



Association
of European
Businesses

Post event report 12 October 2015

The Association of European Businesses celebrated its 20th anniversary in Russia

On 24 September, the Association of European Businesses (the AEB), the main representation of foreign investors in Russia, celebrated its 20th anniversary.

The occasion was celebrated in Congress Park Radisson Royal with the support of sponsors: Roca, Porsche, Alabuga, Burda International, BNP Paribas, Chiesi, Credit Agricole, E-On, Fortum, Metro Group, Novo Nordisk, SAP, Severstal, Telenor Group, YIT, Bayer, Commerzbank, ING Bank Eurasia, NP IRT, Oriflame, Shell, Total, Allianz, Cinco Jotas, Elite security, Ferrero, Flotilla Radisson, Julius Meini, L'Occitane, and MIG.

The AEB CEO Frank Schauff moderated the event.

In his opening speech, the Chairman of the AEB Board Philippe Pegorier noted that over the course of twenty years the Association of European Businesses has progressed from a small business club into the main representative of European businesses in Russia.

"Twenty years ago our volume of direct investment amounted to one billion euro. Today that investment has reached 170 billion euro. This underscores our belief in Russia and in its development", said Philippe Pegorier.

Honorary guests congratulated the AEB on its anniversary. The Chairman of the Eurasian Economic Commission Collegium Viktor Khristenko stressed that today it would be strange and short-sighted to pretend that the reality has not changed and that the essential element "of the main strategy should be direct dialogue between the European and Russian business communities".

"My main message is that Eurasian integration and the Eurasian project offers a window for interaction, a window of opportunity. Not only against a backdrop of reduced opportunities in other platforms; but, most importantly, because this project is economic in nature. Deprived of a political component, it focuses on the interests of business, improving regulatory frameworks and reducing

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barriers. And in this, dear colleagues, we are together with you 100% in our goals and objectives", the Chairman of the Eurasian Economic Commission said in his address.

"I have said it many times and I will repeat it once again: the strategic nature of the relations between our partners does not seek to avoid difficult subjects. It is built on the ability to openly and constructively discuss even the most sensitive of subjects, and to find mutually acceptable solutions. The Association of European Businesses in Russia and European business in general has always been like this, genuine, partners. You can always feel and accurately understand the actual context", concluded Viktor Khristenko.

The Deputy Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation Stanislav Voskresensky, and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Alexei Meshkov focussed on the need for cooperation between European businesses and Russia's state structures. Alexei Meshkov also delivered a welcome address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov.

"Over the years, the Association has confidently established itself as a useful tool in the development of Russia - EU, trade and investment cooperation. Given the difficulties of the current situation in Europe, the activities of the AEB is of particular importance, and it is designed to contribute to the preservation of mutual understanding between the business communities of our countries, promoting positive sentiment and aspiring to the future agenda. We greatly appreciate the willingness of European businesses to continue actively working on the Russian market and their interest in returning to an early normalization of the situation on our continent, and in their rejection of the counterproductive sanctions logic," the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov said in a message.

The guests were also congratulated by the former Vice President of the European Commission (2004 - 2010) Günter Verheugen and the Ambassador of the European Union to Russia H.E. Vygaudas Ušackas.

"European business in Russia is a well-organised structure, which is of great interest to both Russia and the European Union. We remain the main trading partner of Russia, regardless of geopolitical conflicts", said Vygaudas Ušackas.

"EU and Russia are neighbours and have to live in a peace together. We confront with the same global challenges. And I am absolutely sure that EU will not be strong enough to meet all the difficulties without Russia. Russia will not do it as well. We need to join our forces and try to find common solution by cooperation and partnership", emphasized Günter Verheugen.

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The President of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RSPP) Alexander Shokhin thanked the AEB for its contribution to the development of business cooperation between Russia and the EU. At the end of his speech he awarded a medal for his contribution to the RSPP in the development of cooperation between the AEB and the RSPP, and the Russian and European business communities, by the Chairman of the AEB Board Philippe Pegorier and the AEB CEO Frank Schauff. Alexander Shokhin also presented the AEB with the RSPP diploma for its contribution to the development of business cooperation between Russia and the EU.

After the official ceremony a reception was held.

The Association of European Businesses thanks all of its sponsors and guests of the event for their warm greetings and the wonderful atmosphere.

The AEB was established in 1995 on the initiative of European companies working in Russia, and supported by the Delegation of the European Commission and a number of European embassies. Initially, the organisation was called "The European Business Club" (up to 2004). In 1996, the organisation comprised 120 companies, but now the AEB consists of more than 600 companies from 23 countries of the European Union and 8 countries outside the EU, including Russia. The association has opened two regional offices: in Krasnodar in 2003, and in Saint-Petersburg in 2010.

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