

JOINT STATEMENT FROM THE 8TH U.S. –EU SME WORKSHOP IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE TRANSATLANTIC ECONOMIC COUNCIL

On October 19, 2017 the U.S. and EU held the 8th U.S.-EU Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Workshop in the framework of the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC), at Wichita State University Innovation Campus, in Wichita, Kansas. The conference was convened by the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the Department of Commerce, the Small Business Administration with the European Commission's Directorate General for Trade and Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW). The U.S. Department of Labor, Export-Import Bank, Kansas state agencies and officials including the Mayor of Wichita, the Kansas Secretary of State, Member of Congress from Kansas; and EU member state representatives including Croatia, Estonia, Germany and the Netherlands, also participated with 100 SME stakeholders on both sides. This is the first time the United States has held the workshop outside of Washington, D.C., hosted by the Chair of the Industry Trade Advisory Committee for Small and Minority Business (ITAC-11). The Wichita area is a hub for advanced manufacturing and SME supply chains in America's heartland.

Topics for discussion included manufacturing SMEs in transatlantic trade; SMEs startups, scale-ups innovation and competitiveness; transatlantic skills development for SMEs and best practices in apprenticeships and vocational training; transatlantic FDI in manufacturing; SME export promotion resources; and an update on the U.S. Department of Commerce and EU DG GROW - SME Cooperation Arrangement. Local examples of European FDI in the local economy and best practices in Kansas apprenticeships with European company partners were of particular interest. SMEs also raised the importance of supply chain relationships with large exporters, and the possibilities for mutual recognition of industry standards where possible to ease compliance with regulatory requirements. As a result of the Workshop, parties are exploring SME-led business to business discussions on sustainable chemistry, as well as the potential expansion of European Enterprise Network partners in the United States.

The US/EU Delegation also visited the Innovation Campus robotics and virtual engineering design labs and a local SME chemicals manufacturer, to hear first hand from local small businesses and innovative companies about the opportunities and challenges they face in transatlantic markets.

The U.S.-EU SME Workshop is an ongoing opportunity for small businesses to engage directly and discuss trade topics of interest with U.S. and EU officials as well as EU Member States and small and medium businesses and associations from both sides of the Atlantic. We look forward to the European Union hosting the 9th SME Workshop under the auspices of the TEC in 2018.