

The PSLO Tribune



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Putting Your Local Business Community on the WBG Map: Enterprise Outreach Services (EOS) Goes Global



21 PSLOs met in Paris for their Annual Retreat

What does an island located on the fringe of the Arctic Sea have in common with a landlocked country in the heart of Africa? Ask this question to Audbjorg Halldorsdottir ([video](#)), Private Sector Liaison Officer (PSLO) to the World Bank Group (WBG) and representative of Overseas Business Services at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Reykjavik, Iceland, and she'll most likely mention 'a lack of diplomatic relations.' Iceland's single embassy on the African continent is located in Maputo, Mozambique.

Hence, when the island's trade agency was planning to send a delegation to Uganda, a simple introductory letter to the African country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not the first option. Instead, the island's trade agency called upon a tightly-knit network of 25 trade and business representatives from Europe, which has been promoting – in the context of the [PSLO network](#) – trade and investment between developed and developing countries since 1999. The PSLO network put the Ugandan business community on Iceland's trade map. *"Being a PSLO facilitated my contacts with the World Bank office in Kampala and through them I met with the Uganda Investment Authority (UIA), which – a few months later – as a result of my visit came to Iceland. We started communicating on different projects and, probably, what we will see as a result is at least one if not two projects with the UIA and Icelandic partners,"* says Halldorsdottir.

The PSLO network – part of the World Bank Group's [Enterprise Outreach Services \(EOS\)](#) and located within EXT Europe – serves as a bridge between the WBG and its client countries on the one hand, and the private sector in developed countries on the other hand. The PSLO network consists of professionals based in business intermediary organizations (chambers of commerce, trade or business organizations, investment promotion agencies), which are selected through a local consensus-building process and are under the guidance of the local WBG offices ([see full list of PSLOs](#)).

On September 6, 21 PSLOs from across Europe, including new members from Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, and Turkey, met at the World Bank office in Paris for a two-and-a-half day retreat. Through a series of presentations/seminars, PSLOs and WBG staff shared information and experience on a wide range of PSD-related topics. Long-time PSLO members offered practical advice to those who recently joined the network, and World Bank Group experts from the IBRD, IFC and MIGA contributed to the seminar program with their own presentations.



DEC Lead Economist Ioannis Kessides briefed participants on the Bank's rejuvenated infrastructure agenda, and Carlos Braga, Senior Advisor in the Bank's International Trade Department, provided an update on the WTO Doha trade round. Officers from the Department of Trust Fund Strategy and Donor Relations answered questions on the phase-out process of the Consultant Trust Fund, and the Public Information Center in Paris offered a step-by-step approach to World Bank online and offline resources.

Access to reliable data, knowing how and where to find it, can sometimes be the determining factor in a company's decision whether or not to venture abroad. In some European countries, getting the private sector to reach beyond traditional trade boundaries remains a challenge. Barbara Kanabus

([video](#)), PSLO from the Polish Confederation of Private Employers, explains that the lack of reliable data on trade opportunities in transitional and developing economies is discouraging the Polish private sector from engaging outside conventional trade patterns. *"Polish companies cannot find reliable sources of information regarding business opportunities, the legal situation, or foreign investment laws. The information resources within the World Bank thus offer opportunities to our companies. Additionally, the PSLO network allows me to get the information from people who have already helped companies entering these new markets."*



Sharing knowledge and experience was at the center of the seminars.

From the perspective of the World Bank Group, having a private sector representative liaise with the Bank provides benefits beyond the network's trade and investment promotion mission. Jacek Wojciechowicz ([video](#)), Senior Communications Officer at the Bank's Warsaw office, explains that in some country units, such as ECCU7 which covers eight new EU member countries, the World Bank does not have a physical presence in a number of those countries. *"Sometimes it is very difficult for us to get in touch with a certain delegation or to make sure our partners from those countries are participating in all sorts of processes where the World Bank is involved,"* he says. The PSLO network offers the Bank a way to have a presence in those countries,

even if the Bank decides to withdraw from some when they graduate. *"There will be a permanent presence of someone who will be a liaison person not only between the business sector and the Bank but basically between the communities in those countries. I see very strong benefits for country directors."*

Gilles Garcia, Enterprise Outreach manager in Europe and the 'coach' of the PSLO network, which is now being [expanded globally](#), explains that Private Sector Liaison Officers work free of charge to the WBG because their work is in the interest of their respective country's private sector. *"In exchange, PSLOs have access to WBG communication tools, are provided with WBG speakers for jointly-agreed private sector outreach activities, and receive WBG training."* Trade service provider Finpro is assisting Finnish companies in finding financing for their projects in emerging markets. *"The PSLO network has facilitated access to IFC and MIGA and to the experts there - it has helped Finnish companies get IFC and MIGA onboard,"* says PSLO Tero Lausala ([video](#)), from Finpro. Lausala also notes that Finnish companies have benefited from the PSLO network and the World Bank Group's training seminars. *"We have had experts from the World Bank procurement department coming to Helsinki doing case studies and going through the nitty gritty of how to bid in World Bank-financed deals."*



Networking at lunchtime: PSLOs meet with Giorgio Ambrosetti from the IFC (third from right).

The PSLO network is expanding globally ([see map](#)). For more information, contact [Gilles Garcia](#).