



WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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E-MAIL

To:	WCP Advisory Board Members WTO Chairs	Date:	24 November 2020
From:	Knowledge and Information Management, Academic Outreach and WCP Programme Division	Div. Ref:	

WTO CHAIRS PROGRAMME

Expressions of interest

In preparation for the next phase of the WTO Chairs Programme (WCP) to be launched in 2021, the Secretariat is inviting expressions of interest from universities in developing countries, least developed countries, recently acceded and acceding Members to participate in the programme. Universities and academic institutions interested in participating in the programme are invited to fill out an expression of interest on the website of the WTO Chairs Programme at <http://wtochairs.org/expression-interest> and they will be kept informed regarding the next phase of the programme.

For over ten years, the WCP has been providing support and promoting trade-related academic activities by universities and research institutions in beneficiary countries. The programme is aimed at empowering universities and academic institutions in beneficiary Members engaging with government and other influential stakeholders in trade policy decisions. Capacity building activities under the WCP relate to development of teaching curricula, research and trade-related policy advice, and outreach activities. The WTO Chairs are part of existing law and economics faculties and selected in a thorough selection process. Chair holders and the WCP secretariat are advised by an Academic Advisory Board comprised of more than a dozen professors and experts of high standing.

For further information please refer to the annex to this message and the WCP website or get in touch by email at wtochairs.enquiries@wto.org.

ANNEX

Additional information on the WTO Chairs Programme (WCP)

The WTO Chairs Programme contributes to the WTO's technical assistance mandate of "enhancing human and institutional capacities of beneficiaries to take full advantage of the rules-based multilateral trading system, meet their obligations and enforce their rights as Members, and deal with emerging trade-related challenges." The Technical Assistance Plan for 2020/2021 endorses it as a pivotal component of key result three, aimed at ensuring that "academic institutions and other stakeholders are analysing WTO issues and reaching out to policy makers."

The programme extends significantly the reach of the WTO's trade-related technical assistance directed at government officials by involving university chairs serving as multipliers in beneficiary countries. Rather than sourcing know-how from WTO headquarters, university institutions participating in the programme receive support for generating themselves research and knowledge thus building capacity and generating expertise on the ground in beneficiary countries. Participants can rely on the expert knowledge of the WCP Advisory Board and mutually support each other as peers within the WCP network. The WCP is (i) focusing on the design and delivery of courses on international trade law, economics and policy at academic institutions in beneficiary countries; (ii) fostering research in trade-related matters of relevance for government and stakeholders in the regions; (iii) promoting networking among academic institutions and outreach to policymakers in beneficiary countries.

Over two four-year cycles, the programme has created a network of WTO experts in the field. Given that unlike other international organizations the WTO has no regional offices in different parts of the world, WCP Chair holders also contribute to the Organization's liaison with the respective regions. In addition, the programme generates excellent long-term sustainability by capitalizing on the fact that, typically, academic specialization remains active and increases over the course of a professional career. Capacity of WCP chairs and networks established through the programme remain even after the conclusion of a cycle of the programme and governments in beneficiary countries benefit thereof when seeking trade policy advice.

In 2019, an independent in-depth external evaluation yielded favourable results, finding that WTO Chairs have been successful in generating high-quality research and impactful advice that translated into policy action in beneficiary countries in the programme's first and second phase (for example, on trade facilitation, global and regional value chains, small and medium sized enterprises, trade and gender, digital trade, or sustainable development through trade). In essence, Chairs participating in the programme generate research and policy advice helping to identify their country's capacity needs and building up the required capacity, thus contributing policy makers and local stakeholders diversifying exports, partaking in value chains and creating business opportunities. These examples demonstrate that the programme has been successful in generating strong links connecting academic research, outreach and teaching work, with trade policy making and sustainable capacity building in beneficiary countries.

The next phase of the programme will commence at the beginning of 2021. It implements recommendations by the independent external evaluation and by the Advisory Board members, as well as lessons learned from the first two phases of the programme. Accordingly, research should focus on topics most relevant to policy makers and stakeholders, including those covered by WTO committee work and negotiations. More universities from LDCs and underrepresented regions will be included in the programme, while geographic representation of all world regions will be maintained. In addition, the academic network will be enhanced by including, albeit without funding, universities in developed countries, thus strengthening opportunities for peer-to-peer collaboration and intensified networking and outreach activities between participating universities. Finally, synergies with other trade-related technical assistance and research activities carried out by the WTO will be promoted.
