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UNDERSTANDING THE WTO: DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

WTO technical cooperation



Technical cooperation is an area of WTO work that is devoted almost entirely to helping developing countries (and countries in transition from centrally-planned economies) operate successfully in the multilateral trading system. The objective is to help build the necessary institutions and to train officials. The subjects covered deal both with trade policies and with effective negotiation.

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The WTO holds regular training sessions on trade policy in Geneva. In addition, it organizes about 500 technical cooperation activities annually, including seminars and workshops in various countries and courses in Geneva.

Targeted are developing countries and countries in transition from former socialist or communist systems, with a special emphasis on African countries. Seminars have also been organized in Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Middle East and Pacific.

Funding for technical cooperation and training comes from three sources: the WTO's regular budget, voluntary contributions from WTO members, and cost-sharing either by countries involved in an event or by international organizations.

The present regular WTO budget for technical cooperation and training is 7 million Swiss francs.

Extra contributions by member countries go into trust funds administered by the WTO Secretariat or the donor country. In 2004, contributions to trust funds totalled 24 million Swiss francs.

A WTO Reference Centre programme was initiated in 1997 with the objective of creating a network of computerized information centres in least-developed and developing countries. The centres provide access to WTO information and documents through a print library, a CD-ROM collection and through the Internet to WTO

websites and databases. The centres are located mainly in trade ministries and in the headquarters of regional coordination organizations. There are currently 140 reference centres.



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