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ABOUT EBOWN

EBO WORLDWIDE NETWORK ASBL

FOREWORD

European Business Organisations are a key component of the European Union's engagement with the private sector in non-EU markets. When they are credible, well governed, and sustainable, they provide EU Delegations with a structured interface to European business and allow companies to engage collectively with local authorities and stakeholders.

Establishing such an organisation, however, is a complex and sensitive process. It requires more than bringing companies together. It demands a clear understanding of local legal frameworks, existing Member States and business representation dynamics, and the diplomatic considerations inherent in representing European business as a whole. Without the right technical knowledge and guidance, EBO initiatives risk fragmentation, limited legitimacy, or weak long-term sustainability.

The EBO Worldwide Network (EBOWN) brings distinct added value in this context. As the global network of officially recognised European Business Organisations operating outside the European Union, EBOWN draws on practical experience from more than 60 markets worldwide. This experience underpins its role not only as a coordination platform, but also as a source of technical and institutional expertise for EU Delegations.

This document outlines how EBOWN and European Business Organisations function together to ensure a coherent, credible, and sustainable European business voice beyond the European Union. It is intended as a practical reference for EU institutions, EU Delegations, Member States, and partners engaged in European business representation abroad.

WHAT IS EBOWN?

EBO WORLDWIDE NETWORK

The European Business Organisation Worldwide Network (EBOWN) is the global network that brings together officially recognised European Business Organisations (EBOs) operating outside the European Union. It is the only worldwide structure that represents European business interests in third markets through a coordinated network of business organisations.

EBOWN does not represent individual companies. It represents organisations that collectively represent European business at country level, ensuring coherence, credibility, and scale.

- Global network of European Business Organisations
- Active exclusively in non-EU countries
- Operates as a coordination, cooperation, and representation platform
- Interfaces with EU institutions on issues affecting European business abroad
- Preserves the independence and autonomy of its members

Core Purpose and Mission

EBOWN exists to be the **leading collective voice of European business in non-EU markets** by providing a global platform through which EBOs can cooperate, align, and engage effectively with EU institutions.

Through the network, EBOWN enables member organisations to:

- Share best practices globally and regionally
- Advocate collectively for European business interests in third markets
- Strengthen links between EBOs and EU institutions
- Support EU economic diplomacy and SME internationalisation
- Promote cooperation and coordination across the network

What EBOWN Represents

EBOWN represents a network of European business organisations and chambers that operate on the ground in third countries and serve European companies across sectors and sizes.

Member Organisations:

- 1 Operate outside the European Union
- 2 Represent European multinationals, SMEs, and micro-enterprises
- 3 Work closely with EU Delegations, Member State actors, and partners
- 4 Support European competitiveness, market access, and investment abroad

The network today spans over 60 key markets worldwide, reflecting its broad geographic reach and diversity of operating environments.

Who Can Be A Member of EBOWN?

EBOWN membership is restricted and selective to safeguard credibility, legitimacy, and coherence across the network. Membership is open only to European Business Organisations, not to individual companies or national chambers acting alone.

One EBO per Country Principle

This principle is employed to ensure clear, legitimate, and effective representation of European business interests. This avoids duplication at EU level and ensures a single interlocutor, with EU Delegation recognition as the deciding factor where multiple claims exist.

Responsibilities of EBOWN Members

Members are expected to actively participate, uphold European values and responsible business practices, provide reliable market insights, maintain good governance, and comply with EBOWN statutes and collective decisions.

How EBOWN Works with Its Members

EBOWN supports members through structured cooperation, including policy coordination, advocacy, global and regional meetings, working groups, capacity building, and access to EU institutions. EBOWN is registered in the EU Transparency Register.

Values and Principles

EBOWN operates on principles of transparency, ethical conduct, responsible business, sustainability, cooperation with EU economic diplomacy, and partnership with stakeholders.

Core Membership Conditions:

- ✓ Be a European Business Organisation operating in a non-EU country
- ✓ Represent European business interests collectively, not a single nationality
- ✓ Be non-profit and non-governmental, where legally possible
- ✓ Be business-led and independent in governance and operations
- ✓ Be formally recognised by the EU Delegation in the host country
- ✓ Operate under a clear legal status in the country of establishment
- ✓ Have transparent governance, statutes, and membership rules

Why EBOWN Matters

European companies operating abroad face complex legal, regulatory, cultural, and commercial challenges. Acting individually, their influence is limited. Acting collectively through EBOs and EBOWN, their impact is significantly strengthened.

EBOWN contributes by:

- Creating a unified European business voice abroad
- Amplifying local market insights to EU policymakers
- Facilitating coordinated advocacy and representation
- Supporting sustainable and inclusive SME internationalisation
- Enhancing European competitiveness in global markets

In One Sentence...

EBOWN is a selective global network composed exclusively of EU-recognised European Business Organisations, operating on a one-EBO-per-country basis, to ensure a coherent, credible, and collective European business voice in non-EU markets.

WHAT IS AN EBO?

EUROPEAN BUSINESS ORGANISATION

A European Business Organisation (EBO) is an independent, business-led association established in a non-EU country to represent and support European companies operating in that market.

EBOs provide a collective platform for European businesses to engage with local authorities, institutions, and stakeholders in a structured and credible way.

- Non-profit and non-governmental
- Business-led and independent
- Established outside the EU
- Recognised by the EU Delegation
- Represents European companies collectively

Why EBOs Exist

European companies abroad face regulatory complexity, market uncertainty, and limited influence. Collective engagement helps unify business interests, reduce fragmentation, address systemic barriers, and promote transparency and predictability to support long-term investment.

Values and Principles

European Business Organisations (EBOs) uphold European values through responsible business conduct. They promote the rule of law, transparency, and fair competition, while advancing environmental and social responsibility, strong governance, ESG standards, and sustainable long-term investment.

How EBOs are Organized

EBO structures vary by country but generally follow a clear governance logic.

- **Board of Directors** - Elected from the membership; Provides strategic oversight
- **Secretariat** - Led by a CEO or Executive Director; Manages daily operations and advocacy
- **Committees or working groups on key themes**

What Makes an EBO Distinct?

- 1 Represent Europe as a whole, not one Member State
- 2 Embedded in the local business environment
- 3 Business-driven rather than institutionally controlled
- 4 Promote European standards through practice

What an EBO is Not

- A diplomatic mission or embassy
- A trade promotion agency
- A consular or visa service provider
- A political lobbying organisation
- A substitute for national chambers

Membership Models

EBOs adapt their membership structures to local realities. *Membership criteria and fees are defined locally.*

- **Direct Membership** - European companies as members
- **Chamber of Chambers** - EU Member State chambers as members
- **Hybrid Model** - Combination of companies and chambers

Who Can Join an EBO?

Membership eligibility varies by country and legal context.

- **European-owned companies**
 - Full membership and voting rights
- **Local companies with strong EU links**
 - Accepted as associate members
 - Usually without voting rights
- **Criteria set by local statutes**

What EBOs Do For Businesses

EBOs deliver practical services aligned with business needs in third markets.

- ✓ **Advocacy and representation**
 - Identify barriers, engage authorities, present consolidated positions
- ✓ **Market intelligence**
 - Share regulatory updates, policy insights, and economic analysis
- ✓ **Networking and visibility**
 - Facilitate partnerships, peer exchange, and public-private dialogue
- ✓ **Business platforms**
 - Support missions, forums, and investment-related initiatives

Why This Matters

Together, EBOWN and EBOs ensure that European business abroad is organised, credible, and heard.

- EBOWN provides global coordination and EU-level access
- EBOs provide local representation and engagement
- Combined, they strengthen Europe's economic presence worldwide

In One Sentence...

EBOWN connects European Business Organisations globally, while EBOs represent European companies locally, together forming a coherent and credible European business voice beyond the European Union.

EBOWN Technical Support

EBOWN provides hands-on technical support to EU Delegations and partners for the establishment and strengthening of European Business Organisations in non-EU markets. Support includes:

- 1 **Pre-feasibility and diagnostic studies**
- 2 **Establishment of European Business Organisations**
- 3 **Guidance on building strong, market-relevant advocacy strategies**

Services are delivered directly by EBOWN or through recognised technical experts from its global network, drawing on experience across more than 60 markets.



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