

EU-Turkey Chambers Forum: a practical step forward in Turkish preparation for EU accession

One year ago, a EUROCHAMBRES/TOBB survey showed that Turkish businesses are not yet ready for EU accession mainly because of a lack of information on EU legislation. Today, part of this information gap has been filled thanks to the ETCF project (EU-Turkey Chambers Forum).

80 Chambers from all over Turkey and 24 Chambers from the European Union have been involved in one or several ETCF activities since 2007. This has concretely improved expertise on EU-related issues within the Turkish Chamber network, and enhanced the dialogue between EU and Turkish business communities.

Two set of activities were carried out:

- **Awareness-raising on EU affairs** – An EU Training Programme, involving speakers recognised for their outstanding EU expertise, provided participants with specific training on the needs and expectations of Turkish businesses. As a result, a pool of 47 Turkish experts on EU Affairs was established to advise Turkish companies on relevant EU legislation. In addition, six manuals have been published and will be widely distributed, covering various EU topics of relevance to Turkish companies.
- **Capacity-building for Turkish Chambers** – 29 Turkish Chamber executives have enhanced their management skills in the context of EUROCHAMBRES Academies. 11 Turkish Chambers have been trained and reviewed on the new system of quality standards for Chamber accreditation and, last but not least, 22 partnership projects between European and Turkish Chambers have been successfully implemented.

Commenting on these results during ETCF's closing conference, Georgios Kassimatis, Deputy President of EUROCHAMBRES, said: *"Enlargement Commission Olli Rehn used to stress that 'the accession process with Turkey is a long-standing project, where the journey is as important as the final destination'. If the accession negotiations are in the hands of political leaders, our role as business leaders in this journey is essential. We have to make sure that, independently from the accession process, the business community is prepared. The ETCF project has actively contributed in this respect."*

"Thanks to ETCF Turkish companies now have a better understanding of the impact of EU legislation on their daily business and how best to adapt their practices in preparation for EU accession," added M. Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu, TOBB President. *"It is essential that the Turkish business community puts all its weight behind the necessary reforms, and thus contribute to making the European project of Turkey a success story."*

Following the success of the first phase, a second phase of the EU-Turkey Chambers Forum is under preparation and should be launched in the second half of 2010.

About ETCF

The aim of the EU-Turkey Chambers Forum (ETCF) project, was to strengthen the mutual knowledge, dialogue and long-term co-operation between the Turkish Chambers and their counterparts in the EU, thus promoting the integration of EU and Turkish business communities. ETCF was implemented since November 2007 by EUROCHAMBRES in cooperation with TOBB,. The project was fully financed by the European Commission. More information on www.etcf.org.tr.

**The final results of the ETCF project can be downloaded from
www.eurochambres.eu/content/default.asp?PageID=1&DocID=2077**

EUROCHAMBRES is the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry. EUROCHAMBRES represents over 19 million member enterprises in Europe through 45 national associations of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and a European network of 2000 regional and local Chambers.

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TOBB is the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey. TOBB represents a network of over 1.3 million enterprises, 365 local Chambers and Commodity Exchanges and 56 sectoral assemblies.

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