



AACC

خرفة التجارة العربية النمساوية

AUSTRO-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
ÖSTERREICHISCH-ARABISCHE HANDELSKAMMER

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Report presented to the 19th Meeting of the Board of Directors and the 18th General Assembly of the Austro-Arab Chamber of Commerce on November 24, 2008 by the president of **AACC, Dkfm. Dr. Herbert Stepic**

1) New policy

This report, which you have in your hands now, is the second one presented by the President instead of the Secretary General of the AACC. As we most probably will have a new SG soon, it will be my last one as well.

As you know, in Nov. 2006 I and the whole EB proposed to the GA and the BOD a new policy for our chamber with new ideas, new activities and better management. The declared goal was the transformation of this chamber from a legalisation institute to a true service organisation.

2) New start

It soon turned out, that in fact a real relaunch was necessary; with less income and a reduced number of staff this was quite a challenging task.

The year 2007 showed already a promising turn-around with many more activities and with a partly new, motivated staff. I reported on that first big step forward in detail on the occasion of the previous GA in 2007.

3) Success story 2008

I am most satisfied and even happy that this positive development could be successfully carried forward in 2008 and clearly topped the achievements of the year 2007. I hope that you will join my positive evaluation by your own observations during this year. This judgement of mine is underlined and certified by the summary of activities in the years 2007 and 2008, which you find attached to this report on the next page.

For this success story and all other achievements mentioned below, the chamber has to thank Dr. Alfred Strommer, who – besides his function as treasurer – in his capacity as coordinator of activities, was the main initiator and motor of this development and all this work was done by him at no charge.

I may draw your attention to the fact that not less than 16 (!) events were promoted by the chamber in 2008. 10 of them fully organised and executed. Most of them were very well accepted. All of them showed high quality. This work was done by the staff only, with no help from outside organisations (out-sourcing). In sum, 11 events dealt with economic, 3 with cultural and 2 with social issues.

AACC Events Organized in 2007 / 2008

2007

1. Dialogue on Islam
2. Shariah Law
3. Art & Auction
4. 1st Arab- Austrian Economic Forum & Trade Exhibition
5. Strategy of OPEC - cancelled last min.
6. Circle Deluxe / Lecture Dr. Stepic
 - 4 x Economic
 - 1 x Social
 - 1 x Cultural

GRAND TOTAL: 6

2008

AACC EVENTS ORGANIZED

1. Taqasim - Oud Concert
2. Consultation Day on Gulf States
3. Algebra
4. Consultation Day on Iraq
5. Arab Oil
6. Importance of Networking
7. Training Course for SGs and Top Managers of Arab CC
8. Get-together and Lecture on issues of business competition with members of the AACC and TC-participants
9. Consultation Day on Algeria
10. Al Hoota Caves / Mussels + Sparkling SHADI Dinner
 - 1 x Social
 - 2 x Cultural
 - 7 x Economic

SUBTOTAL = 10

EVENTS WHERE THE AACC ACTED AS CO-PROMOTER

1. Two-day seminar on Gulf States
2. Ice Age Arabia
 - 1 x Economic
 - 1 x Cultural

SUBTOTAL = 2

EVENTS WHERE AACC REPRESENTATIVES TOOK PART

1. AACC stand in AWO - Export Day
2. Sudanese Investment Delegation
3. Sharjah State Visit
4. DAW- FORUM - Arab Ladies in Modern World
 - 3 x Economic
 - 1 x Social

SUBTOTAL = 4

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- **11 Economic Events**
 - **3 Cultural Events**
 - **2 Social Events**

GRAND TOTAL: 16

4) First and second Arab-Austrian Economic Forum / Export day of WKO

As we are holding the second forum simultaneously with the GA this year, I will focus on the importance of such a yearly forum, where many Austrian – and hopefully more and more Arab - exporters and interested business people will meet, exchange experiences, listen to outstanding lectures and panel discussions and hopefully find new opportunities.

Since this forum should become a permanent institution, the third forum is already planned and fixed for November 2008, again simultaneously to the GA and the meeting of the BOD. It will last one and a half days and concentrate solely on medical issues in the context of Arab-Austrian knowledge exchange. It will be a nice setting for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the existence of the Austro-Arab Chamber of Commerce. We will specifically concentrate our endeavours on bringing Arab doctors and top medical managers and opinion leaders to this event.

Furthermore our chamber participated, for the first time, in 2008 with a nicely done booth at the annual Export-Day of the Austrian Federal Chamber, where we met many people interested in doing business in the Arab World and making use of the services offered by our chamber. For sure we will participate again in 2009.

5) New management – Internal organisation achievements:

Here again a huge deal of work was invested. Let me mention just some of it:

- A **database** was established containing all kinds of useful addresses, contact persons and actual information (development from 250 to 1.500 addresses).
- **Homepage**: modern design, great number of information incl. Arab country profiles, all addresses of Arab embassies, commercial counsellors in both areas.
- First **trade directory**: ready to print, samples will be shown at the general assembly, invitations for ads will be sent.
- Development of a new **corporate identity** with modern, fresh style, applied in the newsletter, homepage, letterheads, roll-ups, invitations, flyers, and the like.
- **New statutes** are ready for being adopted through the GA.
- **Strategic partners**: AWO from WKO, WKW, ICC (Int. Chamber of Commerce). Close contacts with all of them were established. Prominent WKO speakers will attend and speak at the economic forum. President Mrs. Brigitte Jank will be our guest of honour at lunch. With ICC we have organised and co-promoted respectively two successful events. It must be stressed, specifically, that we are not in competition with these respected big organisations, but in co-operation to deliver complementary services (typical niche policy). I specifically express my thanks to these esteemed Austrian organisations and their leading persons who showed so much interest in our chamber and the Austro-Arab business.
- A very warmly accepted **training course** for high-ranking Arab chamber functionaries took place in June. It was organised by AACC but with far reaching training sessions delivered by AWO/WKO. Arab participants asked for even more information sessions.
- **Queries** mostly from the Austrian side – very much opposite to former times – were answered professionally and as fast as possible. I am specifically thankful to Dr. Horst Machu, the chamber's chief consultant, who not only contributed to the achievement of this work, but also to the two previous issues (training course, co-operation with chamber organisations).
- **New members**: Due to the inactivity of the chamber in the past years we lost approximately 30 members (one fifth of the total), but due to the new

engagement of all people working for the chamber it was possible to gain new members in the same number.

6) Newsletters

Since the installation of the new management including some new staff members (4 all in all, incl. the legalisation officer) not less than 18 Newsletters in English/German and 9 in Arabic were published and to our knowledge well accepted. In the year 2008 alone we published 10 English/German Newsletters and 5 Arabic ones. The management has plans to extend this 4 page NL by two more pages containing additional economic information mainly received from the Oxford Business Group.

The instrument of Newsletters with plenty of information on fairs, events, congresses and economic (and cultural) news cannot be overestimated. They play an important role in the increasing awareness of the AACC in the business world.

I have to thank Mrs. Johanna Sassark, the chambers internal General Manager who did the main work for the publishing of the newsletters i.e. design, layout and drafting most of the articles. On this occasion I also want to express my respect to her intensive and highly qualified work for the implementation of all events.

7) Cooperation with embassies and commercial counsellors / target companies

I am happy that, as last year, the Arab Ambassadors will participate in the GA and get first hand information of our work and intentions. Additionally special meetings were held with their Excellencies, the Ambassadors. In the past, the lack of information resulted, to some extent, in the Arab Ambassadors only meeting internally and separately before the GA. Furthermore they had not been informed sufficiently by regular contacts with them and their commercial counsellors. There were not any AACC newsletters or invitations to events in the past years.

I would like to kindly ask the Ambassadors for their further intensified participation in our events and to promote the chamber and its work at all relevant places. We continue to offer cooperation and even help to the commercial counsellors of the Arab embassies. There are many occasions, like visits of Arab delegations, where our chamber could serve as a neutral co-organiser or co-promoter. It is a specific goal to acquire more Arab members of our chamber. At the same time we have to complete a list of exporters by intensive research work of all Austrian companies doing business with Arab countries. Curiously enough such a list does not exist presently, not even a data-protected one (also not in Germany).

8) New Secretary General

Most probably the Executive Bureau jointly with the General Union of Joint Chambers will present to the BOD a qualified candidate of Arab origin to take over the post and the duties of SG. In September we had a visit of the newly elected SG of the Union of Arab Chambers, Dr. Shehab and the coordinator of the work of Joint Chambers in Europe, Mr. Mikhlafi, SG of the Ghorfa, the German-Arab Chamber. They are both prepared to deliver any kind of help to the SG to enable him to expand the services of the AACC. Hopefully the GU can afford some donations, if needed, to finance the AACC in the coming years.

9) The president's summary

As initially mentioned I am very satisfied with the work of the staff and the consultants of the AACC delivered in this interim period, which at the same time was a period of a nearly complete new start. If you look at the activities as presented above in some details, you will join me in my summary: in the year 2008 alone there were more activities, than in the 10 years until 2007.

I am sure that in 2008 the Austro-Arab Chamber was the most active one in the group of joint chambers acting in small and middle-sized European countries. As I will continue to be a strong supporter of the Arab-Austrian business and will further serve as a President for some time, I can only hope that the standard of work, with all alterations that seem appropriate in the course of the work, will be kept up in the future. It can be said, that the chamber in its present appearance is handed over to the new SG in very good condition. I may add that quite some important events and other activities are already in concrete planning, initiated by the present staff and consultants. My specific thanks, for all their devoted work, once more, goes to Dr. Strommer, Dr. Machu and Mrs. Sassarak as well as to all other members of the staff.

Vienna, November 2008

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