

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Tallinn, 26 October 2017

Private Sector speaks out for a better business environment in the Eastern Partnership Region

More than 500 entrepreneurs, high-level government officials and representatives of international organisations participated in the 4th Eastern Partnership Business Forum on 26th October 2017 in Tallinn. During the closing session, UEAPME Secretary General Véronique Willems presented the Regional Position Paper that was developed and endorsed in the framework of the East Invest 2 project, implemented by EUROCHAMBRES and UEAPME. Ms Willems also highlighted the overall achievements of the project.

The Regional Position Paper contains an impressive list of concerns and recommendations to the policy makers by the EU and EaP business sector for improving the business environment in five areas: (1) business climate, (2) skills and innovation, (3) SMEs access to markets, (4) SMEs access to finance, (5) taxation and customs procedures. The wider use of digital solutions in all these areas is underlined.

UEAPME Secretary General Véronique Willems stated that *“Creating a better business environment requires teamwork, partnerships, collaboration, and creating solutions through public private dialogue. One essential component is that any new legislation impacting SMEs should be SME friendly by applying the “Think Small First” principle. Moreover, our SMEs particularly suffer from the mismatch between the skills and competences needed by them and the skills provided by the educational system.”*

About East Invest 2

East Invest 2 is a EU-funded project within the EU4Business framework under the Eastern Partnership initiative that started in September 2014. It supports the development of a conducive economic environment and competitive private sector in the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) and has been implemented by the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry (EUROCHAMBRES) and the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME).

During its implementation, the consortium supported an interactive network of over 100 Business Support Organisations from the Eastern Partnership and the EU, including the establishment of long-term partnerships (Twinings) between Business Organisations, technical assistance and capacity building, training and business missions for SMEs, and much more. Full details available on www.east-invest2.eu

The regional position paper was endorsed at the East Invest 2 annual conference in June 2017 in Kiev as a contribution to the Tallinn business forum.

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