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Media release

SECOND ‘EXHIBITION INDUSTRY EU DIALOGUE’ HIGHLIGHTS CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL AT DECISIVE MOMENT FOR THE EU AND INDUSTRY

The second edition of the “Exhibition Industry EU Dialogue” organised on 21st February 2018 by the European Exhibition Industry Alliance (EEIA) in Brussels was again a success. Over 50 participants from all over Europe gathered for a day of policy insights, open discussions, advocacy work and political networking.

Claude Membrez (CEO Palexpo and EMECA President), Gerald Böse (CEO Koelnmesse and UFI European Chapter Chair) and David Boon (General Manager Brussels Expo, EMECA Vice President EU Relations and UFI European Chapter Vice Chair) welcomed the participants and speakers:

“Open markets are the motor of our industry, therefore we are delighted to discuss the news and challenges in this specific matter in the trade part of this conference”, said Claude Membrez. Gerald Böse stressed that “The exhibition industry has a strong innovation power and aims to use data in an intelligent way. We look forward to learning about the Commissions next projects in the digital field.” David Boon called attention to the socio-economic impact of the exhibition industry: “Trade fairs increase productivity, jobs, growth and infrastructure in many regions in Europe.”

Member of the European Parliament and former Prime Minister of Slovenia Alojz Peterle opened the first part of the event with a general picture of the current state of the EU, its internal and external challenges and a personal outlook to the 2019 European elections. He mentioned the growing attitudes and values gap between Eastern and Western EU Members States, the currently unbalanced Franco-German motor of the EU, migration and the Western Balkan question and the desire to revitalize the spirit of Europe, to strengthen and unite Europe more. In his view, more dialogue, open discussions, the European elections with the “Spitzenkandidaten” model and a merger of the Commission and Council President positions could contribute to this aim.

Soledad Rodríguez Sánchez-Tabernero from the European Commission’s internal Think Tank European Political Strategy Centre presented the official strategy as proposed by European Commission President Juncker. The EU came from a polycrisis with Brexit as a shock but now has the wind in its sails again. The Commission President promotes a plan to make Europe more united, stronger and more democratic, based on European values. It contains concrete proposals to be

delivered before the 2019 elections but also elements looking further until 2025. One big challenge will be the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework after Brexit with a gap of up to 12 billion EUR.

Fabian Zuleeg, Chief Executive and Chief Economist of the European Policy Centre zoomed into one important policy area, the Industrial Policy Strategy. It is a fact that industry *is* changing and that it *needs* to change quickly. Global value chains mean global competition and more competitors, even advanced technology is under threat. Some industries are lost, in some areas Europe is at the forefront, in some areas, including ICT Europe is falling behind. The enormous transition ahead will cost jobs and this social impact must be taken into account to avoid political backlash. “The global rise in protectionism is a major challenge to the growth path of the EU”, Zuleeg added and suggested to think about the UK as a future competitor after Brexit. According to Zuleeg, the presented policy it is rather a collection of measures than a real strategy, and that most tools are on Member States level, such as skills policy. “However, coordination of measures is needed to translate innovation into commercial profits”, he underlined. Nevertheless, he ended his overview on a positive note: “Just think about the world without the EU!”

The following session was dedicated to digital policies with speaker Carl-Christian Buhr, Deputy Head of the cabinet of Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya Gabriel. He outlined policies currently tackled such as GDPR, ePrivacy, Portability, Geoblocking, Audiovisual Media Services Directive, Copyright, Cybersecurity and Free Flow of Data. He depicted also some future areas of action such as fake news, public sector information, platform to business and Artificial Intelligence.

Monitoring developments and application of rules by observatories will make sure the measures are appropriate and Court decisions will also help to clarify some doubts. “Common rules are very important even for quickly changing digital technologies to ensure a level playing field within the EU and the appropriate advantages and protection for all EU citizens”, explained Carl Christian Buhr.

Lucian Cernat, Chief Economist of the European Commission’s DG Trade was the speaker for the third part about the EU’s foreign trade relations. He gave an overview on successful Free Trade Agreements (FTA), ongoing negotiations, modernisation talks for existing FTAs and plans for the future. FTAs not only regulate the commercial relations between countries but the EU promotes its values abroad through these contracts. As an outstanding example he mentioned the positive developments for 49 out of 53 sectors after the conclusion of the FTA with Korea. SMEs do still need further support and incentives for internationalisation, which in many cases starts with the participation in a trade fair: “Your industry is the one critical factor to engage in international trade”, he affirmed. Cernat also highlighted the positive effect of export generated job creation inside the EU. Recent protectionist movements like the latest measures imposed by the USA should be answered by the EU. “Policy making should appeal to people and reconnect the citizens with the very ambitious agenda of the EU”, resumed Cernat.

During dinner, Luisa Santos, Director for International Relations at Business Europe shared her views and insight on international relations in trade and on Brexit in particular. “The main question is the dilemma between control versus access”, she pointed. For businesses in both the remaining 27 EU and the UK, pragmatic approaches and reasonable solutions are vital and a transition phase should be reached to ease effects. Nevertheless, companies should prepare to a cliff-edge.

Several possibilities for future UK business models and trade relations were discussed and participants participated actively in the sometimes emotional debate.

“All speakers highlighted openly the challenges in general or in their specific area of expertise while expressing the wish and taking measures to relate to the people in Europe, to offer practical advantages, a stable set of values and contribute to a strong, united Union”, resumed Barbara Weizsäcker, Secretary General of the European Exhibition Industry Alliance and of EMECA. Kai Hattendorf, CEO of UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, added: “We have experienced an excellent event with high level content and speakers, an intensive day worth everyone’s time, as the participants confirmed.”

This year, the event was organised by EEIA in partnership with AUMA, AEFI, CFI, Febelux and IFES. These and many other EMECA and UFI members collaborated in the event organisation and speaker identification. It took place at the Representation of Lower Saxony to the EU, a visit to the European Parliament was offered by MEP Istvan Ujhelyi and the dinner was held at the distinguished De Warande business club.

Background Information

About EEIA

The European Exhibition Industry Alliance represents nearly 400 European exhibition organisers and venue operators in Brussels to the European institutions and stakeholders. These trade fairs and exhibition players are organised in UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry and the European Major Exhibition Centres Association EMECA. For more information please visit:

www.exhibition-alliance.eu www.ufi.org www.emeca.eu

About Business Beyond Borders

Business Beyond Borders, is a European Commission initiative to help businesses, in particular SMEs and Clusters, to operate internationally with the ultimate goal of increasing economic growth within and outside Europe. Support will be provided to companies participating at international fairs by establishing a series of Business to Business (B2B) and Cluster to Cluster (C2C) matchmaking events and by supporting the development of the companies’ activities in target markets (Australia, South Africa, India, Chile, Iran, among others). All details at:

www.businessbeyondborders.info