Terms of Reference


Analytical Study on Digital Trade and MSMEs

1. Background

The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission and its Member States have been exploring avenues to strengthen economic resilience in the face of multi-dimensional challenges now amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In exploring trade related policy options that could drive a post-COVID-19 economic recovery, and support long-term economic vitality and resilience, the Member States have requested the OECS Commission to provide analysis on responses to the opportunities and challenges related to: Sustainable Ocean Economies — blue economy; the Digital economy; Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs); and the Multi-dimensional Nature of Vulnerability.

2. Specific tasks

The consultant will work closely with the Head of the Commonwealth Secretariat’s International Trade Policy Section and the Ambassador of the OECS Permanent Delegation in Geneva to undertake the following tasks:

   a) Prepare an analytical paper focusing on how OECS Member States can improve their digital economies, with a special focus on the role of MSMEs.

   b) Specifically, the paper will build on the existing literature and policy initiatives to identify gaps and actions, and examine the opportunities and challenges relevant to building a digital enabling environment in OECS countries. The focus will be on the following issues:

      a. Physical infrastructure: What are the opportunities and challenges in the context of the physical infrastructure necessary to create a digital enabling environment (e.g. e-payment infrastructure, robust and cost-effective telecommunications infrastructure, cost of electricity, internet access and coverage, etc.);

      b. Digital regulatory environment: What are the relevant legal and regulatory frameworks in place to enhance a digital enabling environment (e.g. consumer protection, privacy regulation, etc.);

      c. Digital platforms and OECS MSMEs: What are the challenges and opportunities related to international/regional/national digital platforms and how can OECS MSMEs benefit from the digital economy?

   c) The paper will provide a set of recommendations with respect to actions that can be pursued to support OECS MSMEs to benefit from existing and emerging trading opportunities, both regionally and internationally.
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3. Essential qualifications, skills and experience

a) Education:

An advanced university degree (Masters or PhD preferred) in an area that is demonstrably related to international trade and economic development issues, such as International Economics, International Law or International Relations.

b) Skills and experience:

i. A minimum of ten (10) years of work experience in the area of international trade and economic development. Demonstrable experience working on issues related to OECS countries would be advantageous.

ii. At least seven (7) years of experience in policy-oriented research and analysis related to digitisation, digital transformation, digital trade and the digital economy (spanning, for example, information and communications technology policies, cybersecurity frameworks, taxation, innovation, digital infrastructure, e-commerce) and private sector development. This would be reflected in peer-reviewed publications or technical reports for national, regional or international organisations, especially in the OECS region.

iii. Proficiency in the use of word processing, spreadsheets, databases, and presentation software.

iv. Excellent communication skills (oral and written) - complete fluency in English is required.

v. Ability to work effectively under tight deadlines.

vi. Ability to set and meet own priorities and work with limited supervision.

4. Expected output

The expected output would be a 25-page analytical paper.

5. Timeline

The consultancy will commence on 8 March 2021 and end on 10 April 2021. The consultant will deliver the first draft of the paper to the Secretariat no later than 31 March 2021 and a final paper, which incorporates all suggestions and comments, by 10 April 2021.

6. Fee

An all-inclusive fee of £15,000