

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The fourth regular meeting of the CEFTA Working Group on Trade in Services was held in Tirana on 30 March 2012, under the Chairmanship of Albania. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the current market openness of each individual Party, explore the potential for the negotiations and to agree on the two-year action plan.

MAIN POINTS OF THE FOURTH MEETING

Assessment of current market openness of CEFTA Parties. The Parties undertook the commitment from the last meeting to provide the list of restrictive measures in force. All the Parties submitted the individual lists and the Secretariat created a Consolidated List on Restrictive Measures, which so far has undergone two revisions. The Parties agreed that some modifications to the List should be done in order to have a more transparent and informative overview of the restrictive measures. The Parties agreed to provide the Secretariat with the updated and revised inputs on the Consolidated List by June 2012.

Exploring the Potential for Opening up the Negotiations on Liberalisation of Trade in Services. Building on what was discussed and agreed at the third meeting, the OECD and the World Bank developed together a project on providing assistance to the potential negotiations in the liberalisation of trade in services.

STRI and Regulatory Database on Services. One of the project outcomes will be the creation of a regulatory database, which will comprise at least professional services (including legal, accounting, architecture and engineering). Furthermore, the Parties were shown the methodology of the Services Trade Restrictive Index and how it is developed and applied in this analytical exercise. The Joint Work Plan of the World Bank and the OECD for professional services was also presented. It spans over three major phases including the collection of data in the period of April-August, verification of data in August-October and analysis from September onwards. The analysis will provide a comparison of the regulatory framework of the CEFTA Parties, highlighting of the main barriers in specific services, impact analysis to indicate the gains from liberalisation and a comparison of the regulatory framework and the STRIs of the CEFTA Parties with those of the OECD and EU countries.

Implementing the Services Knowledge Platform. The World Bank also presented their part of the project, its objectives and expected outcomes that will be conducted together with the OECD. The wider circle of stakeholders will be included in the exercise including national and regional professional associations, the private sector, international organisations, universities, think tanks, etc. The major outcome will be to identify ways in which regional cooperation can help Parties to deal with constraints in professional services. The status of the project preparation, next steps, funding and the full

implementation of activities were discussed. The CEFTA Secretariat will serve as a focal point for the project team, which will, apart from the World Bank, also include external consultants. The results of both projects will be available for discussion at the next Working Group meeting (mid October) when it is expected that the Parties will make recommendations to the Joint Committee on the potential opening of the negotiations in sectors of mutual interest.

Two Year Action Plan. The Parties discussed the activities of the Action Plan in line with the conclusions of the meeting. Having in mind that the OECD-World Bank joint project will deal with the analysis of current openness in professional services, the Parties agreed to postpone making decisions on opening the negotiations until the project results are presented at the next Working Group meeting in mid October. The Parties agreed to redefine the Action Plan which was later on adopted.
