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FORTNIGHTLY E- BULLETIN FOR GLOBAL UPDATE
ON SME NEWS, EVENTS, & PROGRAMS

ISSUE: 16-30 April 2023

Belgium

Improving SME access to public procurement

The Council of Ministers has approved a draft law aimed at promoting access for small and medium-sized enterprises to public procurement procedures.

The preliminary draft modifies the law on public procurement with a view to stimulating the participation of SMEs in these procedures, given their importance in the Belgian economy.

The preliminary draft advocates the payment of advances: the contracting authorities have the right to authorise the payment of advances, the amount of which cannot exceed 20% of the initial amount of the contract and a ceiling of 225,000 euros. An advance of an amount equivalent to at least 5% must be paid when the contracting authority is an administrative authority and the successful tenderer is an SME (<250 people). This amount is increased to 10 or 20% for small businesses (<50 people) and micro businesses (<10 people) respectively.

In addition, the adjudicators are required, in certain procedures, to grant a tender indemnity to the tenderers, when the latter must make certain intellectual or creative efforts in order to be able to submit a tender.

In addition, a series of modifications are made in order to oblige, in certain cases, the contracting authority to already communicate to the tenderer, immediately after the opening of the tenders, his individual place in the provisional classification. This improvement in transparency allows operators to establish their schedule more easily.

Finally, certain provisions enshrine the application of the only once principle in the context of competitions.

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Chile

Los Lagos Productive Development Committee will allocate \$4,181 million for MSMEs and entrepreneurs in the region

This budget will allow the opening of calls in the territory for Corfo initiatives and some Sercotec programs from May onwards.

The second session of the Los Lagos Productive Development Committee (CDP) was held at the Los Lagos Regional Government facilities, chaired by the Regional Governor, PatricioVallespín.

On the occasion, the strategic axes, budget, as well as the dates of the sessions of the next plenary sessions and subcommittees were defined.

The collegiate body, where public and private actors participate, also approved the budgetary framework, allocating for this 2023 a total figure of \$4,181 million, which will allow the opening of calls, starting in May, from Corfo and Sercotec .

“This has been a very productive session. Under the strategic view of the Regional Government, we have addressed axes that are related to the productive sectors defined in the Pact for a Sustainable and Inclusive Region, with a focus on the circular, collaborative and regenerative economy. The members of the committee are very committed to this task of working for the sustainable development of the region. We seek to align the promotion instruments and for this we have approved the budgets for this year, accepting the experience of Corfo and Sercotec, we are talking about the order of \$3,400 million from both services”, said the Regional Governor.

For his part, the regional director of Corfo and executive director of CDP Los Lagos, Gabriel Pérez, indicated that the calls will be informed in a timely manner to entrepreneurs in the region to apply for the different lines of promotion that are defined and promoted by the Committee.

In turn, he highlighted the relevance of this second session in which positions were approached and generating the necessary confidence to think about the region in a different way from what we have been used to. "Through this CDP we collect the views of the territories, which are provided by the regional councilors, and the Governor's vocation to carry out the decentralisation process and create conditions for communities to have access to a better quality of life", said the director of Corfo los Lagos.

The Presidency of the Productive Development Subcommittee was in charge of Hector Henríquez, President of the Multigremial and Armasur , who relieved the participation of the private sector in this type of initiatives for the well-being of the region, the communities and the commercial and productive development. “This is a regional decision-making committee. Our main concern is that resources are well allocated to instruments that focus on sustainability, circularity and innovation, this is the virtuous purpose that we have to contribute”, Henríquez pointed out.

Meanwhile, the regional director of Sercotec, JéssicaKramm, maintained that “the proposal presented has been unanimously approved. It was a very clear session, very objective, transparent and what we hope is to contribute to the development of our Los Lagos region. We have expectations and a great desire to work around it, we know what it means as a service and we will continue to contribute”, she pointed out.

Finally, the Seremi de EconomíaFomento y Turismo, Luis Cardenas, explained that the “Committee will work from a strategic point of view, with guidelines such as fair decarbonization; adaptation to the climate crisis and socio-environmental impacts and sustainable productive diversification. This will allow promoting entrepreneurship, innovation and productive development, generating enabling

policies from a decentralized, equitable, sustainable, territorially balanced perspective and with a gender perspective".

The CDP Los Lagos is a regional collegiate body, with delegated powers for decision-making in the area of budget management and fund allocation, which will allow progress in the distribution of power and in the capacity of regional governments to promote development productive according to the needs and desires of their territories

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Congo

[African Development Fund, Smart Africa Alliance launch \\$1.5 million project to enhance digital trade and e-commerce ecosystems across Africa](#)

The African Development Fund and Smart Africa Alliance have jointly launched a \$1.5 million project to streamline digital trade and e-commerce policies across 10 African countries.

The Institutional Support for Digital Payments and e-Commerce Policies for Cross-Border Trade Project (IDECT) will evaluate policy gaps in the digital trade and e-commerce ecosystems of Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Ghana, Liberia, Uganda, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, the Republic of Congo, São Tomé and Príncipe, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The project will see to the implementation of regional training and capacity-building programs focusing on cross-border e-payment and e-commerce for governments, private sectors, and Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs).

These programs are expected to reach 600 participants, with 60% being women and youth. Additionally, a certified gender-sensitive e-learning training program addressing the unique challenges faced by women in digital trade and e-commerce, will be developed and disseminated to 2,500 participants, of whom 60% will be women.

The agreement was signed on Tuesday, 25 April, a day ahead of the 2023 Transform Africa Summit which takes place in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, from 26-28 April. African Development Bank Director General for Southern Africa Region Leïla Mokaddem, described the IDECT as a pivotal step towards strengthening Africa's digital trade and e-commerce landscape.

"This initiative will bolster the development of harmonized e-payment policies, capacity building, and gender-sensitive frameworks, ultimately fostering a digital trade ecosystem that generates employment opportunities across the continent," she said.

LacinaKoné, CEO of Smart Africa, said: "The IDECT project demonstrates our commitment to fostering digital transformation and economic growth in Africa. By addressing policy gaps and promoting gender-sensitive training, we are laying the foundation for a thriving digital trade and e-commerce ecosystem."

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Oman

[Oman: SMEs can now use state-owned lands](#)

Muscat: A ministerial decision granting small and medium enterprises the right to use state-owned lands has been issued, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning said. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning issued Ministerial Resolution No. 90/2023, which granted small and medium enterprises this right.

It was decided:

Article (1) - Small and medium enterprises are granted the right to use state-owned lands in accordance with the provisions and controls in the law regulating the usufruct of the lands of the Sultanate of Oman and its implementing regulations.

Article (2) -The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning allocates for small and medium enterprises no less than (10%) of the land in commercial, industrial, agricultural and tourism schemes ready for distribution and under the usufruct system.

Article (3) -To grant small and medium enterprises the right to use state-owned lands, the following is required:

- The establishment must be wholly owned by an Omani citizen.
- The headquarters of the institution must be in the Sultanate of Oman.
- The owner of the establishment should be dedicated to managing it.
- The owner of the establishment must be registered with the Ministry of Labour as an employer.
- The enterprise must be registered with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, and have an entrepreneurship card.

Article (4) - Small and medium enterprises shall have the right to usufruct only one land. Comparison between enterprises shall be according to the nature and importance of the project and its economic feasibility, then to the enterprise that achieves higher Omanisation rates, then to the enterprise that submitted the application first.

Article (5) - The aforementioned Resolution No. 12/2016 is hereby revoked, as is everything that contradicts this resolution or its provisions.

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Serbia

FIF - Unicredit Leasing Serbia - SME

Project Description- Provision of a senior loan in the amount of up to EUR 30 million, under the Financial Intermediaries Framework SME ("FIF" or the "Programme"), to Unicredit Leasing Serbia ("UCL"). The loan will be fully guaranteed by Unicredit Bank Serbia ("UCB").

Project Objectives -The proceeds of the Bank's investment will be used for providing leases to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Serbia, in accordance with the FIF-SME Policy Statement. At least 30% of the investments will be in line with the Green Economy Transition ("GET") criteria.

The project contributes to the objectives of the Programme, supporting the Competitive and Resilient transition qualities. FIF seeks to (i) foster SME competitiveness by increasing availability of financing and (ii) contribute to the competitiveness of financial institutions by enabling innovation in strategy, products, processes and marketing related to SME lending. By ensuring that UCL has adequate underwriting and risk management practices in place, the FIF also seeks to support the resilience of the financial system.

UCL is leasing company in Serbia with EUR 156 million in total assets and with a market share of 12.1%, measured by total assets as at Q4 2022. It is one of the most active EBRD partner leasing companies in Serbia, with a proven ability to channel EBRD's funds to targeted economic segments efficiently.

Additionality

Additionality of the projects stems from the following: (i) EBRD offers financing that is not available in the market from commercial sources on reasonable terms and conditions;

(ii) EBRD provides expertise, innovation, knowledge and/or capabilities that are material to the timely realisation of the project's objectives, including support to strengthen the capacity of the client; and (iii) helping projects and clients achieve higher standards: UCL seeks/makes use of EBRD expertise on higher financial standards, including through financial covenants.

Environmental and Social Summary

Categorised FI (2019 ESP). UCL is an existing client and will be required to continue to implement the Environmental and Social Risk Management Procedure for Leasing; continue to comply with the EBRD's Performance Requirements (PRs) 2, 4 and 9, including adherence to the expanded EBRD E&S Exclusion List and Referral List introduced with ESP 2019 and submit Annual E&S Reports to the Bank. This applies to both committed and uncommitted tranches.

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Tunisia

[Tunisia, AFESD sign funding agreement](#)

Minister of Economy and Planning Samir Saied and Director-General and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) Bader Mohammed Alsaad signed Saturday in Rabat, Morocco, an agreement under which 16 million kuwaiti dinars (TND 157 million) in funding will be provided to Tunisia.

The funds will be earmarked for building and upgrading classified roads in Béja, Jendouba, el Kef and Nabeul, the ministry said. The two officials also signed a TND 3 million grant agreement. The funding will go towards the acquisition of medical equipment for the Tunisian health ministry. The signing ceremony was held on the sidelines of the annual joint meetings of Arab financial institutions (April 28-30) in Rabat. The minister hailed the fund's ongoing support for the economic and social development process in Tunisia.

There is keenness, he added, to carry on "the fruitful cooperation and partnership in the coming years." Samir Saied had a talk, on the sidelines of these annual meetings, with the fund's SG in charge of financing small- and medium-sized enterprises. He lauded the approval by the board of directors of 40 million dollars (TND 120 million) in funding to Tunisia for subscription to investment funds with a view to support SMEs.

The minister hailed the fund's responsiveness and its readiness to consider a 10 million dollar (TND 30 million) funding application for the Tunisian Investment Fund. This will help enterprises access funding, he added.

Saied attended meetings of boards of governors of participating institutions and had talks with some Arab counterparts and officials in charge of regional and international financial bodies. The meetings were an opportunity to lay emphasis on Tunisia's willingness to scale up economic cooperation with Arab countries and financial partners at this delicate juncture

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Turkey

EBRD loan to support women in business in Türkiye

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is extending a €50 million loan to TürkEkonomiBankası A.Ş. (TEB) to expand financial opportunities to women-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Türkiye. The loan comes under the EBRD's €600 million Türkiye Women in Business II (TurWiB II) programme, which builds on the success of the initial TurWiB initiative.

In addition to promoting and strengthening the role of women-led SMEs, the proceeds of the loan will help TEB to adapt its business model and delivery mechanisms to make them more inclusive and better meet the needs of women-led SMEs. TEB will also expand its Women in Business portfolio and target clients outside major urban areas.

The EBRD had previously undertaken a similarly targeted transaction with TEB in 2015. The EBRD remains focused on promoting gender equality in the Turkish economy. In 2022, the Bank celebrated its tenth anniversary of supporting Women in Business in Türkiye. TurWiB was launched in 2014, before becoming operational in many economies across the Bank's regions. The EBRD is a leading institutional investor in Türkiye. Since 2009, it has invested more than €17 billion in various sectors of the economy, mostly in the private sector.

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USA (United States of America)

DHL Express U.S. Launches GoGreen Plus as New Survey Reveals the Importance of Sustainability to SMEs

PLANTATION, Fla., April 20, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- DHL Express, the world's leading provider of international express shipping services, today announces the expansion of

its sustainable business services available to U.S. small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with GoGreen Plus. GoGreen Plus is a new service that enables customers to reduce ('inset') the carbon emissions associated with their shipments through the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF). This service is a first for global express carriers, with the initial launch taking place this past February in the United Kingdom. Now, customers based in the U.S.—and any country—have the option to select GoGreen Plus when choosing their shipping preferences within MyDHL+, the company's online shipping and tracking platform. The service is designed to be fully flexible, and can be selected for individual shipments. Shippers also have the option to tailor the CO₂e reduction they want to achieve and the amount of SAF they use.

This service expansion follows the company's recent survey of nearly 2,500 SMEs, including DHL customers, which gained insights into how businesses prioritize sustainability. Of all respondents, 95% said sustainability is important to their business, with almost half (48%) believing it's extremely important. However, when asked about the biggest challenge to achieving sustainable goals, 42% said the overall investment is the main obstacle, and 11% said they had no clue where to start.

"Consumers have an increasing interest in environmentally friendly products and services, and businesses can cultivate brand loyalty by making an effective commitment to environmental sustainability," says Greg Hewitt, CEO of DHL Express U.S. "We take pride in assisting our customers as they build more sustainable supply chains, and in offering guidance to SMEs that may lack the necessary means to take that first sustainability leap on their own."

The new GoGreen Plus service is made possible following DHL's recent collaborations with BP and Neste to supply SAF to DHL Express hubs around the world. The renewable part of the innovative fuel is produced from waste oils. Such SAF from wastes and residues can provide greenhouse gas emission reductions of up to 80 percent over its life cycle compared to the conventional jet fuel it replaces. The GoGreen Plus service is part of Deutsche Post DHL Group's sustainability goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. It contributes to the interim target of using 30 percent SAF for all air transport by 2030. In line with its Sustainability Roadmap, Deutsche Post DHL Group aims to offer a green alternative for all products and services across all divisions.

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Finland

Finnish start-up Montinutra transforms forest waste into sustainable personal care ingredients

Most of Europe's forests are in Finland, covering over 70 percent of the land area. The forest industry plays a crucial role in the Finnish economy and now there is more emphasis on how renewable raw materials can replace fossil-based materials. Finnish startup Montinutra has developed a novel, highly sustainable, zero-waste closed-loop manufacturing methods to extract ingredients from forest waste products such as sawdust and bark for second-life uses. This week the company announced a partnership with a Finnish producer of natural personal care products, Ole Hyvä, to bring its Boreal Bioproducts® SpruceSugar™ into the consumer market for the very first time.

SpruceSugar™ (derived from wood sugars) is a 100% natural hemicellulose extract from sustainable spruce sawmilling side streams. It serves as a substitute for analogue chemicals and polysaccharides. It contains antioxidants and SPF-boosting capabilities and can be used for various purposes in skin and hair care products, such as emulsifying and natural colouring.

SpruceSugar™ helps with wrinkle-smoothing, hydration and sun protection and helps increase the antioxidant capacity of personal care products. For example, helping mitigate the oxidative stress caused by hair dye. It also has the potential to inhibit inflammation. All products in the Boreal Bioproducts® Montinutra range are vegan and biodegradable. In Finland, our forest and supply chain are very transparent, and we can even track and trace where the goods have been harvested." Also, what sets Montinutra apart is that its not dependent on crop seasons but enjoys a steady flow of raw materials throughout the year.

In 2021 Metsä Group, a cooperative owned by some 90,000 private Finnish forest owners and one of the biggest forestry companies in Finland, invested in Montinutra via its innovation arm Metsä Spring. Its investments enabled the company to upscale from a laboratory scale to develop its own pilot factory.

SpruceSugar™ was developed at a record speed – it went from the testing phase into a consumer product in just 14 months, showing infinite opportunity for manufacturing at scale. Montinutra is seeking partners for further development in cosmetics and various chemicals. There's also interest in the food and beverage market, "where Kämäräinen explains "some studies claim that our ingredient is as good as guar gum as a modifier." Wood sugar also has other potential use cases. For example, developing bio-latex, which appears in products such as paint and glue. Additionally, health-beneficial Qusitol® obtained from sawdust has shown potential for treating lower urinary tract symptoms.

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Mauritius

TerraPay Mauritius gets \$30 million in new funding to speed up international money transfers.

TerraPay is a British fintech company that focuses on payment infrastructure. Recently, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) helped the company raise \$100 million. After this success, the IFC has said it will give a \$30 million loan to TerraPay's Mauritian branch to help with its working capital.

The loan will be paired with a \$60 million loan from the IFC and its partners. The loan will be paid back over four years, with a two-year grace time.

The main reason for the loan is to help TerraPay Mauritius, which is the local branch of TerraPay Holdings Limited, improve its working capital. The IFC says that the loan will also help set up a way to raise money for future projects.

The IFC is a part of the World Bank Group, and this project is meant to make it easier to move money internationally and pay across borders. It will also help TerraPay Mauritius, which specializes in foreign money transfers and business payments made across borders, grow.

In a statement, the IFC said that the loan facility would help TerraPay Mauritius get the working cash it needs, which will help its efforts to make it easier for people to send money abroad and for businesses to pay each other across borders.

The project is still subject to approval by the IFC Board of Directors, but it is expected to receive the green light soon. With the support of the IFC, TerraPay Mauritius is set to enhance its financial capabilities, ultimately leading to greater access and more efficient cross-border payment options.

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Poland

E-learning, business training, and performance management services startupInnential raises "close to" €1 million

Berlin-based Innential has raised "close to" €1 million in a seed round that will see the company up its tech capabilities alongside strengthening its sales teams in what it's calling both the Polish and European markets. The last time I checked, Poland was a part of Europe, but alas. The startup also says the funding will be used for "other things" as well.

Innential's "close to" €1 million seed round was led by the Polish venture capital funds Tar Heel Capital Pathfinder and bValue with Campus Founders and a group of angel investors participating.

In a similar style to AG5, Innential says it can offer organisations the ability to map and analyse the competency needs of their talent, link them with educational content through personalized growth plans, and monitor their career progress.

"Our goal is to make it easy for companies to create career development experiences that grow and retain top tech talent. From diagnostics to personalized educational resources and effortless progress tracking, Innential covers it all," explained Innential co-founder Daniel Carter.

According to the company, their client list includes software consulting firm Nortal, online insurance broker Luko, and SMA Solar Technology, it's up to you to figure out what they do.

On the investment, bValue's Marcel Animucki commented, "For tech companies, working with the best specialists is key for growth. As a result, they must pay special attention to keeping talent in the team. Innential has been created for this purpose. Increasing employees' satisfaction levels directly impacts how they view their future in the company and affects their retention levels, helping build and scale modern technological organisations."

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Towards Quality Assurance in Machine Learning: Compliance with the AI Act, in practice



Date: 10 May 2023

Venue: Online Mode

Details: <https://www.digitalsme.eu/events/towards-quality-assurance-in-machine-learning/>

The green transition: What role for regional public employment plays?



Date: 12 May 2023

Venue: Trento, Italy

Details: <https://search.oecd.org/cfe/leed/oecd-rtaa-workshop-pes.htm>

INDIA INTERNATIONAL MSME EXPO & SUMMIT



Date: 10 - 13 Aug 2023

Venue: PragatiMaidan, New Delhi, India

Details: <https://msmedevelopmentforum.com/msme-expo-2022/>

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Our members support WASME's mission to advance, promote and support SMEs in their respective countries through association and collaboration mechanism with local government bodies, regional authorities, international linkages, civil societies and SMEs.

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Associate Membership-Indian Chapter	Indian MSMEs, Entrepreneurs, Corporates, SME Associations, Universities, Training Institute and Individuals who are interested in the growth of SMEs.

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Exposure Visit to Global members	Participation & Knowledge Support	Branding Opportunity
Facilitate exposure visit at National & International Organizations, Institutes, Research Centres etc	Participation of WASME National/International conferences and seminars, workshops, training and programmes etc	Sponsorship and volunteering, advertising and programs, newsletters, website, e-bulletins, publications etc.

For more information visit our website: www.wasmeinfo.org or contact

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WASME was founded in 1980 with the goal of supporting MSMEs in member countries. We have achieved this through our strong association with local government bodies, regional authorities, international linkages, civil societies, SMEs, etc. We are continuously working to improve our innovative and sustainable framework so that we can better serve MSMEs around the world.

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Editor, World SME Update
World Association for Small and Medium Enterprises
Plot No. 4, Institutional Area, Sector – 16 A,
Noida, GautamBudh Nagar – 201301, Uttar Pradesh, India
Tel: +91-120- 4216283, Fax: +91-120- 4216284
Mobile: +91 9560685555
Email: editor@wasmeinfo.org , wasme@wasmeinfo.org
Website: <http://www.wasmeinfo.org>,