

# EU Labour Mobility Practitioners' Network The Pilot Project for Entrepreneurial Mobility (PEM WECCO')

Focus Session with ENABEL

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## Key Discussion Points

### *Speakers*

- Francois Mayécor Faye, Intervention Manager, ENABEL
- Giulia Fagotto, Human Mobility Expert, ENABEL
- Carla Fanini, Intervention Officer Human Mobility, ENABEL
- Charlie GUERIN BIAGUI, Co-manager Bond'innov Afrique
- Eric DE CLERCQ, Director Africa, Near and Middle East Division, AWEX
- Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Fall, Regional coordinator Yeestal Agrihub

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### *Summary of the Presentations and Points of Discussion*

#### **ENABEL – Presentation of PEM WECCO**

The main objective of PEM WECCO' is to foster partnerships between Senegalese and Belgian companies thereby creating economic opportunities for both. Mobility between the two countries is a tool to build these win-win partnerships. The project takes an eco-system approach to entrepreneurial mobility by operating on three levels: entrepreneurs -micro-, entrepreneurial support structures (incubators/accelerators EES) -meso- and public institutions -macro-.

Senegalese companies are selected based on primary and secondary criteria - including the company formalization level, years in business, annual sales, the number of women employed -which allow to assess their readiness to embark in an international partnership project with a Belgian company. The same approach applies to the Senegalese entrepreneurs – mostly CEOs of the selected companies- benefitting from the mobility scheme, after passing through a selection process, they are coached individually based on their needs before, during and after their business trip to Belgium. Thanks to the partnership established with relevant Belgian and Senegalese relevant authorities, entrepreneurs are also supported and guided through their business visa application process.

The first results are quite promising: new partnerships and collaboration have been established on all levels of intervention (entrepreneurs, incubators/accelerators, and public institutions). In addition, several business contracts have been signed between Belgian and Senegalese entrepreneurs (in the water, transportation, and agro-food sector), a new joint company is being created and a PEM WECCO' Senegalese company active in the medical sector has received funding from a Belgian foundation.

A research-action component is included in PEM WECCO' and is led by two think tanks based in both countries of implementation. The main objective is to gather good practices from the pilot project on two levels:

operational and strategic/political. At the operational level, the idea is to get ongoing feedback to improve the procedures of the project as it is being implemented, while analysing the impact of mobility and the development of partnerships. On a strategic level, the project aims to feed into better migration governance and cooperation between the two countries through its actions bringing together different institutional actors. Ultimately, the objective is to establish a model that could be replicated with other partner countries and to assess the relevance of sustaining this type of project over the long term.

*Question: What are the lessons learnt / recommendations from the research-action component so far?*

- Recommendations and lessons have mostly been on an operational level, activities had to be adjusted and adapted to strengthen the project. For example, companies selected in the first cohort were not mature enough and companies that were at more advanced stages were selected for the second cohort of entrepreneurs.
- Mobilising the ecosystem and building durable relations with different actors such as civil society, institutions and incubators were identified as key elements for a sustainable project/system of entrepreneurial mobility.
- Building the autonomy of entrepreneurs and companies in their business visa requests was also identified as an important point to work on.

#### **Bond’Innov – Sourcing, selecting and coaching entrepreneurs in both environments, Senegal, and Belgium**

Bond’Innov is an innovation accelerator that works on innovation with a strong social and economic impact in Europe and Africa. Bond’Innov has offices in France, Morocco, and Dakar, implementing programmes that strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems and create links between both continents. In PEM WECCO, Bond’Innov supports ENABEL in sourcing, selecting and coaching entrepreneurs before and after their mobility.

Sourcing takes place on different levels: monitoring entrepreneurial activities, or meetings with investment funds and incubators who are in close contact with entrepreneurs. An open call for proposals was also launched and many applications were received. These applications were then screened based on different criteria evaluating their maturity. Pre-selected candidates then participated in a bootcamp to consolidate their project and evaluate the relevance of a partnership with a Belgian company.

Coaching is then provided to selected candidates with two coaches, one in Senegal and one in Belgium. Coaching takes place before, during and after the business trip to Belgium. Bond’Innov also coordinates the community of PEM WECCO’ entrepreneurs.

*Question: We have seen that the selection of those that participate in the various MPF labour and skills programmes is key to success. Could you share a little more information on how you selected the entrepreneurs for PEM WECCO?*

- The process is led by ENABEL and implemented together with Bond’Innov. Through the lessons learned by the action research on the first stage of the project, the selection procedure was fine-tuned and modified to improve the process as well as the profiles of the entrepreneurs. A questionnaire was shared to the different partners of Enabel (incubators as well international organisations working in a diverse range of sectors. An online information session was organised to explain in detail the selection criteria and the procedure. The reach out allowed to have a wide range of applicants working in very different sectors. The selection was then made by applying the primary criteria (such as level of formalisation, years in business, annual sales) then applications are screened. Pre-selected companies then participate in a boost camp where their projects are evaluated, based on the value of their partnership project. Only projects at an advanced stage and where mobility in Belgium is of real added value, are selected.

The criteria are two fold : for the business and for the entrepreneur and are evaluated between primary and secondary. Primary criteria are necessary to pass the selection (ex. linked to the company: the revenue of the business, the level formalisation (documents needed for the business visa request) whereas for the entrepreneur their identity documents are needed. Secondary criteria include more the relevance of going to Belgium for the company, the maturity of the business etc.

### **Awex - The role of economic institutions in the Belgian entrepreneurial ecosystem**

In Belgium, trade is a competence that was transferred to regions with three agencies, one in each region. In Wallonia, it is the Agence Wallone a l'Exportation et aux Investissements Étrangers (AWEX) that is responsible for trade. AWEX supports Belgian companies in their development abroad and works on attracting foreign companies in Wallonia. Since Wallonia is a French-speaking region, there is an obvious interest to work with Enabel and Senegalese companies.

In PEM WECCO', AWEX is responsible for sourcing Belgian companies that can be matched with Senegalese partners. Similarly to the sourcing in Senegal, companies that can benefit from AWEX services must be sufficiently mature and need to pass an "export maturity diagnostic". AWEX is responsible for mobilising and liaising with the companies in the Wallonia region on the PEM WECCO'. Within this framework, together with the its Flemish and Brussels counterparts Flanders Investment and Trade (FIT) and Hub.Brussels, AWEX co-organised the presentation of the PEM WECCO' at the Belgian princely mission organised in Dakar in May 2023. This mission, which brought 160 Belgian companies to Senegal, has been the occasion to link Belgian entrepreneurs with Senegalese PEM WECCO' entrepreneurs and prepare the ground for fruitful businesses partnerships. AWEX is awaiting the results from pilot project to evaluate whether this kind of initiative can be replicated with other countries.

### **Yeesal Agrihub – The meso level: the mobility of entrepreneurial support structures as a driver of economic growth in both countries**

Yeesal Agrihub is the first structure supporting entrepreneurs in the agribusiness, agritech and green economy sectors in West Africa. Yeesal Agrihub was created by entrepreneurs, farmers and researchers and operates mainly in rural areas. It works on pre-incubation, incubation, and acceleration for entrepreneurs in rural areas.

In PEM WECCO', Yeesal Agrihub contributed to identifying and sourcing entrepreneurs, mostly from their own programmes and participated in a mobility scheme for entrepreneurial support structures (ESS). The objective of this mobility was to enable ESSs to better guide their beneficiaries, including in mobility schemes. This was done through three main components: first, learning about the Belgian ESS ecosystem, understanding the needs of Belgian and entrepreneurs from the diaspora in Belgium and discovering new ways of operating. Second, developing partnerships by identifying incubators in Belgium and exploring the possibility of developing new services jointly. Third, strategic development: identifying new investors/ diversifying sources of revenue and prospecting for the development of new services.

The trip was beneficial in identifying joint challenges for Belgian and Senegalese ESSs in their attempts to work abroad: lack of knowledge on the other country (laws, institutions, rules but also cultural differences), which can obstruct the company's development. The following solution was put forward: partnerships between Belgian and Senegalese ESSs to fully support entrepreneurs with the intention to work in the other country (as a complement to the work of trade agencies).

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## Documents

- [PEM Entreprenre \(enabel.be\)](https://enabel.be)