

## EU SME Centre to continue business support in China until 2018

Following the success of the first phase, the EU SME Centre in China officially launched its second phase of operations, having secured funding from the European Union for another four years.

The Centre will continue promoting market access for European small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) offering market intelligence information, webinars, trainings, workshops, hot-desking and tailor made solutions. Advocacy work towards the Chinese government is another important field of the Centre's activities.

Chris Cheung, Centre Director, also unveiled three new services – the Knowledge Centre, the Advice Centre and the Training Centre – which will deliver more in-depth business support to SMEs seeking to internationalise in China.

Since its operations began in 2010 the Centre answered over 2,400 enquiries from all EU member states – with Italy, UK and Spain topping the statistics – covering areas such as Business Development, Legal, Standards & Conformity and Human Resources. Most common challenges faced by EU SMEs when dealing with China are Chinese partners and how to conduct due diligence on them. Ways to enter the market, customs clearance and salary as well as recruitment procedures are also among the most relevant issues for European companies.

Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES – the organisation responsible for coordinating the Centre's activities in Europe – said: *“The Centre's success during the first phase confirms how important it is to provide hands-on support to European companies in third markets. More similar EU initiatives are needed in order to meet the clearly existing demand from European businesses, helping them prosper beyond the EU's borders.”*

Chairing the launch event, Ambassador Hans Dietmar Schweisgut, Head of the European Union Delegation to China, praised the EU SME Centre for being a tangible and successful example of providing business support services and said he was confident that the success of the Centre will continue and “develop into an even more effective tool” in the second phase.

The Centre's six implementing partners are the China-Britain Business Council, the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, the French Chamber of Commerce in China, the China-Italy Chamber of Commerce, the Benelux Chamber of Commerce and EUROCHAMBRES. The second phase will last for 48 months. The EU Commission finances the action with EUR 5,995,640.18.

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