

## Eastern Partnership Summit: Trade is key to a stronger partnership

Prior to the EU Eastern Partnership Summit on 15 December, EUROCHAMBRES President Christoph Leitl has called on leaders to give a new impetus to economic relations between the EU and its eastern neighbours.

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine are not only collectively an area of strategic interest to the EU, more than that they are natural trading partners. Exports to and imports from the Eastern Partnership countries have increased significantly in the last ten years and trade reached an unprecedented €65 bn in 2020. Nonetheless, there remains potential for even closer ties.

EUROCHAMBRES President Christoph Leitl stated: *“Trade usually precedes political developments and we see a very positive trend in intensifying our economic ties. But we need not stop here! The EU should establish a more intense economic and political partnership based on common values.”*

Through the “EU4Business: Connecting Companies” programme, EUROCHAMBRES has connected many companies, especially SMEs from the Eastern Partnership countries with new trading partners from the EU. In the past 10 years, these countries have achieved significant progress in reforming their economies and integrating into global market places. To further boost the ties between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries, EUROCHAMBRES suggests:

- A proper implementation of the ambitious €2.3 billion regional economic investment plan, focusing on the people in the region.
- More technical support for Eastern Partnership countries in the twin green and digital transition.
- Further develop the “EU4Business: Connecting Companies” programme to integrate companies from the Eastern Partnership Countries more in EU value chains and make the advantages of integration with EU markets more visible.

*“Policy and vision are crucial for the implementation of this strategy, but it is also essential to capitalize on trade so that the advantages of the partnership with the EU are visible for people in the Eastern Partnership countries”,* President Leitl added.

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