Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

IFD Inter-sessional Meeting on Needs Assessments

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Joel K Richards

Counsellor, Permanent Delegation of the OECS

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Background

OECS Needs Assessment Project launched in December 2022 with over 100 stakeholders from six Member States.

Funded provided through the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).

In May 2023, the Needs Assessment process started for with Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica and Grenada.

In November 2023, the process started for Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Methodology



The OECS commissioned an investment facilitation expert, to support the OECS in conducting the IF Needs Assessment.



We started with the requesting that OECS Member States designate a focal point for the Self Assessment process to act as the main interlocutor between the Expert and national stakeholders on the one hand and to build the institutional memory of the self assessment process at the national level.

Methodology cont’d



We liaised closely with the focal point, outlining our methodology and the steps involved, discussed the substantive issues at play and requested from the focal point to identify a core group of officials from key agencies.



A core group consisting of 5-7 officials was formed in each OECS country conducting the Needs Assessment. Members of the core group are officials from the investment authority (investment promotion agency), legal affairs, ministries of finance, trade, digital government (ICT), business registrar and other agencies in addition to the focal point.

Methodology cont’d

- We conducted on average three online information sessions with members of the core group in each OECS country going through the entire Investment Facilitation Agreement to raise awareness among members of the core group about the structure, scope and content of the Agreement.

Methodology cont'd

- The Expert held in country consultations over 5 days in each of the three OECS countries under review as follows below using the templates of the Self Assessment Guide developed by the WTO secretariat:
  - 3 days long meetings with the core group to discuss compliance with the relevant provisions of the Agreement on Investment Facilitation for Development; and
  - Over 2 days held several bilateral meetings with representatives of (i) issue- specific agencies (agencies dealing with anti corruption and money laundering, integrity commission, etc), (ii) development or regional agencies supporting digitization or transparency, (iii), private sector agencies such as chambers of commerce, (iv) local and foreign investors and (v) investment lawyers.

Methodology cont’d

- Validation Meetings were held with each Member State to review the results of the initial Needs Assessment.
- This is important to safeguard the accuracy of the information.
- Needs Assessment Reports were also peer reviewed by the International Trade Centre (ITC) and Karl Sauvant (Academic and Investment Facilitation Expert).

Insights and Lessons Learnt

- **Ownership and institutional memory**:
  - Several agencies are engaged in the facilitation of investment. It is, therefore, important to engage with all relevant agencies and stakeholders to take stock of the current level of compliance with the IFD Agreement while understanding what needs to be done to reach compliance.
  - The notion of a focal point supported by a small core group of officials from highly relevant agencies to the Agreement is a good starting point for developing institutional memory and building ownership.
  - The level of commitment and competency of the focal point determine the quality of the consultations. In cases where the focal point was prepared and committed, the in-country consultations achieved excellent results.

Insights and Lessons Learnt cont'd

- **<u>Consultations are important:</u>**
  - Consultations are very important to take stock of where things stand but more importantly to understand the barriers to implementation and the reform priorities.

Insights and Lessons Learnt cont'd

- **Targeted engagement of stakeholders in consultations is key**:
  - Stakeholders in small administrations like the OECS (not dissimilar to administrations in many developing and least developed countries) are overstretched. Engaging these stakeholders has to be targeted and the consultations need to be tailored to the stakeholders present. Not all stakeholders need to be present at all times in the consultations.
  - Dissecting the themes of the consultations and tailoring the consultations to the stakeholders present reduces burdening small administrations with lengthy consultations.

Preliminary Insights

- Some of what we have seen so far (snapshot of Grenada) indicates that TACB resources will be especially required for the following (likely candidates for Category C):
  - short term expertise;
  - training of staff;
  - upgrading of information management and publication practices;
  - information technology infrastructure upgrade and relevant procurement support;
  - support for legal drafting;
  - TA and financial assistance to complete digitization of competent authorities; and
  - establishment of single information portal.

Preliminary Insights cont'd

- We anticipate that areas such as fees for access to information are already fully compliant with the IFD Agreement and can be designated in category A.
- Similarly, all of Article 13 – Reasonable, Objective and Impartial Administration of Measures, will likely go into Category A since there appears to be full compliance.
- Furthermore, areas such as the publication of laws and regulations addressing FDI are already published and also available online.
- Areas such as Authorization Fees will likely end up in Category B.

Next Steps

- Final reports due by end of May 2024.
- Categorize commitments into Categories A, B and C.
- Submit information to WTO.