



east forum Berlin

6 April 2017



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Press release

Protectionism, digitalization and cybersecurity – the main themes of the 5th east forum Berlin on 6 April 2017

- International conference underscores the will to cooperate in a common economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok
- Keynote speeches by Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission Tigran Sargsyan, WTO Deputy Director-General Karl Brauner and President of the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry Eric Schweitzer, among others
- Presentation of the WARR Hyperloop provides a glimpse into the future of mobility

Under the motto “**The future of the European-Eurasian partnership: Rebuilding trust, defining drivers, overcoming barriers**”, the 5th east forum Berlin on 6 April 2017 offers more than 300 international figures from industry and politics another opportunity to take part in the dialogue about a common economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok. In view of the growing protectionist trends in the global economy, which have been triggered by Brexit and the new US administration, the conference aims at sending a clear signal in favour of international cooperation and open markets.

The east forum Berlin is organised by UniCredit, the German Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations and the METRO GROUP Wholesale & Food Specialist Company. Our cooperation partners are the Federation of German Industries (BDI), the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK) and Schaeffler Technologies.

With reference to Brexit and the current debate on possible scenarios for the further development of the EU, **Giuseppe Vita**, Chairman of the Board of Directors of UniCredit, urges that a decision be made soon about the future of the Union: “It is crucial to focus on what brings us together and reaffirms our ties. I believe the future of the EU should include much deeper integration, ideally across the entire EU27.”

Wolfgang Büchele, Chairman of the Board of the German Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations, warns against calling into question the very existence of international organizations like the EU and the World Trade Organization: “The weaknesses of the EU and WTO today could be the trade wars of tomorrow.”



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Instead, Büchele hopes that through **east forum Berlin**, new impetus can be given to the creation of a common European economic space that includes Russia: "It is a good thing that **east forum Berlin 2017** will once again send the clear message that a common economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok should not remain a utopia. Not least at a time when greater isolationism is being talked about in the Anglo-American world, we should breathe life into this project."

Olaf Koch, Chairman of the Management Board of METRO AG, observed that old values about integration as a guarantor of political and economic stability have come under pressure. One reason for this development was the weak economic growth, which fed the raise of populist tendencies worldwide. "We must not stop exploring drivers of innovation and prosperity, in order to counter social imbalances but also to reinforce the alliance between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union."

Digitalization is also one of the main themes of **east forum Berlin** in its anniversary year. The impact of digitalization is such that not only company-client relations but also production and value chains will be put on a completely new footing. The prerequisites for making use of this potential are common international standards for data flows and joint regulations aimed at improving **cybersecurity** – both of which are discussion topics of the morning session of **east forum Berlin**. The second session will discuss promoting a dialogue between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union on the dismantling of trade barriers in Europe and Eurasia. An afternoon presentation is devoted to the future of mobility and connectivity. The focus here will be on the **Hyperloop**, a capsule that moves at high speed through a tube network held in near-vacuum conditions. A pod developed by a team of students from the Technical University of Munich won the prize awarded by Elon Musk in California in January for the fastest prototype. The conference will end in the evening of 6 April with a round-table discussion chaired by **Thomas Roth**.

Speakers at this year's conference include Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission **Tigran Sargsyan**, WTO Deputy Director-General **Karl Brauner**, DIHK President **Eric Schweitzer**, President of Digital Europe **Markus Borchert** and **Gabriel Felbermayr**, Director of the Ifo Institute in Munich. The Eurasian Economic Commission is represented by two other ministers, who will take part in panels. In all, some 20 countries are represented at the level of minister or ambassador. As was the case last year, when Germany held the chair, **east forum Berlin 2017** is linked to the connectivity agenda of the OSCE, this time under Austrian chairmanship.



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