

**Joint statement of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union  
and the European Commission on Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting on  
Trade**

7 May 2015, Brussels

On 7 May 2015 the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in close cooperation with the Commission organized the first Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting on Trade. The meeting was co-chaired by Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Edgars Rinkēvičs, and European Commissioner for Trade Ms Cecilia Malmström.

The EU Trade Ministers and their Armenian, Azerbaijani, Belarus, Georgian, Moldovan and Ukrainian counterparts met in the afternoon of 7 May to discuss the achievements of the Eastern Partnership in the area of trade, as well as the opportunities and challenges to the further development of a successful trade dimension of the Eastern Partnership.

In light of the upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga and the ongoing European Neighbourhood Policy review, Trade Ministers exchanged views on current trade relations between the EU and the Eastern Partners. The Ministers also discussed the possibilities of further cooperation, taking into account the diverse interests of the Eastern Partners with regards to their trade relations with the EU.

The Presidency and the Commission stressed the importance of trade as a part of the Eastern Partnership policy and underlined the need to strive for inclusive and sustainable economic development. The participants acknowledged the importance of trade and increased market opportunities for creating growth and jobs.

They welcomed the start of the implementation of Association Agreements with Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, urging to continue the reform process. They noted positively the increase in trade between the EU and Georgia and the Republic of Moldova respectively, since the application of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) and looked forward to the provisional application of the DCFTA with Ukraine starting on 1 January 2016.

The Presidency and the Commission expressed respect to individual choices of Eastern Partners, and confirmed readiness to work on strengthened but differentiated trade relations with each of the Partners.