



east forum Berlin

22 April 2015



Press Release

3rd east forum Berlin discusses the impact of the Ukraine crisis and new approaches for the EU Neighbourhood Policy

- 250 representatives from the worlds of business and politics from 25 different countries are expected in Berlin on 22 April.
- Keynote speeches by EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Ministers from neighbouring states of the EU

On 22 April 2015 UniCredit, the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations, the METRO GROUP with the kind support of the Governing Mayor of Berlin will be hosting the **3rd east forum Berlin**. The objective of this international conference, in view of the growing tensions in Europe, is to revive the vision of a common European economic space stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok. Berlin is presenting itself as a venue for economic policy debates between East and West and as Europe's start-up metropolis.

“A new European order over the crisis in Ukraine?”

This year the **east forum Berlin** will be discussing in particular the impact of the Ukraine crisis, will be looking at the current debate on a new EU Neighbourhood Policy and will be searching for possible answers to the increasing confrontation between the EU and Russia. Among other speakers we are expecting the EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, as well as high-ranking representatives from South East Europe, Wider Black Sea Region, Russia and Central Asia.

A year after the annexation of the Crimea by Russian troops and the introduction of first EU sanctions against Russia the question arises as to how a permanent splitting up of Europe into two blocs could still be avoided and what contribution business in particular could make to achieve a rapprochement of the two sides. "The crisis has shown us dramatically, how important it is to follow up on the idea of a common economic area", said **Giuseppe Vita, Chairman of the Board of Directors UniCredit**. "I am confident that the development of shared economic interests will be supportive of improved political relationships."

"In the Minsk agreements the heads of government of Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France have committed themselves to the vision of a common humanitarian and economic space stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific", the **Chairman of the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations, Eckhard Cordes**, stressed. "It would be necessary for the EU Commission to launch negotiations with the Eurasian Economic Commission on the reduction of trade barriers. This would not least of all be in the interest of countries such as

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Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia, for which an economic division of Europe would lead to existential crises.“

Olaf Koch, Chairman of the Management Board of METRO AG, highlights the meaning of free trade zones for the economic development in Europe: “On both sides and in the countries which lie in between free trade creates winners only. Harmonisation of standards, elimination of tariffs – as traders we see great potential in a common market, which could also provide a valuable incentive to shift the focus back to commonalities.“

More than 250 guests from 25 countries are expected to attend this year's **east forum Berlin**. The **east forum Berlin** will be opened on the morning of 22 April at the AXICA, Pariser Platz with keynote speeches by EU Commissioner Hahn and German Foreign Minister Steinmeier on the debate regarding the future EU Neighbourhood Policy. Afterwards Berlin will be introduced as an East-West hub for innovation and a centre for creative industries in a public forum. A second forum will be devoted to the future of Ukraine. Here the various special representatives of the IMF, the EU and the federal government will inter alia be holding a debate with the Deputy Head of the Ukrainian Presidential Administration on the progress of the reforms and the further steps required to stabilise the country.

Parallel to the two fora, future relations between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union and the internal structures of the EU after the long years of economic crisis will be discussed in two non-public panel debates. The results of the discussion rounds will be explained on the evening of the 22 April: The **east forum Berlin** will end with a gala reception at the Allianz Forum at the Pariser Platz, a stone's throw from the Brandenburg Gate.

As in previous years this year's east forum Berlin will also be framed by side events focusing on individual countries and regions. Further information on participants and the programme of the **east forum Berlin** can be found at www.eastforum-berlin.de

Accreditation of Journalists:

Those interested in reporting on the **east forum Berlin** should send an email stating medium, birthdate and press accreditation number to **Christian Kühn**, c.kuehn@bdi.eu by 17 April.

Accredited journalists will have access to both the opening at the Axica on the morning of 22 April and to the concluding reception at the Allianz Forum on the evening of 22 April.

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Photo Session:

A photo session for the participants of the east forum Berlin is to be held in front of the Brandenburg Gate at 6.45pm on 22 April.

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