



REPORT

1st Round of the EU-Tunisia DCFTA negotiations (Tunis, 19-22 October 2015)

Date: 29/10/2015

Trade

General

The EU and Tunisian negotiators met last week in Tunis for a first round of negotiations. Discussions remained preliminary but were also open and constructive based on the already existing good cooperation on many of the areas to be covered by the future DCFTA.

All chapters were discussed in plenary session format in presence of an important number of Tunisian experts. The EU experts presented its negotiating approach. Tunisian negotiators were well prepared and had numerous questions on the different issues, which were addressed by EU negotiators within the time constraints of the round.

The Parties agreed that work at expert level should continue in a number of areas before the next negotiating round (the date still to be determined).

A joint meeting with representatives of the Tunisian civil society was held at the end of the round.

Details

Services and investment protection

Negotiations on services will build on the work which took place during 2008 - 2010. Impact assessments will be particularly important in this area as well as evaluation of gaps with the EU acquis on potential areas for regulatory approximation. Tunisia showed a particular interest in e-commerce. Tunisia reiterated its interest on visas and mutual recognition of qualifications.

IPR

On IPR-GIs, Tunisian negotiators were well prepared and confirmed Tunisian interest in this area, including on non-agricultural GIs. Tunisian IP legislation is already quite developed.

Competition

Regarding competition, the most challenging area for discussions will be State aids, given the current regulatory and institutional Tunisian framework in this area.

Customs and Trade Facilitation

No particular issues were identified in the discussions on customs and trade facilitation. Existing bilateral cooperation in this field is already well advanced.

Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)

During the discussions on the TBT chapter, the need to assess the state of play on ACAA preparations in detail was identified, both as regards regulatory and institutional aspects.

Public procurement

Discussions showed a large consensus on the procedural aspects. Negotiations will need to address the existing Tunisian national preference and limitations for EU operators to access Tunisian procurement markets.

Sustainable Development

The initial reaction of the Tunisian side on the trade and sustainable development chapter was quite positive, both in terms of substance and implementation mechanisms. The Tunisian side is likely to ask for the inclusion of Tunisian specific priorities in this area.

Trade-related energy issues

In view of the on-going reform process in the energy field, Tunisia expressed doubts on the approach presented by the EU and referred to already existing bilateral cooperation in this area. Therefore, more expert discussions will be needed,.

Agriculture/PAPs/fisheries and sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS)

On agriculture/PAPs/fisheries and sanitary and phytosanitary measures, the Tunisian side was very well prepared and brought forwards concrete proposals on a number of the issues to be covered by the future negotiations. The Tunisian side stressed the need to take a "holistic" approach in this area, bringing together market access, quality issues, sanitary and phytosanitary matters. Technical discussions on these issues will continue in the near future.

Transparency

The EU provided an explanation on different articles of the transparency chapter. No particular difficulties or issues were identified at this stage.

Trade defence

Only preliminary discussions took place on trade defence. No particular difficulties or issues were identified at this stage.