end of 2019 exports were at an all-time high, the result of a decade of year-on-year growth for Enterprise Ireland backed companies. Customers in more than 60 countries across five continents bought our clients products and services to the value of €25.6bn.



Anne Lanigan, Regional Director Eurozone, Enterprise Ireland, Member of the Board of Directors of ETPOA

CHALLENGES

Brexit and Covid-19 underline the increasing importance of diversification for Irish Enterprise. With 40 offices across the world our diversification strategy is global. However, the Eurozone is central to this strategy. Exports to the Eurozone equal just two thirds of exports to the UK. Almost 50 years after Ireland joined the European Economic Community (EEC), Irish Enterprise has still to take advantage of the single market and the single currency. Our ambition is for Irish Enterprise to view the Eurozone as an extension of our domestic market.

2021 FOCUS

As we navigate the impact of Covid-19 and the new trading relationship with the UK, Enterprise Ireland's focus is on building a resilient enterprise base in order to sustain jobs and exports. In particular we need to address the increasing drive to digitalisation and a low carbon economy. To deliver on this, and aligned to the Government's National Economic Plan and SME Growth Plan, Enterprise Ireland's 2021 strategic priorities are to:

- ★ Strengthen Irish enterprise to respond to market shocks and disruption
- ★ Drive transformational change and the pace of innovation transitioning to new business models, digitalisation and the low carbon economy
- ★ Scale and grow the export and start-up base



Netherlands Enterprise Agency

The Netherlands Enterprise Agency

The Netherlands Enterprise Agency is a government agency that supports entrepreneurs, NGOs, knowledge institutes and organisations both in the Netherlands and abroad. We facilitate entrepreneurship, improve collaborations, strengthen positions and help achieve national and international ambitions. We do this through funding, networking and knowledge. Currently, it has over 4500 employees spread over five locations throughout the Netherlands. We are part of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy. We carry out programmes for all the Dutch ministries, local and regional authorities and the European Union. We have 4 pillars: sustainability, agriculture, innovation and international entrepreneurship.

Within the international entrepreneurship pillar we support international trade, development cooperation, investments in the Netherlands and international innovation cooperation.



Annette Wijering, Managing Director, International Trade, Netherlands Enterprise Agency

We help entrepreneurs with every step towards and during doing business abroad. We therefore support the 4 leading steps in this business journey: provide reliable information, enable networks and contacts, promotion of interests and providing finance through subsidies and programs. We organise a.o. trade fairs, (digital) events and missions, Netherlands Branding and multi-annual market-thematic programs. We work closely with private partners, embassies and consulates and Netherlands Business Support Offices worldwide.

As one of the founding members of the European Trade Promotion Organisation (ETPO) we always supported cooperation with our public partners internationally. This is now even more necessary with the increasing global pressures and challenges. By working together, the trade promotion organisations can influence more in the field of international trade. We can also exchange information and learn from best practices. We therefore look forward to expanding our cooperation within ETPOA.

Q&A



with **Mario Nava**, Director General of DG REFORM, European Commission

What is the role of the European Commission in Supporting Reforms?

The European Commission has a dedicated Directorate General to support reforms in the EU Member States. The Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support

(DG REFORM) was created in January 2020, taking over the mandate previously carried out by the Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS). DG REFORM helps EU Member States in designing, developing and implementing reforms: to build better public administrations, bring about the digital and green transition, and make the most of the Recovery and Resilience Facility, cohesion funds and national funds.

Following requests from Member States, we mobilise the best knowledge and expertise from our internal experts, international organisations, consultancies and professionals from the public or private sector to help MS implement those reforms, as well as to exchange best practices amongst them and learn from each other. Our support is primarily provided through the new Technical Support Instrument (TSI) with a budget of EUR 864 million for 2021-2027. In the annual work programme for 2021, we have selected 226 technical support projects. These projects support reforms of Member States to strengthen the recovery and bring about the digital and green transitions.

What has been the contribution of DG REFORM to the EU's trade agenda?

In order to support a resilient recovery, Member States should tap the potential of trade and exports. The EU is one of the biggest actors on the world's trading scene, and also the world's largest single market with 440 million consumers.

DG REFORM has collaborated with national authorities and trade and Investment promotion agencies to support the EU Trade agenda. Some of these examples illustrate key issues for the promotion of exports:

- ★ How to leverage digitalisation
- ★ How to put in place tailored approaches for regions
- ★ How to provide tools that support SME's to export.

In Belgium, DG REFORM supported the Flanders Investment and Trade Agency (FIT), the regional trade and investment promotion agency of the Flemish Government, with the help of consultants, to deploy an enterprise architecture for artificial intelligence (AI). On the basis of this work, FIT will use AI to design innovative products and services in order to promote international investment and trade of Flanders-based enterprises.

In France, DG REFORM partners with the newly established National Agency for Territorial Cohesion. In cooperation with the OECD, the support focuses on providing better data for the regions and the Agency to prepare the next generation of strategic programmes, such as the regional internationalisation strategies focusing on exports and investment attraction.

In Greece, support is being provided for several years mainly focused on providing tools that facilitate trade and support SME's to export. Our support focused mainly on developing tools that help exporters in expanding their businesses abroad. This includes the design of the national digital platform on export-related information and the help desk at Enterprise Greece.

How can DG REFORM support EU MSs under the TSI 2022?

Member States are invited to submit their request for support by 31 October 2021 under the TSI call for 2022.

Following a selection procedure on the basis of the criteria provided for in the TSI Regulation, the Commission will adopt the relevant decision approving the requests for funding in the first quarter of 2022.

Under a TSI call, Member States could typically request technical support to implement the CSRs, Union law, other union priorities. As of 2021, technical support can be deployed to help Member States implement milestones and targets agreed in the final RRP.

As of 2021, technical support can be deployed to help Member States also to implement RRP, including reaching milestones and targets agreed in the final RRP.

A dedicated Q&A on the Technical Support Instrument is available in all EU languages here (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_21_746)

Where can we find additional information on the projects supported by DG REFORM in the different EU MSs?

In the next few days the European Commission will launch the new Reform Support website as part of the support to the Member States to deliver reforms, to propel Europe's recovery and resilience, and improve the quality of citizens' lives. The Reform Support website will be accessible through https://ec.europa.eu/info/examples-reform-support_en and will offer a range of online tools for Member States' Public Administrations, providers of technical support, and EU institutions, including an interactive map which will allow the user to easily find relevant information on projects in each Member State.



How FIT gives trade promotion a boost during COVID-19 through artificial intelligence (AI)

As a result of COVID-19, Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT) is even more resolutely playing the digitisation and virtual event cards, together with and for the business world. The foundation for these efforts is a well-considered digitisation strategy that has artificial intelligence (AI) as a cornerstone.

**Yves Ruland,
Project Manager Data
Architecture & Artificial
Intelligence,
Flanders Investment & Trade**

**Tine Van Valckenborgh,
Press-PR-Corporate Digital
Communications, Flanders
Investment & Trade**

FIT relied on the advice of EU experts for its AI strategy through European Commission's DG REFORM. The European Commission assists EU member states to transform their government operations. DG REFORM is putting the AI forward as the first 'project in the spotlights'.

An assessment showed FIT is 'AI-ready'. FIT has been transforming into a data-driven organisation since 2016. As an agency, we must continue to provide optimal support for international entrepreneurship in these trying times, thereby helping to safeguard our economy, business and prosperity. To this aim, AI is – as in many other domains – a true game changer.”

The power of data

Central to FIT's AI efforts are its customers: Flanders-based firms with export ambitions and foreign companies interested in investing in Flanders.

FIT generates a goldmine of data. The more than 100 Economic Representatives and Science & Technology Counselors worldwide are our eyes and ears when it comes to identifying market opportunities and gather all their knowledge in a unified CRM system. In Flanders, too, our employees work with data on a daily basis: import and export statistics, social media analytics, data from other government institutions, and so on. All this 'business intelligence' helps us strengthen the international competitiveness of companies in a tailored way. With an optimised data culture, digital marketing, knowledge sharing and AI, we are constantly modernising this customer interaction.

From pilot projects to concrete services

While there are still many opportunities to grasp in order to realise the full potential of AI, there are plenty of examples of how FIT is already making progress today.

Today, we have a coordinated, organisation-wide and long-term AI strategy, which we are rolling out step by step. Meanwhile, we already use AI on questions from Flanders-based companies about foreign markets. FIT processes more than 10,000 questions every year. COVID-19 has certainly not slowed down the flow. On the contrary: the number of questions has remained constant and has even exceeded our average figures several times compared to other years. The trends and data concerning these questions as well as our market advice are ideal for applying AI. How? By using algorithms to generate – almost in real time – suggestions for highly relevant answers. FIT can therefore offer even more export companies useful and tailored advice.

With a data specialist, we took a close look at our knowledge and business databases. The company developed an intelligent search robot that automatically uncovers patterns, connections and derived information within the many thousands of FIT documents and data related to export and foreign investments. In this way, our employees can make knowledge and expertise from within and outside FIT available to the business world even faster.

ITC and ETPOA members define the keys for digital acceleration

ETPOA and the International Trade Centre (ITC) held an information session for CEOs on 31st March 2021, to understand and apply three critical strategic perspectives of accelerated service delivery digitalisation



Miyoba Lubemba, Senior advisor, Trade Support Services, ITC

Client Centricity is the Compass

TPOs exist to serve their client companies. A customer-centric organisational culture ensures that every service the TPO delivers responds to the specific needs of end users, offering both a positive client experience and tangible business results. TPOs can take advantage of artificial intelligence to personalise the client engagement process while automatically collecting data about clients and their specific needs. Applying machine learning also helps to create personas and typology, to anticipate needs and behaviours of different client groups. Standard service inquiries can then be automated for efficiency, reach and scale, while more complex requests can be graduated to specialised support by individual client managers and advisers within the TPO.

“

Customer centricity remains a core driver of enterprise digital transformations, and this golden ticket is closely linked to the real gold in today's value chains - a robust data strategy”

David Rogers, 2021
(<http://bit.ly/digitalacceleration>)

Critical Role of Data

Data-driven decision making is core to successful TPO service digitalisation. The organisation must therefore have comprehensive smart data about its clients, ideally within a fully integrated Client Relationship Management (CRM) system. This way, the TPO can make use of analytics to identify trends and anticipate client needs and preferences. Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) applications are often ideal to manage workflow, data storage and retrieval while tapping into Big Data technology is useful for managing and deploying deeper analysis to anticipate changes in the business environment and their implications for clients. Cloud-based solutions provide opportunities to expand both analytical and storage capacities. By combining all these elements, an organisation can harness data to drive client-focused support efforts. Data silos can be a major barrier to optimisation for decision-making. TPOs should therefore ensure that their databases across teams, units and branches are fully interoperable. TPOs should integrate their business applications, and ensure solid mechanisms for data quality, proper governance, privacy and cybersecurity. GDPR compliance is not an option.

Streamlined processes for efficiency and excellence

TPOs are encouraged to harness technology to streamline workflows for process efficiency. By mapping these flows, monitoring data on both back and front office efficiencies as well as direct staff and client feedback, the organisation can identify process weaknesses and gather intelligence about what works well under which parameters. Digitalisation means TPOs can efficiently automate some processes with integrated platforms providing greater flexibility and options for unique service delivery. Application Programming Interfaces that allow integration of different solutions is a cost-effective approach as an alternative to implementing new platforms.

Building synergies with the European Commission: the APC contribution to the Market Entry Handbooks



Tania Gesto Casás, Policy Manager, AHDB, APC Vice-Chair for Brexit Coordination & Interaction with ETPOA

The Coronavirus pandemic has largely spanned the first year of existence of ETPOA's Agrifood Promotion Committee (APC), which started operations in January 2020. During these difficult times, the main focus of the APC activities has been on supporting our members so they can better cope with the ongoing disruption in key areas of activity such as participation in trade fairs.

Yet, we have not lost sight of our longer-term priorities. One of the main objectives of the APC is to establish a direct and constructive engagement with the European Commission. Our goal is to be acknowledged as the voice of the sector and to ensure a stable flow of communication

in key issues for our members. One of our main activities in this area has been the collaboration established to contribute to the ongoing work on "The Food and Beverage Market Entry Handbooks". These guides, published regularly by the European Commission, aim to assist EU agri-food exporters on entering new markets by providing relevant information such as market analysis and market access procedures.

Work is currently ongoing on a new series of handbooks that will cover key markets such as Australia, Indonesia, Mexico, Peru, Russia and Turkey. The APC members have a wealth of expertise in these markets and this knowledge has been put at the disposal of the authors of the handbooks to support their documentation process. In addition, following the conversations between ETPOA and the Commission, the new set of Market Entry Handbooks will include a detailed contact list of Trade Promotion Organisations and Agrifood Promotion Organisation present in those markets. This is a significant achievement in terms of visibility of our members, but also an important step forward to build synergies in support of European agrifood exporters.

While everyone's attention – and priorities – continues to be focused on dealing with the consequences of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, the APC remains committed to its core objectives of supporting the internationalisation of European SMEs in the agrifood sector. The recent collaboration on Market Entry Handbooks is an important first step towards that objective. The first, hopefully, of many to come.

List of milestone events ETPOA First semester 2021

January

- ★ Meeting with EU-Japan Centre on project cooperation possibility between ETPOA and EU
- ★ Letter to Gulfood
- ★ Participating in the distribution of European Court of Auditors surveys
- ★ European Union's Promotion Policy – Info day

February

- ★ WEBINAR: GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2.0 How to apply and benefit from the recent legal updates?
- ★ Meeting with the European Commission
- ★ Webinar: EU Trade Policy
- ★ Basque Trade and Invest opportunity for international (BEINT)
- ★ Digital Event: Empowering resilience, growth and development across E.U. Regions, by Business France, Enterprise Greece, supported by ETPOA
- ★ First two consortia of ETPOA members awarded contract for EU Public Procurement Call

March

- ★ Meeting IFOAM OE
- ★ Informal Brexit talks between Business France and Flanders Investment & Trade
- ★ Meeting with the European Court of Auditors on their survey of the European instruments related to internationalisation of SMEs
- ★ Event/Webinar organised by Enterprise Ireland and FIT about maximising Trade Flows in a new European Union
- ★ ETPOA CEO Call: The lockdown leap: Digitisation of TPOs and their service offering

April

- ★ ETPOA participation in EABF Green Talk on Green Energy in Africa - Stakeholder meeting
- ★ Participation in European Association Summit

May

- ★ Webinar Green talk: How TPOs can assist their SMEs in being informed of, and using the EU funds dedicated to sustainable development?

June

- ★ ETPOA organised meeting with the European Commission

EU Institutional Dialogue Committee

EUIDC achievements and next steps

The ETPOA EU Institutional Dialogue Committee (EUIDC) underwent a significant development since the 2020 fall General Assembly, with two additional Deputy Chairs being added to the Committee. H el ene Hovasse, from Business France, in charge of relations with the Commission, and Mar a Palanca Reh from ICEX, in charge of relation with the Council, joined Maria Jo o Gomes, from AICEP, who became Deputy Chair in charge of relations with the European Parliament.

The past months, notwithstanding the COVID-19 crisis, have been fruitful for EUIDC in terms of building connections and developing relations with long-standing and new officers of the Commission. EUIDC shared relevant information on new EU policies, EU programmes and EU public consultations.

Thanks to the support of DG GROW, ETPOA gained significant recognition inside the Commission and the status of official stakeholder. A substantial outreach initiative towards the European Parliament and the Council is being implemented, bringing additional visibility of ETPOA and its members in these institutions through information sessions organised from June 2021 onwards.

The ETPOA position prepared for the Member States representatives in the Council Working Group on the COSME Work Programme resulted in a greater balance in the adherence to the principle of subsidiarity and additionality and the role of the national TPOs.

The recovery phase is starting and the focus on export promotion and SMEs' internationalisation is stronger than ever. The result will be a significant flow of EU financing towards our fields of action, at local, national and EU levels. The EUIDC will follow the developments and inform members about them.



Andrea Maccanico,
Project Manager,
ITA, EUIDC Chair

News from the TPOCC



Philippe Yvergniaux,
Director of International Cooperation,
Business France,
Vice-President of ETPOA
and TPOCC Chair

Sustainable development is one of the main priorities of the European Commission, with **60%** of the total European Commission funding to Member States related to sustainable development issues. Therefore, in the light of this priority, TPOCC has decided to guide TPOs in the use of EU funds related to sustainable development by organising a webinar on the subject: on 27 May, the first ETPOA **Green talk** was held, entitled: “**How TPOs can assist their SMEs in being informed of, and using the EU funds dedicated to sustainable development?**”.

The objectives of this webinar were, first, to obtain **an understanding of the European Commission’s policy framework**. To this end, Thomas Pellerin Carlin, Director of the Jacques Delors Energy Centre, presented the **main European Green Deal guidelines**.

In a second step, this webinar was an opportunity to discover the **most relevant EU funds for concrete support to SMEs, start-ups and scale-ups**. Penelope Nabet, Policy Officer at the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), presented their relevant tools. EIT aims to increase Europe’s competitiveness, sustainable economic growth and job creation by strengthening cooperation between leading companies, educational institutions and research organisations.

In addition, the webinar offered a special focus on the **growth sector of green hydrogen**. Firstly, Francois Paquet, Impact Director at The Renewable Hydrogen Coalition, gave a presentation on the role of **renewable hydrogen in achieving climate neutrality**. This focus on hydrogen was completed by a testimony from Emmanuel Galland, Trade advisor on Energy Transition at Business France, on concrete events and actions done by his TPO to **support French companies** involved in green hydrogen. For instance, participation in the Hannover Trade Fair and cooperation with Spanish and Italian TPOs in organising B2B meetings are some of the good practices he shared.

Finally, Jose Manuel Capitan Romero, Program Management Officer at DG INTPA (European Commission) provided us with **an outside perspective on the green deal**, relying on its external dimension as well as the role of the private sector (in particular by presenting the functioning of the European Fund for Sustainable Development).

More than **50 participants** followed this first green talk. This shows that our TPOs are truly interested in these issues. For this reason, TPOCC would like to make this event the starting point for the creation of a sub-working group on sustainable development issues.

With the planned creation of another sub-group, this time on **digital issues**, TPOCC will be able to cover the two main priorities of the European Union for the coming period, namely **the digital and ecological transitions**.

ETPOA Board of Directors

President: Tonia Van de Vyver (Flanders Investment & Trade)

Vice-President: Philippe Yvergniaux (Business France)

Board Member: Anton Buttigieg (Trade Malta)

Board Member: Vasso Kyrkou (Enterprise Greece)

Board Member: Anne Lanigan (Enterprise Ireland)

Head of Secretariat: Christos Skouras (Enterprise Greece)



8/F, Zenith building, Boulevard du Roi Albert II 37, B-1030
Brussels, Belgium

hos@etpoa.eu, www.etpoa.eu