

PRESS RELEASE

EU-Turkey: In times of political strain, EUROCHAMBRES-Erdogan meeting highlights optimism

On the fringes of a visit to the Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Turkey (TOBB) in Ankara yesterday, Pierre Simon, President of EUROCHAMBRES, met the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the Chief EU Negotiator of Turkey, Ali Babacan.

According to Mr Simon, both Turkey and the EU would gain from a reinforced partnership, and the business community can take the lead in consolidating relations between the two economies. *“In times when the political debate is heated up as it is now the case between Turkey and the EU, the business community has a responsibility: the responsibility to pave the way for mutual trust and cooperation. This is why we believe that by increasing the interactions between Turkish and EU enterprises and their representative organisations, the cooperation agenda will be pushed forward,”* he said.

Mr Simon emphasised the crucial economic relations between the EU and Turkey – trade and investment flows between the two regions have grown steadily in the past few years – but also recalled that, according to economic indicators, a great potential remains unexploited. Trade liberalization should be completed, the privatization process further advanced and the business climate improved in order to boost productivity and foreign direct investments into Turkey.

Mr Simon said: *“The accession negotiations are in the hands of our political leaders. But Turkey could seize the opportunities offered by the EU negotiations to carry out all these reforms that are needed. Our role, as business leaders, is to make sure that whenever accession can take place, the business community is ready for it.”*

In this respect, Chambers of Commerce have an essential role to play in supporting companies in the integration process by providing them with all necessary information on market opportunities and the impact of EU accession.

EUROCHAMBRES is therefore hoping to launch an “EU-Turkey Chamber Forum”, a new cooperation programme which will offer extensive training for Turkish Chambers in the next 3 years. In the past four years, EUROCHAMBRES has already supported Turkish Chambers via the successful “Turkish Chamber Development Programme” (TCDP).

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EUROCHAMBRES has member organisations in 45 countries representing a network of 2,000 regional and local Chambers with over 18 million member companies.