

PRESS RELEASE

New EICC in Russia: a step in the right direction. EU-Russia summit should follow same spirit

Secretary General Arnaldo Abruzzini attended today the opening of the first Euro Info Correspondent Center (EICC) in Russia. A very significant event in the context of EU-Russia relations, which is set to bring the two players a little closer to each other.

The EICC will provide information to Russian and European SMEs, to help them take full advantage of commercial opportunities between Russia and the EU.

Mr Abruzzini highlighted nevertheless the need to integrate the role of the EICC with additional, concrete actions on the ground. *"In times of political turmoil, we welcome the opening of the EICC in Moscow as a symbol of proximity between the European Union and Russia. But this important step must be complemented by concrete actions. Chambers of Commerce will continue in their mission of support to companies from both sides with various cooperation projects on the ground: because we strongly believe that economic integration can build solid bridges."*

Russian SMEs, in particular, need assistance to become more competitive on the global market – at present they export less than 5% of their output! Chambers in Russia could ease the situation by offering companies more and better internationalisation services. Sharing best practices with European Chambers could be of considerable help for them to develop such services. EUROCHAMBRES therefore looks forward to implementing cooperation programmes involving EU and Russian SMEs that would be extremely profiting for both sides.

Obstacles still in the way

Yet, EU-Russia commercial relations are hampered by a number of other obstacles. In particular, European SMEs face three main barriers to export to Russia:

1. Bureaucratic/restrictive procedures for company registration, visa and travelling;
2. Low awareness of market opportunities;
3. Time-consuming/expensive custom procedures and inconsistent application of rules by custom officers.

These obstacles cannot be dealt with by Chambers or business alone, but need to be tackled at a higher, political level.

"Now and again, we call upon EU and Russian authorities to take concrete steps to make economic integration a reality. The next EU-Russia summit in October offers another opportunity for progress in this respect. Will political leaders live up to expectations?"

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EUROCHAMBRES – The Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry represents over 19 million enterprises in Europe through 46 members and a European network of 2000 regional and local Chambers.