

## A course for harmonization

On January 18, the annual meeting of the members of the economic Initiative “Lisbon-Vladivostok”, an ambitious project uniting more than a hundred international companies, associations and think tanks, which seven years ago set out to create **a common economic space** between Western Europe and the Far East, took place at the House of German Economy in Moscow. The basic idea of the project is: “The EU and EAEU country members are national markets with a population of over 630 million people, and they can complement each other. A common economic space can create **the basis necessary for effective cooperation** on the Eurasian continent and strengthen the position in the future international arena”.

In the long term, the Initiative aims to create a free trade zone and a visa-free regime. Task Forces from among the Initiative's members have been working in these areas for a long time. The necessary documentation, requirements and solution proposals have been submitted to the relevant EU and EAEU commissions and authorised representatives: for harmonisation of customs / transport, certification, pharmaceutical market, European Green Deal, taxation / VAT, as well as visa liberalisation.

Around 50 top executives from the Initiative's member companies met in person at the conference hall of consulting company SCHNEIDER GROUP, whose President & Founder, Ulf Schneider, is the chairman of the Initiative. The important role of the Initiative was evidenced by the presence of former Russian Ambassador to Germany **Vladimir Grinin** and former Minister-Counsellor of the Russian Embassy in Germany Vladimir Polenov. Some 70 other participants and interested parties joined the meeting in an online format.

**Ulf Schneider** began the board's report by reminding of the Initiative's particular relevance. He pointed to the importance of the Initiative's communication capabilities in light of the simmering conflict between NATO and Russia, as well as China's great influence on international standardisation, which the EU and the EAEU can effectively counter. Furthermore, he remarked that “Lisbon-Vladivostok” promises to be a kind of response to China's new “One Belt, One Road” Initiative.

Mr. Schneider also reported with encouragement that the board of the Initiative had had numerous successful meetings and dialogues at the highest level in 2021, in spite of the long-term constraints posed by the pandemic. Last year, for example, the board delegation presented the results of its Task Forces to those responsible. New companies and associations are continuously joining the Initiative. At the event 4 companies signed a joint memorandum: AEB (Association of European Business in Russia), the Belarusian

### Key members



Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Spain, French logistics company FM Logistic and the food company SOLINA headquartered in France.

Ulf Schneider's call to join the Initiative **became a success** even before the meeting ended: Italian medical device manufacturer Euronda unexpectedly announced that it was joining online.

**Ernesto Ferlenghi**, board member of the Initiative and executive vice president of Confindustria Russia (Association of Italian Industrialists in Russia), spoke about the objectives for 2022. Among them are the following: attracting more members from all EU countries, an economic study of the Initiative's benefits, intensifying relations with responsible politicians, a meeting with the Eurasian Economic Commission at the EU headquarters in Brussels, a symbolic conference in Lisbon and Vladivostok with the mayors of both cities.

The event ended with the discussion between Matthias Fischer, Director of Economics and Science at the German Embassy in Moscow, and Matthias Schepp, Chairman of the Board of the German-Russian Chamber of Commerce (AHK Russland). Diplomat Matthias Fischer talked about his experiences of coming into contact with different world markets and cultures as well as about interesting personal encounters. His emotional manner created a relaxed atmosphere and at the same time instilled confidence in those present: multilateral economic cooperation is not only possible but necessary - from Lisbon to Vladivostok and the other way round.

## Key members

