

Policy Imperatives for International Trade in Construction Services in the Caribbean Community

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Abstract

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is in the Process of establishing a Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). Amongst other things, the Community is currently agreeing on the terms under which the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) will be implemented, and the construction industry is one of the most important industries in the services sector, and highlights many of the important issues regarding trade within CARICOM as well as between the Community and elsewhere. Issues relevant to the CSME, GATS and to the construction industry include: Accreditation of Qualifications; Harmonization of Regional Registration Legislation; Mutual Recognition of Qualifications and Reciprocity; Free Movement of Natural People; Market Access; Subsidies; Right of Establishment; and New Restrictions on the Provision of Services. These are the key issues also with regard to the CSME establishing fair and effective trading relations with other trading blocs such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas, which it is due to join in 2005. Engineers normally leave the discussion of these issues to economists or politicians, and complain about the results afterwards. This is hardly a satisfactory professional response. In order to be more proactive in ensuring that the profession is properly represented, the engineering bodies in the Community have taken the initiative to formulate positions on these matters, for advising political decision-makers. This paper discusses some of the outcomes of that initiative.