EU - Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dialogue on Economic Diversification

EU – GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries

Project Identification No. EuropeAid/138630/DH/SER/Multi Service Contract No. PI/2017/393165

4th EU-GCC Business Forum: Oman Summary Report

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1 Background

The EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification project initiated its activities in April 2018. Its overall objective is to contribute to a stronger EU-GCC relationship by supporting the GCC countries' ongoing process of economic diversification away from the hydrocarbon sector. In so doing, the project seeks to consolidate EU's position as a partner of choice for GCC countries for cooperation on economic diversification strategies, macroeconomic stability, trade and investment and research and innovation.

The specific objective of the project is to promote climate friendly trade, investment and economic affairs related policy analysis, dialogue and cooperation between stakeholders from EU and GCC at both regional and country levels in the context of the GCC economic diversification process.

Besides supporting the formal government-to-government dialogues, the project is engaging in a number of other activities such as policy analysis, dissemination of information, exchanges between a variety of public and private stakeholders, organization of business fora, etc.

The first EU-GCC Business Forum took place in Brussels in 2016 with the intention of it becoming an annual flagship event to bring together business leaders and senior public sector actors from both regions. Whilst the original aim was for the event to take place alternatively in the EU and in the GCC, after the successful completion of the second EU-GCC Business Forum which took place in Riyadh in January 2017, the third EU-GCC Business Forum took place in Kuwait in March 2019. Following the rotating presidency of the GCC, the fourth EU-GCC Business forum was scheduled to be held in Muscat, Oman on 11th December organized in cooperation with Omani project partners - the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Technology and Communications, Ithraa, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Supreme Council.

2 Overall Objective

This activity is directly framed under the following project results as outlined in the project's terms of reference:

- R 1.2 Cooperation and dialogue between EU and GCC countries strengthened in the areas of Trade, Investment and Climate Agenda and priority stakeholders such as SME's and women entrepreneurs
- R 1.6 Organize business policy and networking events (including business fora)

3 Specific Objectives

Within the overall objective of the activity within EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification project (see above), the 4th EU-GCC Business Forum aimed to attract up to 350-400 business leaders and entrepreneurs as well as key public sector stakeholders from both regions with the following specific objectives:

- Facilitate an open dialogue between EU and GCC stakeholders to improve mutual understanding of business practices and policy processes
- Facilitate information on business and investment opportunities in the GCC and in the EU (including in the framework of the GCC countries economic diversification process)
- Allow sharing of information and expert recommendations among businesses and policy makers to facilitate market access and business cooperation
- Provide EU and GCC companies with a platform to facilitate networking and encourage them to identify and establish new and lasting trade and investment opportunities

- Create an opportunity for participants to share, discuss and learn from other policy and business success stories and best practices

The following outputs arising from the Business Forum were identified and projected:

- Increased networking between EU and GCC companies resulting in new trade and cross investment opportunities
- Increased discussion and sharing of relevant experience between EU and GCC countries
- Increased visibility and projection of EU in the GCC countries
- Increased use of pre-existing platforms to assist SME's development and network building/expansion such as Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) and European Investment Project Portal (EIPP)
- Several business cases developed and published
- The discussions/outcomes of the panel discussions will lead to identification of a better understanding of educational tools and programmes needed, a cohesive legal framework for technology, leading edge business practices for logistics and manufacturing sectors and the challenges and achievements of women in tech entrepreneurs across the GCC and EU.
- Use of the outputs – particularly of the second panel to set in place a legal framework i.e. to seek and create a cohesive framework for technology that can be later used by EU and GCC in order to ensure similar regulatory standards.

4   Results

4.1   Forum Attendance/ Networking

The forum attracted some 380 people (344 registered); the attendees were from both the EU and the GCC regions – specifically 81% from the GCC region and 17% from the EU.

	#	%			#	%
EU	57	17%				
GCC	280	81%		Female	113	33%
Others	7	2%		Male	231	67%
Total	**344**	100%		**Total**	**344**	100%
Participation by Region				Participation by Gender		

Extensive networking between speakers and delegates took place throughout the day of the business forum, at the networking reception held after the conclusion of the business forum and during the site visits arranged on 12 December. The following discussions were known to have taken place at the event (identities of parties concealed to maintain commercial confidentiality).

Party 1	Party 2	Follow Up
EU software company seeking finance for expansion	Major UAE investment organization	Further discussions to be facilitated by EU-GCC project team
EU software company seeking graduate talent for expansion in Oman	EU-GCC project team	Project team to introduce business to public and private tertiary educational institutions in Oman and UAE if required
EU trade office discussing commercial and trade opportunities in Oman	Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry	As direct contact established, follow up led by EU Trade Office

Party 1	Party 2	Follow Up
Major UAE bourse looking to partner with financial institutions in the Sultanate	Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry	As direct contact established, follow up led by Bourse
Major Oman Family owned business seeking investment in tech ventures	EU-GCC project team	Further discussions to be facilitated by EU-GCC project team particularly through the use of EIPP
Bahraini SME support agency seeking to develop and extend international networks for its members	EU software company and EU digital SME association	Further discussions to be facilitated by EU-GCC project team
GCC legal firm seeking for EU support in setting up an arbitration system	EU related institutions	Further discussions to be facilitated by EU-GCC project team
EU education and training provider seeking joint venture to deliver training modules in the Sultanate	Omani training institute	Further discussions to be facilitated by EU-GCC project team
EU logistics company	Omani Government holding company with substantial transport assets and services	Discussions to be monitored by EU-GCC Dialogue Team in order to asses facilitation success

Given that contacts made at the event will be followed by more intensive one to one commercial discussions, immediate impacts are difficult to quantify although 'latent' impacts are anticipated. As can be seen from the table above, the EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification project team will seek to monitor project and trade opportunities arising from initial contacts made at the business forum to assess the new trade and cross investment opportunities that have arisen from it.

4.2 Sharing of relevant experience between EU and GCC countries

In addition to the extensive visual branding of the EU identity at the event, at a policy level significant contributions were made by EU speakers at both the plenary panel sessions and in the focused discussions highlighting the experience and expertise that the EU has in policy areas and programmes relevant to the challenges that GCC countries face in economic diversification and the opportunity to utilize these to assist the GCC achieve its diversification objectives.

Of particular note in this regard were the contributions of EU speakers at the event in particular H.E. Michele Cervone D'urso, Ambassador and Head of the EU Delegation to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman who said in his opening keynote address:

'These events (business forums) are an excellent foundation to enhance further cooperation between public and private sectors both in the EU and GCC. So, let me highlight some of the ways in which we can deepen this co-operation. For example, Horizon Europe is the planned 7-year European Union scientific research initiative designed to succeed the current Horizon 2020 programme. International co-operation in the implementation of Horizon Europe programmes is being sought with a general opening to international participation particularly for third countries with 'good capacity in science, technology and innovation'. The Erasmus Plus Programme also enhances the opportunities for cooperation and mobility with Partner Countries, notably in the fields of higher education and youth, taking into account the various external policies in particular neighborhood, enlargement and development objectives of the EU. Digital Europe is the proposed new dedicated programme to embrace digital transformation. Whilst access to the programme for third countries is dependent on their contribution, Europe's ambitions in R&D cannot be achieved by isolating third-country market participants'.

4.3 Visibility and Projection of EU in GCC Countries

The strong representation of EU speakers and participants in the panel discussions sharing European experience and expertise served to position the EU as a partner of choice in the ingoing national transformation processes of the GCC in the area of technology and highlighting some of programmes that can be used to achieve this. EU panelists made reference, inter alia, to:

- The features and benefits of the Digital Single Market which aims to reduce barriers and offer more opportunities to do business across EU borders in a legal, safe, secure and affordable way;
- The role of technology in the recently published European Green Deal to reach "climate neutrality" (net-zero greenhouse gas emissions) by 2050. Using the existing advanced technologies, commercially or pre-commercially will create a zero-carbon, resource-saving, environmentally sustainable advanced economy. By combining renewable energy, digital technologies, advanced materials, and a sharing economy in transport and other infrastructure, the EU can decarbonize the energy system, move to a circular economy, and dramatically reduce the flow of primary resources;
- EU Member States strategies and initiatives to increase women's participation in the digital transformation.

4.4 Increased use of pre-existing platforms

Whilst there were no panelists from established platforms such as EIPP and EEN which extensively use technology to communicate and connect, panelists made reference to the existence of these tools and as can be seen from point 1 above, a number of follow-ups are planned to engage GCC businesses with these platforms.

4.5 Several business cases developed and published

Once the dialogues highlighted in point 1 above have been satisfactorily concluded, these will be published as best practice cases.

4.6 Outcomes of the panel discussions

The Role of the Education:

Disruptive changes to business models will have a profound impact on the employment landscape over the coming years. Many of the major drivers of transformation currently affecting global industries are expected to have a significant impact on jobs, ranging from significant job creation to job displacement, and from heightened labor productivity to widening skills gaps. The panel discussed topics on how the education system has been and should be changed to include and cope with latest trends in the application of some of the modern technology tools. They also explored in the discussion what skills are required in the near future and how educational institutes could provide the right skills to the future workforce.

Speakers:

Mr. Sebastiano Tofaletti, Secretary General European DIGITAL SME Alliance
Ms. Claudia Massei, CEO, Siemens Oman & Co-founder of Eduqo
Mr. Patrick Neubert, CEO & Co-Founder Polarstern Education
Ms. Mervi Jansson, CEO of Omnia Education Partners

The session was moderated by Dr. Manuela Gutberlet, Public Relations Manager at German University of Technology in Oman (GUTech).

Main discussion points:

The panelists, during the panel highlighted and discussed the key following points:

- How to better change/adapt the education system to better prepare the future work force
- How to better develop students' skills set and ensure their preparedness for the future
- How to update the current curriculum to include and integrate more information/content about the latest technological trends
- How Universities need to use digital technologies to improve and scale up their teaching capacity while still ensuring that the education system remains public and technology-neutral

Legal Framework for Technology:

The Fourth Industrial Revolution has brought about a new challenge. Given the Fourth Industrial Revolution's extraordinarily fast technological and social change, relying only on government legislation and incentives to ensure the right outcomes is ill-advised. These are likely to be out-of-date or redundant by the time they are implemented. Future competitiveness requires governments and private sector to re-imagine strategies, business models and operating principles. The 4th industrial revolution is disrupting almost every industry and creating massive changes in a world that strives for new innovations at massive speeds. Adopting and implementing the right regulation and legal framework to adhere to the effects of the 4th industrial revolution is vital for economies to strive and compete. This panel discussed how the EU and GCC are preparing for the 4IR and what regulations and frameworks are already in place and which need to be enhanced.

Speakers:

Mr. Peter Diery, Minister Counsellor for Digital Policy, DG Connect/UAE EU Delegation
Mr. Muzaffer Beygirci, CEO Nablet GmbH
Ms. Maimuna Al Sulaimani, Lawyer at Maimuna Al Sulaimani Legal Firm
Dr. Abdulhasan Al-Dairi, Chairman, Bahrain SME Agency

The session was moderated by Mr. Majid Al Toky, Chairman of the Trowers and Hamlins Office in Oman.

Main discussion points:

The panelists, during the panel discussed and highlighted the following key points:

- Re-structuring operational and business models to better work with current technological advancement
- The current status and readiness of the GCC countries and EU to deal with the effects of the new advancements in the technological field
- Best practices on how to regulate any additional new technological advancement

Focused Panel 3A – Technology in the Logistics Sector

Improved technology has increased productivity in the supply chain, minimizing costs and errors. These advances benefit all areas of the logistics industry: trucking transportation, international transportation (ocean and air), supply chain management, and shipment tracking. The panel explored the role of technology in the logistics sector and how technology has assisted SME's in the EU and GCC to compete in the global market.

Speakers:

Mr. Ali bin Amer Al Shithani, Vice President of Technology, Asyad & Oman Logistics Center
Ms. Antonella Di Fazio, FDC
Mr. Richard van Schie, Managing Director, DB Schenker Oman

The session – was moderated by Mr. Klaus Middler, Ericson and Oman Telecom.

Main discussion points:

The panelists, during the panel discussion highlighted the key following points:

- How technology has helped small and medium-sized companies in the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries compete in the global market
- Blockchain technology will be a main driver for the Digital Transformation of the Logistics Industry. It will tackle with its secure recording of events some of today's big challenges in logistics. It has the potential to create 100% transparency from manufacturing to the recipient without any possibility of alteration.
- The next generation of mobile networks, 5G will enable speeds and fast reaction times of networks only glass fiber has offered before. Sensors with a battery life of ten year or more will transmit data from anywhere. Remotely operated vehicles and machines become a reality.

Focused Panel 3B – Technology in the Manufacturing Sector:

Industry 4.0 will make it possible to gather and analyze data across machines, enabling faster, more flexible, and more efficient processes to produce higher-quality goods at reduced costs. This in turn will increase manufacturing productivity, shift economics, foster industrial growth, and modify the profile of the workforce—ultimately changing the competitiveness of companies and regions. The Panel discussed the role of technology in driving the development and growth of the manufacturing and industrial sector in the EU and GCC.

Speakers:

Mr. Peter Statev, Member of Bulgarian National Innovation Council
Mr. Tarek Annan, IT and Policy Consultant at Digikompass
Dr. Abdullah Al Mahruki, Executive Director of the Industrial Innovation Centre, Oman

The session was moderated by Mrs. Iris Meinl, Founder and CEO of Meinl Consulting.

Main discussion points:

The panelists, during the panel discussed and highlighted the following key points:

- The role of the fourth industrial revolution in increasing the productivity of manufacturing industries and promoting industrial growth, i.e. the concept of the so-called "Smart Factory"-which means a factory which is a high-technology and extremely digitalized production site where all departments and machines are cross-linked. One goal of a Smart Factory for example is to collect as many data as possible and to use them for better decision making. Product development and manufacturing processes are highly digitalized.
- The role of technology in driving the process of development and growth of the manufacturing and industrial sector in the EU and the GCC
- That the cost advantage of low-cost labor could be reduced by Industry 4.0. Therefore, it could be attractive for companies to locate their production and manufacturing of goods back home to the original home-country of the company.

Focused Panel 3C – E-Commerce:

As EU and GCC E-Commerce industry continues its rapid growth, and online merchants continue to replace traditional retailers as the destination of choice for consumers, that growing popularity brings with it an array of new opportunities and challenges. The panel tackled topics such as payment methods, regulatory environment and the diverse set of regulations as well as consumer protection, shipping products across international borders.

Speakers:

Dr. Christian Coppeneur Gulz, CEO of ExpoCloud
Ms. Sharifa Al Barami, Co-Founder and CTO of MarkeetEx.com
Mr. Sebastiano Toffaletti, Secterary General of Digital SME Alliance

The session was moderated by Mr. Peter Diry, Minister Consular of Digital Policy, DG Connect/EU UAE Delegation.

Main discussion points:

The panelists, during the panel highlighted and discussed the following key points:

- The role of digital and physical commerce and the synergies between them
- The impacts of GDPR as a model for the GCC
- The role of a regulator to safeguard privacy, consumer protection, fair competition, etc. and to provide a level playing field (also in view of cross-border activities, payment options, platform operators, etc.).

Women in Tech:

Literature examining the impact of women in the technology workplace — specifically women collaborating on teams and in leadership roles — demonstrates the need for and impact of having more women in technology. Greater gender diversity in technology can impact businesses' bottom lines, as researchers have indicated. Recruiting more women into the technology industry is an obvious solution. Interestingly, technology is the only STEM discipline where the participation of women has declined in the past 20 years. The need for tech professionals is not the only reason, nor is it the most important argument, for achieving better gender diversity in technology. A lack of women in technology can lead to a decrease in performance and profits, creating a missed opportunity for those businesses. The panelists discussed the challenges and experience to attract more female tech entrepreneurs to the workforce and challenges and experience and how to support young female tech entrepreneurs and what programs and resources are in place to advance women in technology from the classroom to the boardroom.

Speakers:

Ms. Farida El Agmy, General Manager of Tharawat Family Business
Ms. Alya Shanfari, Founder and CEO of Beennova
Ms. Pia Erkinheimo, Co-Founder of Women in Tech Finland
Dr. Manuela Gutberlet, Public Relations Manager at German University of Technology of Oman

The session was moderated by Mrs. Nona Deprez, Head of Unit at the Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI 4).

Main discussion points:

The panelists, during the panel, discussed and highlighted and the following key points:

- The need to invest in current and future capacity of the female workforce and skills in order to ensure better success
- The need to share and highlight the challenges faced by the female tech entrepreneurs in the field
- The importance of current female entrepreneurs supporting younger entrepreneurs through both financial support and by sharing advise/knowledge
- The need to create more internship opportunities for young female STEM students as well as networking and mentoring programs to promote their future careers

4.7 Use of the outputs for policy advocacy

Ms. Nona Deprez, Head of Unit, Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI 4), European Commission, succinctly summarized the dialogue at the event and its value as a foundation for future EU-GCC policy and other co-operation by saying in her closing remarks:

'Whilst conferences provide an excellent vehicle for raising and debating issues it is important that our discussions on technology today are the beginning of a deepening and continuing process of EU-GCC co-operation particularly in terms of business to business contacts. The good news is that we have the vehicles in place to achieve this. Co-operation arrangements have been signed with

a number of GCC member states including Oman, Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar and discussions are underway regarding the signing of an EU-GCC Free Trade Agreement.

As we heard from H.E. Michele Cervone D'urso, Ambassador and Head of the EU Delegation to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman Saudi Arabia in his keynote address this morning, in this regard the EU has a number of important initiatives to connect businesses particularly SMEs with their counterparts in Europe. Indeed start-ups rather than established companies are the usual source of disruptive technologies. The EU therefore is looking for further interesting discussions with GCC partners to further sustainable growth and the latest technologies and innovations.'

The direct and indirect outputs such as closer cooperation in vocational training or support in establishing an Oman Arbitration Centre will be followed up by the Technical Team and further discussed with the respective GCC stakeholders.

Whilst specific techniques for co-operation, as stated in the EU-Oman arrangement, such as workshops, conferences and senior official meetings are identified, the EU has the opportunity for a deeper level of engagement through connecting GCC countries more directly into the economic development and business support tools that the EU has developed to support economic development in the 28 member states. Adopting this approach, that is engaging with GCC countries through what the EU does rather than what the EU is will also lead to a better understanding of the EU and its structures. The EU is a large and somewhat opaque 'house' with a rich and diverse range of functions and activities both in 'core' Commission DG's but also in EU agencies and supported projects and initiatives such as Horizon 2020, Enterprise Europe Network and dialogue on the EU's experience in creating the Digital Single Market.

4.8 Lessons learned from EU – GCC Business Forum

Despite the fact, that the 4th EU-GCC Business Forum was well received by the attending delegates (see Annex E – Survey Results), some general remarks that warrant attention for the next Forum in Oman are listed below:

- 80% of delegates confirmed their participation in the final two weeks preceding the event, which is common in the GCC. This makes logistics planning challenging.
- Whilst it is important to work in partnership with key governmental organizations in host countries for political and other support, their pace of implementation and organization was much slower than those of the project team. This led to decisions on the event being made at the last minute.
- Engaging rapporteurs to summarize and report on discussions at panel sessions would be a useful tool to capture the substance and nature of panel discussions.
- Communication: response rate from partners on agreed tasks and milestones was slow despite the established task force
- A pro-active EU-GCC project role in the implementation of the Forum was critical in all respects due to the slow approval and response of the partners in executing agreed actions on the forum
- The EU-GCC Team involved were flexible, patient and available 24/7 to make last minute changes as required (e.g. revised script for mc, speaker's guidelines, substitute for a moderator and speaker the day before the Forum). The team spirit created a positive dynamic, which led to the success of the Forum
- The new topics and the format of the Forum- having a moderator introducing into the topic and start right away with the discussion- were successfully received and should be continued.
- The number of European speakers outnumbered the GCC speakers. This is due to the fact, that the Oman partners did not cover the cost of GCC speakers, as done in the last Business Forum by the Kuwait Partners. It should be carefully discussed, if the EU could cover partially the cost for GCC Speakers.

Annex A – Print and Digital Press Review

Local Newspapers – the approved press release appeared in the following newspapers:

Pre-Event
As per our communication with the Delegation in Riyadh – a short press release was shared with regional press in order to create additional buzz around the forum and attract additional European and GCC representatives

Post Event
- Oman Observer
- Muscat Daily
- Al Roya'a
- Oman Daily (Arabic press)

Social Media Coverage

The EU-GCC Dialogue covered the event extensively on its own social media platforms during the event. The team focused on highlighting the main takeaways from the sessions. Additional coverage was obtained through the support of the Omani partners – primarily the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, references of shared tweets can be found below:

https://twitter.com/MOCI_OMAN/status/1204633242168631296
https://twitter.com/MOCI_OMAN/status/1204644403169710080

https://twitter.com/MOCI_OMAN/status/1204696978401222656

https://twitter.com/MOCI_OMAN/status/1204699358660382721

https://twitter.com/MOCI_OMAN/status/1204700050422677505

https://twitter.com/MOCI_OMAN/status/1204992035045855232

In addition, the project's team and partners coverage – speaker's company representatives and/or the speakers themselves tweeted and retweeted their own content. References of particular tweets can be found below:

https://twitter.com/EUdigitalsme/status/1204682101045571584
https://twitter.com/EUdigitalsme/status/1204682094812815360

https://twitter.com/sebastianobxl/status/1205446404803629058

https://twitter.com/F_ElAgamy/status/1204746174940495872

https://twitter.com/PiaErkinheimo/status/1204741906346975235

Speakers such as

- Mr. Toffaletti, Secretary General of the Digital SME Alliance, highlighted in a post that his participation in the business forum re-affirmed the availability and opportunities for EU businesses in the GCC region. He continued on to highlighted that the business forum was provided platform for other businesses/organizations in Europe and the GCC to better connect and hopefully collaborate and establish stronger linkages. Link to LinkedIn post can be accessed from here.
- Ms. El Agmy, General Manager of Tharawat Family Business, indicated that she had *"gained new insights into various industries and the event cemented [her] view that the relationship between EU and GCC private sectors (and family businesses) should be reinforced."* Link to LinkedIn post can be accessed from here

- In addition, the above, Ms. El Agmy's post indicated further discussions to be continued in either the GCC or Europe depending on the speaker's availability. The discussion was notably clear between Ms. El Agmy and another speaker from the Role of Education.
- Ms. Alya Al Shanfari, Founder of Beennova tech SME, later shared a similar post highlighting her contentment at having participated in the business forum as she found the discussion points shared during the panel were "*great points that [focused] on addressing empowering more women in tech*"
- Mr. Neubert, CEO of Polarstern Education, utilized the Business Forum to connect with similar EU/GCC businesses located in the GCC region with the aim of building connections in the hope of collaborating on future projects. A brief description of his meeting can be accessed from [here](#)
- Dr. Manuela Gutberlet, Public Relations Manager at German University of Technology of Oman, published an article following her participation on the Women in Tech panel in *the EU-GCC Business Forum.* The article which can be accessed from this link [here](#) details how *"the discussion should be inclusive [and] how to create an engaging, innovative and diverse work-environment in technology while also [still] highlighting tech role models."* The article continues on to indicate that if change is to be achieved – then it needs to begin with school curriculums in order to better ensure that *"girls and women [are] more involved in the process of producing and creating knowledge, operating, designing and inventing new technologies. Researchers in Europe have suggested to change the testing system at school and to include more cognitive skills instead of fact checking…".* The article concludes by highlighting that equality and diversity in STEM need continuous attention and strong action from various stakeholders.

Annex B – Moderator and Speaker welcome packet

Dear Speakers and Moderators,

Welcome to Muscat, Oman!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation and involvement in the **4th EU-GCC Business Forum**. We look forward to seeing you at **the Business Forum on Wednesday December 11th** and the **networking reception directly organized directly after the Business Forum.**

We have included in this packet the following items for you reference and perusal:

- Your individual speaker guides
- The biographies of the other panelists participating in your panel for your reference
- The most recent event agenda
- Relevant transportation information
- The contact numbers and addresses of all venues
- The contact details of the EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification Project Team – should you need any urgent assistance during your stay
- Your personalized Business Forum badge will be provided to you no later than on the day of the event
- Please ensure to keep this with you for both the business forum and the networking reception

Transportation Details and Logistics

Airport Drop Off and Pick Up
A dedicated taxi pick up has been pre-arranged. The taxi driver will stand between the Omantel and Café Nero stand with a sign highlighting your name. A similar taxi will later drop you off to the airport.

Wednesday December 11th – Oman Convention and Exhibition Center
- The Crowne Plaza is 5-minute walk from the Convention Center. A directional map has been included in this packet.
- For those staying at other hotels than the Crowne Plaza – other methods of transportation will be arranged.

Visa Requirements
For those who hold European passports please apply for an unsponsored tourist visa (26A). To access the correct visa link – please see here: https://evisa.rop.gov.om/

Private Taxis
Should you wish to explore Muscat during your down time or prefer to arrive at the venue at a later time private taxi can be found at the hotel reception.

Site Visits
For those who have registered for site visits on the 12th of December please note that the pick-up details and timings will be confirmed no later than December 11th.

Contact Information & Venue Addresses

Main Hotel Contact Details and Address
Crowne Plaza OCEC, Al Jamah Al Akbar Street Adjacent to Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre Muscat OM, 128, Oman, Tel. +968 24 252000

Organizer Team:
- Stefan Kraxner, Team Leader: +971 50 829 4793
- Rawan Khatib, Communications and Events Expert: +971 55 6964094
- Douglas Aitkenhead, Trade and Investment Expert: +971 58 586 2662
- Tarek Sabasi, Regional Coordinator GCC: +971 50 8147036

Emergency Contact Details
- Emergency Phone Number of Police, Ambulance and Fire Services – **9999**

Annex C– Suggested Panel Questions

Panel 1: Role of Education

No.	Questions	First Respondent	Second Respondent
1.	For years, it was thought that the intelligence quotient (IQ) test – which measures memory, analytical thinking and mathematical ability – was one of the best ways to predict our future job prospects. Then came Emotional Intelligence (EQ), broadly characterized as a set of interpersonal, self-regulation and communication skills. As technology redefines how we work, do we need to measure students in terms of their skills Adaptability Quotient, or AQ, a subjective set of qualities loosely defined as the ability to pivot and flourish in an environment of fast and frequent change in order to thrive in the job market? How can we develop and measure these skills?		
2.	A new report published by Dell Technologies says that 85 per cent of the jobs that will exist in 2030 haven't even been invented yet. How can we use new technologies such as augmented reality and virtual reality to train people rapidly and effectively 'in the moment' to meet new emerging skill needs?		
3.	Do you think that 'Flipped Learning' that is the teaching approach in which the conventional notion of classroom-based learning is inverted, so that students are introduced to the learning material before class with classroom time then being used to deepen understanding through discussion with peers and problem-solving activities facilitated by teachers is a more effective way of developing the knowledge and skills for the digital age?		
4.	While educational models of the past focused on providing students with the requisite knowledge to turn them into skilled workers, the educators of today are more concerned with teaching students how to learn on their own. What techniques can educators use to encourage self-learning not only in formal education but throughout life?		
5.	How can Artificial Intelligence tools such as Intelligent Adaptive Learning be used to provide customized and tailored learning on a one-to-one basis for individual students at a large scale?		
6.	Is AI in education a substitute for traditional pedagogical approaches or a support for them? What is the most appropriate 'blend' in 'blended learning'?		
7.	What is your vision on skills development for SMEs on Big Data, Internet of Things and Cyber security for the coming years and how should skills development programs be implemented by businesses?		
8.	What are the hurdles for businesses particularly SMEs in digital up skilling and how can governments assist SME's in addressing skills gaps both through existing and new educational and training programs?		
9.	What is the role of education in innovation? Can you educate pupils and students to be innovative or is a personal characteristic which can be developed but not taught?		

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Panel 2: Legal Framework for Technology

No.	Questions	First Respondent	Second Respondent
1.	With Saudi Arabia having already granted citizenship to a robot named Sophia, should other countries follow its lead perhaps not through granting citizenship to machines but through recognizing that their autonomous and cognitive features e.g. the ability to learn from experience and take independent decisions requires them to have a status in law?		
2.	In many countries, employers can get into legal trouble if they ask interviewees about their religion, sexual preference, or political affiliation. Yet they can use social media to filter out job applicants based on their beliefs, looks, and habits. How can legislators design and enforce legislation that deals with not only the uses of technology but its abuses?		
3.	How can legislators develop legislative instruments related to the development of robotics and artificial intelligence foreseeable in the next 10-15 years when the product development cycle in AI is much more rapid? Does the promulgation of regulations trail the development of technology rather than precede it?		
4.	Should criteria for 'intellectual creation' for copyrightable works produced by computers or robots be drawn up?		
5.	Blockchain, or Distributed Ledger Technology, is a tamper-evident and tamper-resistant digital ledger implemented in a distributed fashion. How can regulators control this technology used in areas such as crypto currencies, which enables direct transactions within a ledger without the need for a central authority or trusted intermediary in a specific jurisdiction who can be held accountable?		

Focused Panel 3A: Technology in the Logistics Sector

No.	Questions	First Respondent	Second Respondent
1.	How far can predictive big data analysis be effectively used for 'Anticipatory Shipping' that is the storage of goods from larger warehouses to smaller, strategically placed fulfilment centers until customers are ready to order them?		
2.	The fully digital autonomous ship has been hailed as the new frontier in shipping by some commentators providing benefits including lower costs, more efficient use of space in ship design, more efficient use of fuel and lower risk of human error on board. Are 'smart' ships going to be a key component in the future logistics supply and distribution chains just as containers were 50 years ago?		
3.	Will today's multi-billion-dollar global express industry with the integrators such as FedEx, UPS and DHL be replaced by consignors establishing and operating their own Transportation Management Systems (TMS) that is specialized software's for planning, executing and optimizing the shipment of goods using multiple carriers?		
4.	How can the use of Blockchain technology spur seamless and efficient international trade and how can governments be persuaded to use the technology in areas such as Customs Clearance?		
5.	In traditional logistics, the 'last mile' problem that is typically multiple stops along a given route reduces the efficiency of final delivery to the customer. What contribution can 'Crowd sourced' delivery such as in the restaurant industry with services such as Deliveroo make to expediting fulfilment and enhancing customer satisfaction?		

Focused Panel 3B: Technology in the Manufacturing Sector

No.	Questions	First Respondent	Second Respondent
1.	Further development of Industry 4.0 will need new technologies and new business models. This will result in shorter cycles for Research & Development and shorter Product Life Cycles. In the EU many companies react by creating the new job role of an "Innovation Manager". How do you see the importance of professional Innovation Management in companies in both regions - the EU and GCC?		
2.	One of the impacts of Industry 4.0 is that the cost advantage of low-cost labor would be reduced. Therefore, it could be attractive for companies to locate their production and manufacturing of goods back home to the original home-country of the company. What are the opportunities offered to both the EU and GCC through this so-called "Reshoring" or "Onshoring"?		
3.	The heart of Industry 4.0 is the concept of the so-called "Smart Factory" – which means a factory which is a high-technology and extremely digitalized production site where all departments and machines are cross-linked. One goal of a Smart Factory for example is to collect as many data as possible and to use them for better decision making. Product development and manufacturing processes are highly digitalized. How would you rate the maturity of the real-life implementation of Smart Factories in the EU and the GCC?		
4.	Do you think that, the Smart Factory can ever lead to 'Lights Out Manufacturing' that is a fully automated factory which needs little or no human intervention, so it can manufacture with the lights out?		
5.	I personally do some academic research in the field of so-called "Cloud Manufacturing". This technology can support companies to get their manufacturing completely independent from own company production sites. Companies which want to produce a good just need to join a Cloud Manufacturing platform and can choose a supplier from every country in the world which will do all the manufacturing in exact the same way the company would do it by itself. What do you think could be the impact of Cloud Manufacturing?		
6.	There has been much discussion about Industry 4.0 that is connecting operational chains. How would you rate the importance for collaboration between different companies, suppliers, consultants, and technology providers for the further development of Industry X.0?		
7.	How can Virtual Realty-Technologies be used as an 'Assisted Reality' technology for example by wearables by employees to access and overlay highly detailed specifications or instructions in real-time?		
8.	In your view, which countries and which groups of employees are going to be the biggest winners and losers from Industry 4.0?		
9.	What chances to you see for Women Entrepreneurs in the field of Manufacturing- and Industrial-Manufacturing?		

Focused Panel 3C: E-Commerce

No.	Questions	First Respondent	Second Respondent
1.	What is your role / business model in the E- Commerce value chain and what role does E- Commerce play in your organization? What is the mix between physical vs online retailing? Local vs. Cross border?		
2.	What opportunities does E-Commerce provide on top of just digitizing the physical business model or with other word what new and innovative services can be implemented over E-Commerce that would not be possible in a physical store?		
3.	What barriers / challenges do you see for the roll-out / take-up of E-Commerce in your environment? Have they changed over the last years? Do you see new ones coming up, as new technologies appear and the use of E-Commerce increases?		
4.	One of the most important issues for the take-up of E- Commerce is trust. How do you address this issue? What can/did you do to ensure user trust and what can be done on regulatory level?		
5.	Do you see any existing or new technologies that might boost E-Commerce activities? Examples could be Virtual/Augmented Reality, Facial Recognition, predictive Analytics (analysis of past user behavior to better target), proximity marketing (highly targeted marketing based on user location), or any other technology you see as promising.		
6.	How do you see the trade-off between privacy and customer convenience currently and in view of new technologies (e.g. facial recognition)?		
7.	How do you see the role of a regulator to safeguard privacy, consumer protection, fair competition, etc. and to provide a level playing field (also in view of cross-border activities, payment options, platform operators, etc.).		

Panel 4: Women In Tech

No.	Questions	First Respondent	Second Respondent
1.	How did you get started in tech - what experiences led you to technology as a career? Did you consider the gender balance of the sector prior to starting your career?		
2.	What was your biggest success and your biggest learning opportunity?		
3.	What is the biggest challenge for the next generation of women and what are the strongest role models for them in technology?		
4.	What do you believe that young women need to know/hear/see to consider technology as a career option? What advice would you give to young girls who may or may not be considering a career in technology?		
5.	What changes would you make in high school and undergraduate curriculum/culture to encourage more women to stay in tech?		
6.	While IT companies say they are making strides to improve diversity and inclusion, the majority of women (67%) still feel underestimated or not taken seriously at work. What advice do you have for women who are in the field of technology experiencing 'imposter syndrome', that is a pervasive feeling of self-doubt, insecurity, or fraudulence despite often overwhelming evidence to the contrary.		
7.	What can employers do, in your opinion, to attract more women into the tech sector and why should they do this? What is the distinctive and/ or different contribution of a woman in a technical industry?		
8.	Do you think we should promote a broader definition of what it means to be in "Tech"? Perhaps a common misconception about working in the tech space is that you have to know how to code. Can women in tech play other roles for example as entrepreneurs rather than developers?		

Annex D – Photographs Selection and Video

LINK to Pictures

LINK to Video

Annex E – Survey Results

LINK to Survey Result