



### **EU SMEs need to make better use of EU trade agreements**

*(Graz/ Brussels, 20 November 2018)*

Today, 600 participants of the EU's 2018 SME Assembly meet in Graz under the Austrian Presidency to support small and medium-sized businesses to make better use of the increasing number of EU free trade agreements with third countries (like the recently concluded EU-Canada agreement CETA).

The internationalisation of business activities is of critical importance for European companies, especially SMEs for sustaining their business success.

#### **BusinessEurope Director General Markus J. Beyrer said:**

“More than 30 million jobs in the EU currently depend on exports to third markets. That's a good achievement but we should further develop our international business relations. We should ensure that small and medium-sized companies make better use of the trade agreements the EU has concluded and ratified with third countries.

SMEs should much more go abroad and explore trade and investment opportunities in fast growing markets. But only if we simplify rules and procedures, companies will benefit from trade preferences. We also need to closely monitor the implementation of these trade agreements.

The European Commission and the governments of EU Member States, acting in close cooperation with the business community, should make more efforts to raise awareness and promote these trade agreements,” said Beyrer.

The EU 2018 SME Assembly is held in Graz, Austria, from 19 to 21 November 2018 during the Austrian EU Presidency. The event is organised by the European Commission and the discussion “Business Beyond Borders: Encouraging more SMEs to take advantage of the EU's FTAs” was facilitated by BusinessEurope. Participants include about 600 European company representatives, experts of the European Commission Directorate General for Trade, representatives of EU Member States and numerous international journalists.

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