

Growth Beyond Borders

A Common Position on Business Visa Liberalisation with Russia and Eastern Europe

In order to strengthen the European position in international competition, European companies will have to deepen their economic and commercial partnerships beyond the existing borders of the European Union. The creation of a coordinated economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok is one of the most important challenges of the forthcoming decade. Business visa requirements with numerous neighbouring countries of the European Union are a continual impediment to international business; their liberalisation is one of the conditions for growth and job creation.

Business visas are a substantial financial and time burden. Their impact on European companies throughout the world, simply in terms of the application process, totals hundreds of millions of EUR per annum. Moreover, the existence of visas constrains reciprocal investment decisions. Last but not least, visa barriers are an impediment to the exchange of ideas and values.

The financial and intangible damage to European companies caused by visa requirements each year is completely disproportionate when compared to its underlying objective. The deregulation of visa requirements as in the case of the Western Balkan states will be a key impetus towards expansion over the long term.

We therefore ask the governments and parliaments of the Schengen area, as well as the European Commission and the European Parliament to:

- conclude the negotiations with the Republic of Moldova, Russia and Ukraine aimed at a reciprocal deregulation of business visa requirements as regards stays of up to 90 days
- launch negotiations as regards the deregulation of business visa requirements with the remaining Eastern Partnership countries (i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Kazakhstan and Turkey as soon as possible
- remove business visa barriers with the above states by 2018.



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OF PRIVATE EMPLOYERS
LEWIATAN

When it comes to immediate measures on the basis of the Community Code on Visas, we would like the respective authorities to:

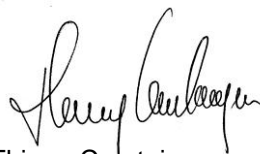
- accelerate the visa application process by means of a gradual reduction of the required documents
- abstain from requesting original source documents
- provide the option to apply for visas by e-mail or online
- abstain from requesting the applicant to appear in person at the consulate
- increase the issuing of multiannual visas up to 5 years
- reduce visa fees
- provide the opportunity for simplified quick business visas for short trips and the option to issue business visas directly at the border.

We invite the numerous business associations across the European Union, as well as in the neighbouring countries of the European Union, to join us in this initiative and forward our request to those responsible for business visa regulation in the respective countries.

Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Paris, Rome, Warsaw
31st May 2012



Dr. Eckhard Cordes
Chairman of the Committee
on Eastern European
Economic Relations



Thierry Courtaigne
Vice President & CEO
MEDEF International

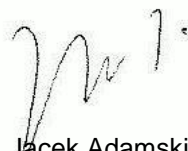


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Supporting Institutions:

The **Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations** (Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft - OA) was founded in 1952 as the oldest regional initiative of the German economy. It represents the interests of German enterprises and associations in 21 countries in Eastern Europe, Southeast Europe and Central Asia. One of the key supporting institutions is the Federation of German Industries (BDI) which represents 100,000 companies in Germany with more than eight million employees.



MEDEF International is a non-profit organisation founded in 1989, which represents the French Business Confederation (MEDEF) and its 800,000 companies in the world, at bilateral level, promotes the know-how and the interests of French international companies from all sectors and contributes to improving the business climate in the emerging and developing countries.



The **Confederation of Danish Industry (DI)** is the strong voice of corporate Denmark. On behalf of 10,000 member companies, DI works to provide the best conditions for Danish businesses in order to improve the opportunities for growth and overall competitiveness.



The **Confederation of Finnish Industries EK** is the leading business organisation in Finland. It represents the entire private sector, both industry and services, and all sizes of companies. Its member companies produce more than 70 percent of Finland's gross national product and over 95 percent of Finland's exports.



Founded in 1910, **Confindustria** is the main organisation representing Italian manufacturing and services companies. A total of 149.288 companies of all sizes - employing a total of 5.516.975 workers - are voluntary members of the organisation. Confindustria represents the interests of Italian companies to leading political and administrative institutions, including parliament, the government, trade unions and other social partners.



The **Polish Confederation of Private Employers Lewiatan** is a nation-wide representation of Poland's private sector employers to the state and trade unions. Today it is an organization of more than eighty sector and regional associations and individual members. Thus in total there are about 3,750 companies employing over 750,000 workers. LEWIATAN promotes the interests of the private sector in the legislative process and media.

