

EU-CELAC Ministerial: strengthening ties with one of EU's closest friends to defend mutual interests

After the deceptional cancellation of the Summit of Heads of State and Government last year, it is high time for both regions to advance key points of interest for both regions at the present Ministerial meeting. In addition, EUROCHAMBRES urges EU-MERCOSUR negotiations to approach the finish line.

This Ministerial meeting comes when the European Union is outlining a new strategy for the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region. EUROCHAMBRES strongly welcomes this initiative, as our economic ties with the LAC countries must grow stronger in a world that has changed substantially since the last strategic vision of the EU with the region.

"In a volatile geopolitical environment, the LAC region has an increasing priority for EU business. This should be the driving point for the new vision of the EU with the region. Effective economic diplomacy, strengthening the competitiveness of our SMEs, more trade and investment as well as greater EU-LAC cooperation in international institutions should be key elements in driving our economic partnership forward. At the same time, our relations with the region must evolve flexibly and in a pragmatic fashion, involving more initiatives at the sub-regional level, such as the Pacific Alliance", stated **Christoph Leitl**, President of EUROCHAMBRES.

EU-MERCOSUR trade negotiations

After more than 20 years of negotiations, both the European Union and the MERCOSUR should use the Ministerial to tackle sticking points in the negotiations and reach necessary compromises towards approaching a political agreement on the main market access issues.

"EUROCHAMBRES has always advocated that a balanced and ambitious trade agreement with the MERCOSUR must be a top priority for the European Union. The benefits of a well-struck deal potentially exceed those from other major EU agreements. Particularly European SMEs would stand to profit from new market access to a region that is as close to us, culturally and historically, as few others. Both sides should do their utmost to finish the negotiations without delay, otherwise we will miss a unique opportunity that might not come again soon" said President Leitl.

EU-LAC business recommendations

EUROCHAMBRES and the representatives from the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) business community have recently tabled a series of recommendations to advance the bi-regional agenda. They can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2uA9o2G>

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