

Burundi: Employers' organisation AEB to work in a difficult environment

During a 3 day mission to Burundi in February 2019, the DECP representative could appreciate the very difficult circumstances in which the national employers' organisation, the 'Association des Employeurs du Burundi' (AEB), has to work, whereby often the focus is rather on survival than on development.

Since the heavy troubles and killings in 2015, the country is facing very serious political and economic problems. It is barred from EU support due to heavy human rights violations. About half a million people fled the country. Economic growth is negative; all investment, both local and international, is more or less suspended due to the persistent instability; unemployment and poverty are wide spread and soaring.

The AEB does in these circumstances what it can with its very limited resources. It maintains some basic level of activities in social dialogue with the trade unions, on issues of labour law and social affairs, and tries to maintain a basic level of communication with its members.

DECP supports the organisation with some limited funds to expand the communications efforts and increase AEB visibility. It also examines how it can help with sponsoring a study and the making of a short business agenda, ready by the end of 2019. In 2020, there will be again presidential elections and AEB wants to be ready by then, to intervene constructively, with facts, figures and proposals in the election debates, and afterwards the policy programmes of the new government. It is indeed high time to enhance and improve the business environment for the private sector in Burundi, and this would be an obligatory route to follow, if poverty and instability are to be diminished.