



7 May 2010

**THIRD MEETING OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP
PLATFORM 2 – ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND CONVERGENCE WITH
EU POLICIES****SPEAKING NOTES FOR ADRIAN VAN DEN HOVEN
DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

- **BUSINESSEUROPE** is a strong supporter of the Eastern Partnership and we are looking forward to a renewed focus on this region under the new Commission. We had concerns that the Commission lacked a sense of focus on the region in the past but we understand that this policy will now become a priority notably for Commissioner Füle.
- **BUSINESSEUROPE** welcomes the civil society platform 2 (Business & entrepreneurship) report by Mr Gogolashvili which outlines a number of useful recommendations to boost business cooperation in the Eastern Partnership.
- In particular, **BUSINESSEUROPE** appreciates the specific reference to deepening cooperation with business organizations like **BUSINESSEUROPE** and **EUROCHAMBRES** as well as the reference to develop a more effective social dialogue.
- As regards future EU funded projects for the region, we are concerned about proposals to provide grants for everyone and everything. The Eastern Partnership has suffered in the past from a lack of focus and we need to avoid repeating past mistakes.
- Specifically, we call for business projects that resemble a public-private-partnership between business organizations, the Commission and Eastern governments to ensure that projects are closely associated with the real policy initiatives developed under the Eastern partnership. We need projects to support targeted and focused political results to advance the partnership.
- Officials should be aware that the approximate of EU legislation in the Eastern Neighbourhood will be costly and difficult for business. Indeed, most EU regulations in fields like standards, health and safety or the environment are implemented by companies which must comply with complex rules. This imposes a short term cost on business which is only rewarded over the medium term through access to the European market of 500 million consumers. Consequently, the consultation of business is essential to build up support for the adoption of these measures.



- We see three key sectors where more work is needed: food safety standards, energy (including energy efficiency) standards and support for infrastructure development (including public-private-partnership contracts).
- We see three cross-cutting issues of direct relevance to business: implementing environment regulations, dealing with social issues like health and safety regulations and compliance with EU industrial standards and regulations.
- Finally, as an overarching theme, BUSINESSEUROPE would like to see more support for the development of capacities to strengthen responsible business and employers federations in the Eastern countries. Business and employers federations play an essential role in dealing with economic regulation and therefore they need to be well organized to structure dialogue between government and business. Unfortunately, the funding schemes proposed by the EU are poorly adapted to strengthen our partners in the Eastern Neighbourhood. We call on the EU to modify the rules to apply Enlargement funding rules and approaches to the Eastern Partnership as concerns business projects. Our experience in training central business and employers federations through enlargement funding (Business Support Programmes) has been very positive, cost-effective and politically relevant to help consolidate central business and employers organizations. We need to employ the same strategy in the Eastern Neighbourhood if we hope to achieve the aim of actually implementing the DCFTAs in future.