

PRESS RELEASE

Easier visas for Western Balkans good for economy, EUROCHAMBRES says

Facilitating entry and movement of businessmen from the Western Balkans in the EU will be very beneficial to the economies of both regions. Therefore EUROCHAMBRES welcomes the Council's decision this week to give mandate to the Commission to negotiate visa facilitation with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES, said: *"The current visa procedures are a considerable hurdle in EU-Western Balkan relations, as we experienced in the PARTNERS* project while organising trainings and matchmaking events for Western Balkan Chambers in the EU. Hence, we strongly support the concession of visa facilitation procedures for Western Balkan businessmen as a way to further promote the rapprochement of EU and Western Balkan economies."*

Fostering people-to-people contacts will also boost the process of alignment of these countries with the EU standards and rules highlighted in the recent Progress Reports by the European Commission.

* PARTNERS (Project of Assistance to Regional Trade and Networking for Economic Recovery and Stability) was a two-year project of EUROCHAMBRES under the EU CARDS Regional Programme for the development of national and regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry in the Western Balkan region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro). It was launched at the beginning of 2004.

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