



THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP
LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE

Name of the mission

ESTABLISHMENT OF ENTERPRISE AFRICA NETWORK (EAN)

Inception Report

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Acronyms

AAFEX	Africa Agro Export Association
ADEPME	Agence de Développement et d'Encadrement des PME
AfDB	Africa Bank of Development
AIDA	Accelerated Industrialization Development for Africa
AUC	Africa Union Commission
CFTA	Continental Free Trade Area
CGECI	Confédération Générale des Entreprises de Cote d'Ivoire
CPCCAF	Conférence permanente des chambres consulaires africaines et francophones
EAN	Enterprise Africa Network
EEN	European Enterprise Network
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central Africa States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West Africa States
JAES SM II	Joint Africa-EU Strategy Support Mechanism II
KISS	Keep it Simple and Scale
TL	Team Leader
MSME	Micro and Small and Medium Enterprises
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NKE	Non Key Expert
PACCI	Pan African Chamber of Commerce
REC	Regional Economic Community
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
TAT	Technical Assistance Team
TVET	Technical, Vocational and Education Training



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Executive Summary

An Expert Group Meeting was organized by the Department of Trade and Industry of the African Union Commission with the view to define a roadmap with priority issues for the establishment of the “Enterprise Africa Network” (EAN). This is an initiative aimed at toward implementing the Business Development pillar of the Master Plan 2017-2021.

The Meeting which took place in Abidjan from 13 to 15 December 2017 was attended by Regional Economic Community (RECs), AUC, Intermediary Organisations (Chambers of Commerce, professional associations, women and youth business foundations) and Africa private companies which developed trade portal and SME’s online platforms.

The meeting recommended, among others, that EAN will be designed to enable SME growth at national, regional, continental and international levels and should focus on regional value chains or sectors with specific focus on increase in the market share for SME’s via business transactions. In addition, the meeting pointed out business development services for SME’s with the view to upgrade the performance and the competitiveness of their products and services.

It was clearly highlighted that EAN should avoid duplications and look for synergies and complementarities with other SMEs platforms active in Africa.

The participants agreed that EAN should mainstream the inclusion of women and youth as a priority.

The cross-cutting sectors Agro-industries, ICT, and Tourism were recommended as the priority for EAN. Additional sectors suggested were transportation, banking, and financial services, health (medicinal plants) as well as consultancy and advisory services.

It was strongly recommended to “Keep It Simple and Scale” in order to avoid any risk of failure.

Following the discussion and deliberation on the EAN initiative the Expert Working Group proposed to undertake the mapping of the existing networking platforms in Africa supporting the private sector on trade information, business transaction and business development and to focus the platform, in a priority phase, on women and youth entrepreneurs/talents who develop innovative products and services with growth potential. Then extend the networking platform to other private sector organizations.

The next recommended steps are to recruit the expertise to undertake the mapping of existing networking platforms in Africa, to update the TOR of the TL and the IT expert and to recruit them for implementing the feasibility study of EAN.



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1. Background

The African Union “SMEs Development Strategy and Master Plan 2017-2021” stressed the necessity *“to develop competitive, diversified and sustainable economies through the development of regional and continental value chains that generate employment, reduce poverty and foster social inclusion”*. One of the recommendations is to create an Enterprise Africa Network (EAN) with the view to facilitate networking initiatives amongst enterprises including from start-ups thus generating employment. EAN is expected to *“promote intra-regional and intra-African trade by integrating African SME’s and MSMEs into regional and global value chains, to encourage partnerships including with European Union Private Sector and to provide advice for international growth and Support for Business Innovation”*. (1)

EAN establishment study is funded by the EU programme “JAES Support Mechanism II (JAES SM II)”. Under the supervision of AUC, *“a feasibility study will be undertaken in order to assess the added-value for the establishment of EAN, especially by analysing the existing EEN and Europe Business Network models and their functioning, to propose the most adapted process for setting up an EAN in Africa and evaluating its potential impact at continental level and to develop a Roadmap toward the establishment of the Enterprise Africa Network in order to launch a Pilot Project of 6 months”*. (1)

In order to kick-start the actions above, a meeting was convened comprising a group of experts from across Africa representing various organizations. The meeting, which took place in Abidjan from 13 to 15 December 2017, was held under the theme *“Designing SME’s online platforms through public-private partnership”*. The meeting was intended to achieve the following objectives:

- to establish and assess the interest of the African private sector to set-up and participate in an Enterprise Africa Network
- to share experiences/lessons learned from similar initiatives in Africa
- to provide recommendations for designing an online Africa networking platform meeting the needs of Africa private sector, especially the growth of SMEs.

To ensure a successful event, the JAES SM II facilitation expert assisted AUC in the preparation of the Expert Group Meeting, elaborated the draft of the agenda, identified and mobilized key speakers and participants from the private sector in Africa and Europe, elaborated speaker profiles as well as briefing them on the format and the topics of their presentation.

During his mission at Abidjan, the expert met with the speakers from the “Confédération Générale des Entreprises de Cote d’Ivoire (CGECI)” and Sayonara Ltd, participated in the “Conférence permanente des chambres consulaires africaines et francophones (CPCCAF)” meeting and promoted the EAN initiative to its members. The expert also contacted Ivory Coast Ministry of Industry and Mines to have one of their senior representatives to officiate at the opening ceremony of the Expert Group Meeting as well as briefed AfDB on the EAN establishment project.

Finally, the expert worked with the Head of Division/Industry (Department of Trade and Industry, AUC) and his team for the finalization of the programme and the logistics of the event and assisted some key speakers who required some clarifications on their role at the meeting.



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(1) Concept note: AUC "Enterprise Africa Network"

This report provides a summary of the presentations and high-level discussions in the different sessions of the meeting. Furthermore, it includes expectations and recommendations from African private sector representatives towards building an appropriate online networking platform.



2. Expert Group Meeting sessions: Debate and Results

2.1 Regional Economic Communities and Africa private sector presentations

The meeting brought together 25 high-level representatives from the private sector (Chambers of Commerce, professional associations, enterprises, private foundations, services providers) mobilized from across the continent (Central, East, West, Southern Africa, Maghreb), as well as high level representatives from AUC, REC's (ECCAS, ECOWAS), AIDA, NEPAD Business Foundation (see list of participants).

The meeting was organized around four sessions, which included presentations by various speakers and rigorous debates and deliberations over two days. The third day was dedicated to consolidate the workshop outcomes and recommendations.

The workshop was opened by Mr. Khebour Ghenna, Executive Director of the Pan African Chamber of Commerce (PACCI), Mr. Jules Touka, Economic Affairs Officer of the Economic Community of the Central African States and Mr. Hussein Hassan, Head of Division/Industry (AUC).

All of the speakers highlighted that SMEs are the driving force of economies in African and play a critical role in job creation accounting for over 70% employment in most African States. They also stressed that SMEs were identified as a strong engine for growth and employment creation and therefore welcomed EAN initiative which could play a key role in SMEs growth in Africa.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Kebour Ghena stressed the importance of taking into account the new factors that influence the rapidly changing environment of entrepreneurs especially SMEs. To this end, there is need to focus on the integration of SME's into the Global Value Chain if they are to survive. He added *"Prioritizing SME development is therefore critical for promoting economic growth. Through digitalization and innovation, SMEs are able to reach new customers anywhere in the world". Regional and continental agreements, such as The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA), will further facilitate trade and investment in Africa and therefore this will require new financing solutions for SMEs to survive and grow."*

Mr. Jules Touka pointed out that *"Promoting youth entrepreneurship is critical in addressing the challenges of youth unemployment. Opportunities provided by new technology through digital economy should be leveraged for a wider benefit for all"*. He further said, *"The African Union Commission should encourage territorial and sectoral professional organizations to develop their internal capacities for economic animation, particularly towards women and young people"*.

Mr. Hussein Hassan reiterated the context of the meeting which is in line with the implementation of the "Acceleration Program of Africa's Industrial Development" as adopted by the Heads of State of the African Union in 2008. He then reiterated *"the commitment of the AUC to engage a dialogue bringing the public and private stakeholders together to find avenues to the growing number of SME's in Africa"*. Mr. Hussein further stated that *"access to finance coupled with a nuanced understanding of the unequal power dynamics that exist amongst women and others in their access to finance and innovation, is a critical issue that needs to be addressed in the core of the Roadmap"*. He urged the Expert Group Meeting to consider the establishment of women and youth networks in e-



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Commerce and capacity building as an essential component of the Roadmap. He mentioned that *“Our Action Plan will be built around the Model of Enterprise European Network... The Network helps businesses innovate and grow on an international scale...”*.

Mr. Hussein introduced the programme of the meeting which includes four sessions:

- Session 1: *“Private sector in Africa: status and perspectives”*
- Session 2: *“Good practices and lessons learned from Africa private sector networks”*
- Session 3: *“Networking platforms and partnership initiatives for SME’s”*
- Session 4: *“Establishment of Enterprise Africa Network: expectations and role of Africa private sector organizations”*.

Following the introduction of the participants, Mrs. Marie Josiane Ngah, Industrial Policy Analyst (AUC) briefed them on the objective of the Expert Group Meeting and presented the *“Concept note of the Enterprise Africa Network”*.

Dr. Sid Boubekour moderated all sessions of the meeting and organized two working groups dedicated to summarize and to validate the conclusions and recommendation to be provided to the stakeholders (AUC, JAES SM II Technical Assistance Team). He invited the participants to visit European Enterprise Network website and to assess this platform. The Experts Group find EEN very relevant. However, they pointed out that the level of SME’s in Europe is more advanced than in Africa for building strategic partnerships or for trading competitive products and services. EAN needs to go step by step to reach EEN level. The participants believe that it is more appropriate to assess SME’s online platforms active in Africa and to determine the added-value of EAN. Partnerships/linkages will be defined and set-up between the two online platforms.

During the sessions, the speakers stressed the role played by the private sector in the development of regional and continental common markets through value chains, sectors or clusters development and the importance for SME’s to be integrated into them. They also stressed the need to provide pertinent information and data on trade, niche markets and investment opportunities to SMEs as most of them still lacked access.

The speakers recognized that internet is an engine for economic development and plays an increasingly important role in the growth and survival of SMEs. This is illustrated by the fact studies which show that approximately 150 000 SMEs in South Africa would not be able to survive without their web presence. The speakers also noted that mobile phone explosion/penetration, especially smartphones, and the increased internet usage are completely changing the way business is done as well as affecting existing business relationships. This puts pressure on SMEs to transform how they do business, but also presents opportunities for them e.g. getting actual information and data on markets in a timely fashion. SME’s will more and more become dependent on innovation, new technologies and know-how for future survival and growth.

The speakers, therefore stressed that it is imperative EAN develop an online platform which assists SME’s to solve common problems such as:

- Provision of advice for regional and international growth;
- Provision of relevant information to SMEs especially on markets and capacity building;



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- Provision of services for SMEs to trade their products or services online;
- Promote the adoption & use of ICT and innovation for business growth’;
- Provision of E-learning & training;
- Promote collaboration and networking on a pan-African scale (webinars, forums, B to B networking events, etc.);
- Encourage International Partnerships and market African entrepreneurship globally.

The speakers also shared experiences and exchanged information on other initiatives from regional organizations, such as SADC secretariat, which developed a “Trade Information Portal” to address SMEs challenges and countries such as Botswana which set-up recently a “Market Intelligence Information System”(MIIS). These portals are dedicated to increasing SME’s businesses through e-Marketing, e-Trading, and e-Commerce. More precisely, these portals provide and promote access to accurate, comprehensive, timely and relevant information about the identified markets (local, regional and international) and how to access them for various sectors e.g. pricing, regulations, tariffs, buyer trends. They also enable buyers to easily search and find information on local products, services, and businesses in the priority sectors, and to network for collaboration and partnerships opportunities. The portals facilitated access to the new market, impacted positively SME’s businesses, increased the collaboration and sharing information and generated new jobs.

The participants agreed on the necessity to be innovative and creative for building EAN, to provide transparent and credible information/data, to develop a sustainable networking platform with a governance structure and complementing existing ones. They see important to optimize the actions implemented by national and regional organizations on education, research, training, trade facilitation, regulations, standards...

Due to their experience on networking initiatives, the intermediary organizations (Chambers of Commerce, sectorial professional organizations) could play a crucial role.

All speakers and participants advocated for better integrating women and youth in the economy and that EAN must assist achieve this goal. The Women & Youth Business Networking Initiatives in the Great Lakes Region was introduced. This Foundation provides vocational and skills development to women and youth in order to facilitate employment. The “Young Africa International” foundation also presented programmes they had developed through establishing sustainable skills training centres in Zimbabwe and Botswana for underprivileged young people to make them employable. Entrepreneurial skills were provided to young people of whom 83% of the graduated students got a job, apprenticeship or start a business.

A speaker introduced some initiatives from the Tunisian government and donors which put the private sector at the heart of economic growth and jobs creation. The World Bank project “Youth Economic Inclusion Project”, launched in 2017, with a budget of 60 million dollars focused on disadvantaged young men and women. The project also aims to identify potential micro-entrepreneurs to be assisted with business development and financing. Tunisia E-Business Network, a partnership initiative between the United States and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tunis (CCIT) which started in 2014 was one of the first platform-based initiatives dedicated to facilitating international trade transactions in Mediterranean and global markets. The platform created a new communication channel between exporting companies, Chambers of Commerce, and financial institutions. The Jamaity Association launched “Jeun'Experts” in November 2017, in partnership with UNESCO in the



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context of the NET-MED Youth project funded by the European Union. Jeun'Experts is an online database with around one hundred profiles in economics, politics, social, cultural and media expertise.

Finally, an interesting IT solutions platform was presented by the President of Agro Africa Export Association (AAFEX). This platform brings together more than 100 companies which process and exports agro added value products from 17 African countries. AAFEX generates 100 million Euros turnover per year.

2.2 Key points from the debate

2.2.1 Challenges for SME's in Africa

- lack of access to information e.g. markets demand, market access, market opportunities, buyer trends/profiles of potential partners...;
- lack of appropriate financing mechanisms, particularly for women and youth entrepreneurs;
- lack of access to technology and innovation to aid their business growth;
- lack of websites or online presence (Google study : 9% of SMEs failed in their first year who had online presence vs 47%);
- understanding and following the fast moving and changing business landscape.

2.2.2 What does not work for a networking platform?

- Investing a lot at the beginning of the project then withdrawing or not allocating enough budget for sustainable operation of the platform;
- Designing with complex and sophisticated solutions which increase substantially the risk of failure;
- Transplantation from other existing platforms without taking in consideration the needs from the beneficiary/potential members;
- Duplication, competition with other existing platforms;
- Lack of sustainability and ownership/uptake.

2.2.3 Keys areas for a successful networking platform for SME's

At conception and implementation levels

- Keep it simple and scale (KISS) with easy access to information and business transactions;
- Defining the management of the contents and the updating plan;
- Identify functional requirements and IT tools;
- Identify the different user groups and the information needs;
- Identify social networks to be used;
- Develop financial services offer for revenue generation (advertising, information subscription...);
- Make use of existing platforms;
- Measure performance and monitor operational activities;
- Encourage research and innovation for better performance;
- Create socio-economic benefit for users.



At service delivery level

- Promote economic and market intelligence information;
- Promote competitive products and services;
- Focus on SME's champions/talents;
- Identify partnerships and collaboration with key players e.g. chambers of commerce, professional associations...;
- Proactive marketing and promotion plan.

2.2.4 Expectations and main guidance from the Expert Working Group for the establishment of a networking platform

- Map existing networks SME's platforms active in Africa in order to partner with and add value to them;
- Focus on value chains and sectors with comparative advantages, growth potential and generating employment;
- information on markets (national, regional, continental and international), investment, financing and job opportunities;
- Incorporation of the ability to do business transactions, trade online as well as providing networking and capacity building for SME's;
- Build Linkages with universities, research centres, TVET organisations interested to collaborate with the private sector;
- Building a sustainable platform with ownership from the private sector;
- The platform must be user friendly, simple and easy to use at the start-up and must be easily scalable based on the experience and lessons learned;
- Strong linkages with regional organisations and initiatives for the private sector;
- Develop a logical framework with comprehensive objectives, activities, budget, results and impact expected, monitoring and evaluation, planning;
- Mobilizing national and regional focal points.

2.2.5 Pending questions on EAN initiative

- How best to start the online networking platform in the shortest time possible?
- Which organization is able to host and manage EAN platform? (Continental organizations: AUC, NEPAD..., REC's, private service provider?);
- How best to implement and finance it;
- Type of the architecture/structure of the platform?
- Technical support, operational and maintenance requirement?
- Budget (design, start-up, implementation and maintenance costs?)
- Monitoring and evaluation framework to be put in place?

2.3 General consensus

Mrs. Oumou Warr, Private Sector and Enterprise Development Associate (AUC) presented the results of the working groups and the consensus obtained:

- EAN is a flagship initiative aiming at implementing the Business Development pillar of the Master Plan 2017-2021 under the AU SMEs Development Strategy and should address challenges currently faced by SMEs, such as access to information and data, market and finance



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and should serve as a tool that creates jobs and build bridges between the private sector and public sector;

- The networking platform will be designed to enable SME growth at national, regional, continental and international levels;
- EAN should mainstream the inclusion of women and youth as a priority in all stages;
- To be successful “Keep It Simple and Scale”;
- EAN should serve as a platform where SME’s can have access to customers, where they can generate sales and benefit on information on how to build capacity in management, operations, and marketing. The platform should provide qualitative data and information that will be useful for SME’s growth;
- EAN should avoid duplications and look for synergies and complementarities with other SMEs platforms. It could serve as a focal point for linkages on existing SME’s platforms, with the AUC as a coordinator and point of access for information (reference to the existing platform Dot Africa). To this end, it is recommended to undertake the mapping of existing online platforms in Africa dedicated to support the private sector, among other: Dot Africa (www.dotafrica.com), Africa Economy Platform (<https://au.int/en/aep2017>), IZF regional platform(<https://www.izf.net/?language=en>), CPCCAF platform (<http://www.cpccaf.org>) , World Bank Trade portals (Botswana Trade Portal), AAFEX agro-industry trade portal (www.aafex.com....) , and to determine the added value (or niche services) of EAN;
- EAN should be more than just a directorate, but serve as a community of information, data and networks for entrepreneurs;
- PPP model of implementation must be at the heart of this initiative to be sustainable;
- EAN platform should be implemented as a secure system (cyber secure), with high availability and uptime. The platform should be protected from hackers by spreading out data across the five regions as opposed to centralizing data in one server as that may pose a threat to cybersecurity;
- The Agro-industry, pharmaceuticals, and mining industries were echoed as decisions taken by Heads of States as priority sectors for the industrialization of Africa, and it was recommended that the roadmap takes the decision into consideration. However except the agro industry the others did not have much potential for SME involvement;
- The cross-cutting sectors Agro-industries, ICT, and Tourism were recommended as the priority for EAN. Additional sectors suggested were transportation, banking, and financial services, health (medicinal plants) as well as consultancy and advisory services.



3. Key recommendations and next steps

Following the deliberation on the EAN initiative, the discussions and key recommendations from the Expert Working Group, it is proposed:

3.1 To undertake the mapping of existing networks in Africa dedicated to support the private sector on trade information, on business transaction and business development;

3.2 To focus EAN, in a priority phase, on women and youth entrepreneurs/talents who develop innovative products and services with growth potential, then extend it to other private sector organizations;

3.3 To complement rather than duplicate existing national/regional/continental online platforms;

3.4 To prioritizing sectors that are cross-cutting across the continent (Agro-industry, Tourism, ICT), then to extend to others with growth potential and generating employment;

3.5 To Keep EAN Simple and Scale.

3.6 Following the recommendation of the Working Group, the next priority action of the project is to undertake the mapping of the existing SME's business and development online platforms in Africa.

To achieve this, the Working Group suggests the intervention of a networking expert. The networking expert would have to implement:

- Assessment of the conclusions and recommendation of the Expert Working Group meeting on "Establishment of Enterprise Africa Network" which took place in Abidjan from 13 to 15 December 2017;
- Identify the online platforms active in the continent (particularly in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa). Special attention will be paid to women and youth platforms;
- Select up to 10 SME's business and development online platforms with critical mass of users/clients, with regional exposure (at least 2 countries) and with annual growth of members/visitors and revenue;
- Analyse:
 - their localisation (centralized, decentralized),
 - their architecture/structure,
 - the type of information and networking provided to the members/clients,
 - the type of products and/or services provided,
 - the marketing actions,
 - the origin of revenue (subscription, fees, advertisement, sponsoring, business partnerships...);
 - analyse the payment systems of the commercialized products or offered services (credit cards, PayPal, other...);
- Assess the type of technology/innovation used by the platforms;
- Estimate the cost of their design, set-up and of management;
- Present of the added value of EAN and possible collaboration/partnerships/alliances with the existing platforms;



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- Regular exchange with the IT expert on the above mentioned tasks and recommendation for designing EAN platform;
- Report including the conclusion and recommendations of the mission

The next proposed steps for the project are the following:

- **To update the TOR of the project (*)** taking in consideration the outcome of the Facilitation Expert. To this end, it is recommended:
 - To recruit Africa expertise to undertake the mapping of existing networks in the continent;



4. Proposed work plan

Tasks	Period	Responsibility
Recruitment of the TL, the networking and the IT experts	January 2018	TAT
Implementation of the project	February-May 2018	NKE
Presentation of the Roadmap to the stakeholders and validation meeting	June 2018	TAT - NKE

(*) It is strongly recommended to look for a TL with strong knowledge of the private sector in Africa and of knowledge of existing networking platform at regional or continental level. It is also recommended to combined EU and Africa expertise for the architecture/design of EAN.



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Annexes

1. Key elements for the formulation of EAN
2. Programme of the Working Group Meeting, Abidjan 13-15 December 2017
3. Speech M. Hussein, Head of Division/Industry, Department of Trade and Industry, AUC
4. Press release on Expert Working Group on ENTERPRISE AFRICA NETWORK to design and implement SMEs Online Platforms through Public Private Partnership
5. Profiles of the speakers
6. Link presentation of speakers
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/Opf7vmm73hyuxgh/AAAGMuXnnG73ktMQ1m1rzuNSa?dl=0>



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Annex 1

Key elements for the formulation of EAN

General objective

In the framework of Accelerated Industrial Development for Africa (AIDA), of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) and Africa Union Strategy for SMEs strategy and Master Plan 2017-2021, the general objective of EAN is to establish continental capacity to support Business Development Services to SMEs and start-ups with the view to accelerate trade, generate revenue and increase employment particularly for women and youth.

Specific objectives

- To facilitate, via online networking platform, access of SMEs/ start-ups to market, transactions, innovation, technology and appropriate financing mechanism/new financing models including Foundations, Corporates (Corporate Social Responsibility...);
- To access to capacity building facilities in Africa and in Europe for upgrading SME's competitiveness and accelerating their integration in continental and international markets

Potential members/beneficiaries

- ✓ Women and youth entrepreneurs
- ✓ SME's
- ✓ Chambers of commerce,
- ✓ Business/Employees Federations Professional associations
- ✓ Universities/research institutions

Services to be provided

- Business information and business transaction for SMEs/start-ups:
 - ✓ national, regional and international markets,
 - ✓ business opportunities,
 - ✓ new technologies and know-how,
 - ✓ innovation of products and services,
 - ✓ trade statistics, regulation, required standard...
 - ✓ Trade of products and services via transaction facilities (type, volume, quality and standard required, prices, brand...)
 - ✓ Networking for collaborations, partnerships at pan-African and international levels (business Fora, B to B meetings, matchmaking events...)
- Capacity building initiatives at continental and EU levels (E-learning & training portal)



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Expected results

- New market for SME's and start-ups
- Increased role played in the value chain
- Trade at regional and continental level increased
- Market/Clients of SME's diversified
- Turn-over/growth of SME's increased generating new investment and new employment

Sustainability-Ownership

- Buy-in by AUC, REC's, Africa private sector organisations and international business community
- Operational Sustainability with adequate resources to cater for:
 - ✓ Updated content
 - ✓ Education
 - ✓ Marketing
 - ✓ Support
 - ✓ Strategic partnerships
 - ✓ Training
- Financial sustainability (adequate financing until project becomes self-sustaining);
 - ✓ There must be a revenue generation model in-built that will ensure long term sustainability;
 - ✓ This require very committed financial and technical partner(s)