

Press Information

For immediate release

Pictures

from FICE's meeting with
Prime Minister Andrus Ansip are
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Tallinn September 26th, 2008

FICE - Foreign Investors' Council in Estonia and Prime Minister Andrus Ansip agreed on a mutual cooperation

- I welcome FICE's initiative as a valuable contribution to Estonia's Action Plan for Growth and Jobs 2008-2011 and I totally agree on your major proposals, said Prime Minister Andrus Ansip as he welcomed FICE's delegation to a first meeting at the Estonian Government's Stenbocki Maja September 26th.

The meeting followed an August 17th FICE contribution to Estonia's Action Plan for Growth and Jobs 2008-2011 where FICE presented a letter to the Estonian Government comprising a list of proposals on issues of importance for Estonia's continued economic growth in today's internationalized economic environment.

- Many of us foreign investors in Estonia have been here since the beginning of the 1990's and have had the opportunity to closely follow Estonia's development, said Jens Christiansen, the Chairman of FICE. All of us have an international background and what is happening in Estonia today has happened in our home countries several times before.

- We in FICE are ready to share our experiences with the Estonian Government and give our opinion on local issues with an international outlook, continued Jens Christiansen. The fact that Estonia now is dealing with the national and international economical slowdown not only locally but also by listening and discussing with its community of foreign direct investors is good news that deserves to be told.

FICE's main goal at the meeting with Prime Minister Ansip was to express a willingness to contribute and cooperate with the Estonian Government for a continued and sustainable economical development in the country.

During the meeting FICE and the Prime Minister focused on three major issues; the tax system, labour and education.

- Flexibility on the labour market is a key issue, said Prime Minister Ansip. We don't have any traditions on life long learning yet and I welcome every support here to get Estonia to a level where, for example, Sweden and Finland are today.

- Efficiency and delivering quality are also key issues on the labour market, said Paal Aschjem, representing the Norwegian-Estonian Chamber of Commerce in FICE. We look forward to you Mr Prime Minister and your colleagues in the Government to now spread the message to the Estonian people that the time has come for all of us, Estonians as well as foreign investors, to work harder for the same remuneration.

FICE and the Prime Minister agreed that there is a clear lack of skilled and qualified labour in Estonia and FICE underlined the need for a renewed education system and possibilities for tax-free re-education and training of labour in need of a new profession.

- Estonia should not be perceived as a low tax paradise, in a European comparison we end up in the middle of the scale, said Anders Hedman, Chairman of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Estonia. And Estonia has to watch up now! Small tax increases here and there makes a big total and fuels the inflation. Stick to a simple and clear tax system and secure continued foreign investments in Estonia.

Further issues discussed at the meeting included the energy sector, corruption, administrative reforms and the need for a streamlining of the approval, management and payment process of available EU funds.

FICE and Prime Minister Andrus Ansip agreed to set up a scheme for continued discussions and also to form work groups for in-depth works on specific topics.

FICE's delegation at the September 26th meeting with Prime Minister Andrus Ansip included: Jens Christiansen – FICE Chairman and Chairman of the Danish-Estonian Chamber of Commerce, Paal Aschjem – Chairman of the Norwegian-Estonian Chamber of Commerce, Martin Breuer – Chairman of the Holland Business Club in Estonia, Johannes Brunner - Austrian Trade Marketingbüro Tallinn, Märt Haamer – Vice Chairman of the British-Estonian Chamber of Commerce, Anders Hedman – Chairman of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Estonia, Tiina Martsik – the German-Baltic Chamber of Commerce, Heikki Mäki – Vice Chairman of the Finnish-Estonian Chamber of Commerce, Yrjö Ojasaar – President of the American Chamber of Commerce Estonia and Kristiina Sikk – FICE Secretary and Ombudsman at the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Estonia.

FICE's next meeting with Estonia's Governmental bodies will be a mutual October brief with the Committee of Economical Affairs at Riigikogu (Parliament).

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FICE - Foreign Investors' Council in Estonia is a lobby group acting through contacts with the Estonian Government and Estonia's Governmental bodies.

Pioneering FICE members include the American, Austrian, British, Danish, Finnish, German-Baltic, Holland, Norwegian and Swedish Chambers of Commerce, Business Clubs and Marketing Offices in Estonia.

Together, the nine countries represented among FICE's members had a more than 80% share of the total foreign direct investments in Estonia during the first six months 2008 [source: Eesti Pank].

Quarterly meetings will be scheduled between FICE and the Estonian Government and the members of the participating FICE-organizations will be regularly invited by the Council to specially arranged speaker events.