

Yerevan (Armenia), 27 October 2016

Business support organisations from Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries and the European Union (EU) discuss challenges and policy recommendations

More than 100 business support organisations from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and the EU Member States gathered in Yerevan today for the East Invest 2 conference to discuss private sector's engagement in policymaking across the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries.

The event was held as part of the EU4Business Week in Armenia and representatives of the European Commission, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD), International Trade Centre (ITC) and the East Invest 2 consortium partners were also present.

According to **Mathieu Bousquet** from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations *"this conference provided a great opportunity to gather business-support organisations from Eastern Partnership countries all together, bringing ownership at the centre of the East Invest community. I trust that today we made another step forward in supporting businesses in terms of getting their voice heard as well as helping them get access to new markets."*

On behalf of the government of the Republic of Armenia, Vice Prime Minister **Vache Gabrielyan** welcomed participants, stressing that East Invest is an important initiative to help strengthen EaP BSOs for them to efficiently support local SMEs in accessing the EU market.

The Annual Partner conference provided a unique opportunity for the business support organisations to get an overview of the EU's East Invest 2 project activities and its role in fostering economic cooperation between the EU and Eastern partner countries. It also enabled businesses to find new cooperation partners and share their experiences.

The main focus of this year's conference was the launch of a process for developing a regional position paper on behalf of the business support organisations with recommendations for the six Eastern Partner countries' policy makers. Participants held in-depth discussions on the role of the Public Private Dialogue (PPD), the importance of the right processes and procedures for a successful dialogue and best practices for making it work.

Specific discussion topics included improving access to markets and integrating with global value chains, also getting access to necessary finance, skills and innovation. The regional position paper will be finalised by mid-2017.

Background

East Invest 2 is an EU-funded project within the EU4Business initiative under the Eastern Partnership that started in September 2014. Its general objective is to support the development of a conducive economic environment and competitive private sector in Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine), while enhancing trade flows and investments between them and the EU Member States. It offers an opportunity for the business sector from the EaP region and the EU to directly engage in effective cooperation in one of the four priority areas agreed at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga in 2015 which is market opportunities.

East Invest 2 target groups are the Business (Support) Organisations (BSOs) and SMEs from the six Eastern Partnership countries, who have a potential for developing mutual cooperation and investment relations with their EU counterparts.

The East Invest 2 Annual Partner conference in Yerevan is the second East Invest 2 Annual Partner conference.

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