

## EU enlargement: businesses call for a clear timeframe and gradual single market integration

A new Eurochambres enlargement survey published today underlines the need for a clear timeframe as well as a transparent and gradual process in order to facilitate the business community's preparation for EU accession. The survey, based on responses from businesses in the candidate and potential candidate countries and from chambers across the EU, emphasises the importance of involving the private sector throughout the enlargement process.

The results of the survey were presented at a conference in Brussels attended by chamber leaders from the EU and candidate and potential candidate countries, as well as senior policy-makers and enlargement experts. In his opening remarks, Eurochambres President, Vladimír Dlouhý said: *"We have to work together, policymakers and business community, EU members states and candidate countries, to ensure EU enlargement remains an anchor for peace, democracy and Europe's economic prosperity. Enlargement can't fail and we must be ready for it."*

The survey highlights the importance of gradually integrating the candidate countries in EU policies, and in the single market. Alignment and harmonisation with EU norms and standards prior to their formal accession would allow countries which make progress to get a reward right away. In this context, targeted and timely information to companies on the EU accession process and on the EU acquis is essential to allow companies to identify and plan the necessary adaptations implied by accession. Particular attention should also be put by policymakers on the improvement of the business environment in the candidate countries and in particular the fight against corruption to further enhance trade and investment relations between the EU and the candidate countries.

With its expansive network of chambers of commerce and industry across the continent, Eurochambres holds a pivotal role in empowering the business community in the candidate and potential candidate countries to ensure businesses remain competitive in an enlarged European Union.

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