



EU – GCC DIALOGUE ON ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION PHASE II

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2. ACTIVITY REPORT

EU-UAE BREAKFAST DIALOGUE ON PUBLIC PROCUREMENT BEST PRACTICES

A project implemented by DAI
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German Emirati Joint Council
for Industry and Commerce
المجلس الألماني الإماراتي
المشترك للصناعة والتجارة



Activity Report

EU-UAE Breakfast Dialogue on Public Procurement Best Practices

16 October 2025 in Abu Dhabi, St. Regis Hotel
9:00 AM to 11:00 AM

Organized by the German Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with the Delegation of the European Union- Part of the EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification Project

Background

The European Union (EU) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are strengthening trade and investment ties, with negotiations for a future EU–UAE Free Trade Agreement (FTA) launched in April 2025. Public procurement is a key chapter for economic operators on both sides. The EU's priorities include a regulatory framework and enforcement ensuring transparent and non-discriminatory market access for firms, the use of open digital platforms to increase visibility and reduce barriers, equal participation for SMEs on both sides, the UAE has already advanced reforms in this area, notably through its Federal Digital Procurement Platform and Green Procurement. Together with EU experience, these steps create a timely opportunity for dialogue, with outcomes expected to feed directly into the EU–GCC Business Forum in November 2025 and the ongoing EU–UAE FTA negotiations.

AGENDA

08:30 – 09:00: Registration & welcome coffee

09:00 - 09:10

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Iñigo Febrel Benlloch, Deputy Head of Mission at the Delegation of the European Union to the United Arab Emirates

09:10 - 09:20

EU-Perspective - Procurement Priorities under Future EU–UAE FTA

Nicolas Grosse, Policy Officer, Directorate-General for Trade at the European Commission (virtual)

09:20 - 10:10:

Panel Discussion: "Business Needs in EU–UAE Procurement"

- Davide Camaiera, Managing Director at Vivaticket
- Saeed Ahmed Bin Bella, Director – Government Affairs (UAE & Egypt) at Guardian Glass
- Davide Felugo, Vice President Sales at Ansaldo Energia

Moderation: Joren Selleslaghs, Counsellor for Political Affairs and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Belgium.

10:10 – 11:00

Breakfast and Networking



Opening Remarks

Iñigo Febrel Benlloch

Deputy Head of Mission at the Delegation of the European Union to the United Arab Emirates

After reiterating the strategic importance of trade relations between the EU and the UAE and reminding key figures of this, Mr Febrel Benlloch emphasised that the ongoing discussions on the **EU-UAE Free Trade Agreement** could result in very significant improvements to bilateral trade for both partners, which he considers as representing a groundbreaking advance. This agreement must implement professional procurement practices and this Breakfast provides an opportunity to promote EU practices and support the current FTA negotiations. It also provides a platform to **promote exchanges** on best practices in procurement.

Public procurement is a critical area of international economic cooperation and the EU puts a great emphasis to establish clear rules in this context in our bilateral free trade agreements with partner countries.

While negotiations—and reaching an agreement—on this topic can be challenging due to the significant economic importance of public procurement systems in any country, we are convinced that meaningful FTAs should include substantial commitments on public procurement.

09:10 - 09:20

EU Perspective: Purchasing priorities in the context of a future free trade agreement between the EU and the United Arab Emirates.

Nicolas Grosse, Head of EU Policy, Directorate-General for Trade, European Commission (online).

Mr. Grosse emphasized the **importance of this market** by giving key figures (2300 players, a market size of €2.5 trillions).

He also stressed the importance of having an **efficient public procurement market**, as an improvement in efficiency by 1% would generate €20 billion in savings.

He presented the principles and functioning of public procurement at the EU level, based on the new procedural framework. The public procurement framework is based on three main principles:

- **non-discrimination**
- **transparency**
- **fair procedure**

These principles ensure the following:

- Guarantees of national treatment and **non-discrimination**.
- Detailed procedural requirements for the public procurement process, designed to ensure a transparent and competitive process.
Requirements for **transparency** of information relating to the public procurement process and domestic review procedure; everyone has the same information and can see who has been awarded the contract
- **Split contracts into lots** to encourage SMEs to participate (60% of bids are made by SMEs in the EU)

In addition to the GPA rules, the public procurement chapter includes disciplines to strengthen the level of ambition in Bilateral Trade Agreements, such as :

- **Anti-corruption measures**



- **Single electronic portal** for all notices with an automatic translation tool
- **National treatment** for established suppliers
- A **standstill period** between the award and the signature to allow for potential challenges.
- **Environmental, social and labour considerations**

Mr Grosse also presented the **Standard Market Access offer from the EU** :

The EU can offer a comprehensive coverage providing UAE provides the same ambitious coverage :

- All **central entities** (positive list), all sub-central entities (regions, counties and municipalities), utilities (water-energy-transport sectors)
- **Goods** (including defence non-sensitive goods) – Services (positive list) – all works
- **Limited exemptions** in general notes (no SMEs preference, no localisation requirements)

The EU would be also able to offer **work concessions** on the basis of **reciprocal access** to PPPs/BOT/Concessions.

09:20 - 10:10:

Panel Discussion: "Business Needs in EU-UAE Procurement"

Panelists

Davide Camaiora, Managing Director at Vivaticket

Vivaticket S.p.A. is an Italian-based company that provides integrated electronic ticketing and access-control systems for events, cultural venues, sports, exhibitions, and theme parks. The public sector represents 65% of their activities in the UAE.

Saeed Ahmed Bin Bella, Director – Government Affairs (UAE & Egypt) at Guardian Glass

Guardian Glass is an American company with its HQ based in Luxembourg. It is one of the world's largest manufacturers of float glass, coated glass, and fabricated glass products. Since 2006, it has a manufacturing plant in RAK.

Davide Felugo, Vice President Sales at Ansaldo Energia

Ansaldo Energia is an Italian engineering company specialising in power generation equipment, turnkey power plants, and services for energy infrastructure, with a production facility in Abu Dhabi. All the tenders they handle have been public tenders for 25 years.

Joren Selleslaghs (moderation) Counsellor for Political Affairs and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Belgium.

1) Asked by the moderator to give examples of **practices and challenges** based on their experience, the panellists mentioned the following important points :

- Having a strong **management office** in the UAE, which makes a real difference
- More and more projects distinguish two parties in the contracts: **technical and finance parts**, which is important, especially for a tech company
- **Maintain a very high quality standard** of delivery in the UAE. This is especially important given the UAE's strong growth. EU companies should choose tenders that prioritise quality
- The very big **size** of the UAE tenders does not allow all companies in the EU to bid.
- **Uniformity** across the UAE has improved significantly, but this remains a concern.



Requirements differ from one emirate to another and access to the different regulations remains complicated.

- Although today it is possible for an international investor to start a business without having a 100% Emirati partner, a **51% local ownership** is still required to participate in public tenders.
- Certain local authorities have kept some rules that are very challenging for EU companies.

The moderator summarised the **key points** :

Ensure **clarity, quality** and **uniformity** of tenders across the Emirates.

2) The moderator asks the panelists what **advice** they can give to businesses to succeed:

- **Build trust** in the long term, be consistent and present in the country .This should be an ongoing investment process, not a one-off bid..
- Go and **meet decision-makers**: Use the open door policy in the country, as laws can be changed if it is good for the UAE and its inhabitants.
- Work on **knowledge sharing** by giving them the tools to differentiate between the technical quality of offers in public entities.
- Keep the right **mindset**: the level of expectations of service is very high (having things tomorrow that are customised to their needs and not standard form).

The moderator summarised the **key points**:

Build **trust**, good **relationships** and **dialogue on the process**.

3) What should be included/emphasised in the **Free Trade Agreement** to increase business between the EU and UAE?

The main points were :

- **Ownership** : having companies that are 100% European and having an import code autonomously
- **Local content** : Deployed across all emirates and sectors to support companies that contribute to the UAE
- Push for **direct contact between authorities** to share practices

4) The panelists were asked to share one existing **best practice**

- A **portal** that brings together public projects. It exists in several emirates and it is very useful
- Keep in mind that **99%** of the projects happen here and this it to be included in the Business Plan. The **criteria** are clear for new tenders, including for semi-government entities
- It is often possible to **negotiate** government contracts, for example regarding IP rights
The government is also prepared to use the **English language**.



Key Conclusions

- The EU public procurement framework is based on three main principles:
 - non-discrimination
 - transparency
 - fair procedure
- Under a Free Trade Agreement, and provided UAE offers the same ambitious coverage, the EU can offer a comprehensive coverage providing:
 - All central entities, all sub-central entities, utilities
 - Goods and services
 - Limited exemptions
- The conditions for success are the following :
 - Ensure the clarity, quality and uniformity of tenders across all Emirates
 - Maintain a high quality standard
 - Build trust and good relationships on the long term
 - Dialogue and negotiate with the decision makers to improve adapt the procurement process
 - Allowing companies that are 100% European to bid and having an import code independently.
 - Integrate the local content in the FTA to support companies that contribute to the UAE economy
 - A portal that brings together all the public projects