

PRESS RELEASE

**German-Russian Trade:
Chambers welcome liberalized visa regime for
business trips**

Business trips to Russia and Germany have become easier for citizens of both countries. A bilateral agreement has simplified the bureaucratic and time consuming visa procedures – which is one of the main obstacle to EU-Russian trade according to the recent EUROCHAMBRES' survey*.

Multiple visas for business trips can now be issued without a formal invitation for a period of up to 5 years and a cumulative annual stay of up to 90 days in Germany and 180 days in Russia. A facilitated visa regime has also been foreseen for employees of German-Russian joint ventures. Furthermore, the Chambers of Commerce on both sides now can request the competent authorities to issue business visas on behalf of the companies.

Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES, said: *“This is a first step towards trade facilitation between the European Union and Russia. As the EUROCHAMBRES' survey shows*, there is a high level of interest in mutual economic co-operation but the business community suffers from sluggish customs procedures, divergent technical standards and bureaucratic visa regime. When EUROCHAMBRES presented the requests and needs of the business community to the European and Russian authorities both sides signalled good will to overcome trade barriers. We are confident that the Russian-German visa agreement can serve as a model for similar documents to be signed with other European countries.”*

Apart from bureaucratic visa procedures, European companies doing business with Russia suffer from time-consuming and expensive customs procedures, inconsistent application of rules by customs officers and diverging technical standards and certification requirements.

Their Russian counterparts highlighted high costs and lack of uniformity along the EU borders, excessive and sometimes arbitrary quality control and consumer protection, lack of information about environmental issues and the complexity of technical standards and certification.

*EU-Russia Trade and Investment: Practical Barriers; EUROCHAMBRES and the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry; October 2003. The survey can be downloaded from: www.eurochambres.be

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