



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

From: Commission
To: Delegations
Subject: Missions for Growth
- Information from the Commission

Delegations will find attached a note from the Commission on the above-mentioned topic with a view to AOB item 9 e) at the Competitiveness Council on 19 February 2013.

Written Information on Missions for Growth

Introduction

The Commission wants to ensure that European industry and enterprises come out of the current economic crisis stronger and more competitive than before.

In that sense, helping EU companies, in particular SMEs develop their activities abroad and in parallel reinforcing industrial relations business policies with third countries is vital. For this reason, Vice President Tajani has been organising "Missions for Growth" in third countries, with a view to better communicate and promote Europe's policies for industry and enterprises.

These missions involve political and business meetings tackling areas of mutual interest in the fields of enterprise and industry policies. As a result of these meetings, high-level contacts can be fostered between the Commission, the European External Action Service, European entrepreneurs, and political authorities of third countries.

European companies are informed of these missions through the Commission's website, the European Enterprise Network (EEN), through industrial federations, Member States Embassies and by EU delegations and representations. The participation is open to all interested businesses bearing their own costs (travel and accommodation expenses).

Missions for Growth are usually followed by missions led by the EU SME Envoy (Director General of DG Enterprise and Industry, Mr Calleja) in Missions concentrating specifically on SMEs.

Objectives

- To strengthen cooperation between EU and other countries and regions of the world by combining political meetings with a business dimension (door-opening/prepare steps to match-finding) on enterprise and industry policy issues.
- To enhance cooperation in areas of mutual interest of enterprise & industry policy (through signature of non-binding agreements in various sectors such as industrial cooperation, innovation, standardisation, clusters, entrepreneurship, raw materials, SMEs, space, tourism).
- To better understand the business climate in other countries and regions of the world, promote business/investments there – seen through the lenses of European business, EU officials get a better understanding of the business environment in other countries.
- To promote the internationalisation of European companies, in particular SMEs.
- To show and promote Europe as an investment opportunity for business: the external marketing of Europe's internal market.

How is it done?

Mission destinations are planned in co-operation with European business federations (EuroChambres, Business Europe, UEAPME) and the diplomatic channels of the countries concerned. A date and location in the country is agreed, often linking up to existing events (business fairs, important conferences, etc). Sometimes a focus on specific industrial sectors is agreed.

The European business federations mobilise European companies through their membership. The European Commission informs the Embassies of the Member States in the target country, mentioning that the nomination of companies from their countries to join the Mission is possible.

The information is also published on the Commission's website and disseminated through the Enterprise Europe Network and other business associations.

Interested companies can individually participate if they wish. In the future some of the work on registration of companies will be automated via a web-based ICT tool.

The European Commission tries to ensure a relevant and balanced EU business delegation. In particular:

- Appropriate representation of the European business associations.
- Good geographical spread in terms of which Member States are represented on the EU business delegation – it is however not ensured that at every Mission all 27 Member States are represented.
- A balance between SMEs and larger companies.
- The balance between newcomers on the market (companies that wish to explore the market for a first time) and existing investors who may wish to expand (the role of these companies is particularly worthwhile in the bilateral meetings with third country political representatives, since such companies can inform the policy makers about their experiences with the local business climate in this third country).

Companies pay their own costs (travel and accommodation) and make their own travel arrangements. The European Commission's role is often to secure group bookings in hotels and to co-ordinate local transport facilities. Third countries can offer items as B2B networking lunches or business cocktails.

Difference between "Missions for Growth" and national economic missions

"Missions for Growth" complement national economic missions and contribute to ensuring the external marketing of Europe internal market. They allow decision makers and companies in third countries to better understand "Europe" as a business destination.

While the role of national authorities remains essential in facilitating companies exporting abroad, "Missions for Growth" offer also the advantage of allowing a Europe-wide representation of industrial sectors within one single mission.

They provide an opportunity to explain key European programmes and schemes (e.g. security, Galileo, European technical regulations and industrial standards, our approach to corporate responsibility, as well as regulatory *acquis* as the Late Payment Directive, Europe's SME definition, etc).

Ultimately these Missions contribute to the promotion of the image of Europe abroad, as a place of solid business opportunities.

What has been accomplished?

- Initial period of December 2011 – January 2013: eight separate Missions for Growth involving eleven different countries.
- More than 300 companies (including some business federations) from 17 EU Member States participated.
- Countries visited: United States of America, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Peru, Uruguay, Colombia, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt.
- In total 56 political agreements signed in the field of Enterprise and Industry.

Next steps

In 2013, visits to Russia (June), China (July) and India or Vietnam (November, to be combined with a Mission of HRVP Lady Ashton to Burma/Myanmar) are planned. Missions for growth to African countries are also under consideration. Follow up visits by the Director General of DG Enterprise and SME Envoy, Mr Calleja to Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Morocco and Tunisia are under preparation.

Plans are under development for a dedicated website, a web based ICT tool to improve company registration and the collection of “success stories” from the companies who have taken part and can demonstrate practical benefit from the Missions (evidence base). The website and registration tool is expected to be operational before the “big” Missions for Growth to Russia, China and India (i.e. March 2013). The intention is that the website also shows all bilateral agreements, lists of all companies per Mission, important speeches and press statements, and other useful information.

Looking ahead, it will be important to ensure closer co-operation and co-ordination with the work of Member States. In this perspective, regular information exchange should be accentuated.