

## **Founding Members' hold second meeting of the European Chapter of the MENA Financial Crime Compliance Group**

The Founding Members of the European Chapter of the MENA Financial Crime Compliance Group (FCCG) held their second meeting on 24 February 2022. The meeting was hosted by National Bank of Egypt (UK) at their offices in central London.

Founding members include Compliance Officers and Money Laundering Reporting Officers (MLROs) of Arab-owned banks in Europe. Officers from London and Paris attended the meeting either in person, or over video.

During the meeting, the following issues were discussed:

- We are compiling a database of CEOs, Compliance Officers and MLROs at Arab-owned banks in Europe. The scope of the database comprises branches, subsidiaries and representative offices of banks that are headquartered in the Middle East (including North Africa), and banks that are owned by Arab financial institutions but headquartered in Europe.
- We are establishing contact with the City of London Corporation and the City of London Police, which is the UK's national lead authority for fighting fraud and cybercrime. We will also be reaching out to the Prudential Conduct Authority (FCA), and to financial authorities in the EU. The objective of such contacts is to ensure that Arab banks in Europe are part of the conversation about how to fight financial crime, and that they are perceived as being part of the solution to the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies and financial standard setters and regulators.
- A Paris-based Founding Member provided a briefing on the new responsibilities being assumed by the European Banking Authority (EBA) and in particular its creation of a central database on banks' material weaknesses in the field of AML/CFT. The database is known by the abbreviation EuReCA.
- The meeting reviewed the priority areas identified by Founding Members. Financial crime matters related to Trade Finance was seen as the most immediate priority, closely followed by Payments and Transaction Monitoring. Benchmarking, Governance/Control Frameworks, and Staff Management & Competency were also identified by Founding Members as significant areas.
- Members held detailed discussions on the UK FCA's recent 'Dear CEO' Letter related to AML/CFT issues in trade finance; and on latest regulatory and legislative updates in the field of transaction monitoring. All discussions are held under the Chatham House Rule so members were able to exchange views and experiences freely.

The next meeting of Founding Members will be held in Paris in May.

The European Chapter of the MENA FCCG was created in December 2021. It is Chaired by Dhar Solanki, MLRO of Europe Arab Bank, London. Nora Amin, the Head of Compliance at National Bank of Egypt (UK), is Deputy Chair. The Chapter's advisory committee also includes Themis Services (represented by Carel van Randwyck), the Arab Bankers Association (represented by Andrew Cunningham), Rasha Mortada (Group Chief Compliance Officer of Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank) and Mohamed Afifi (Group Chief Compliance Officer of Banque Misr). The Founding Members comprise ten institutions, represented either by officers in London or in Paris.