

Dear valued members and friends:

There are only a few days left until Christmas and a few more days towards the year-end. Many of our members have already started their well-earned year-end leave.

I think that 2013 was an exciting and eventful year in many aspects. Park Geun-Hye took office as the first female President of the Republic of Korea and launched policies to further develop Korea's expertise in strategic areas. Ministries were partly re-organized and the move of ministries to Sejong City continued – which makes it a bit more difficult for us to regularly meet officials. North Korea continued to surprise us especially in May but also just recently.

In terms of improving the business environment in Korea, the ECCK has successfully addressed many trade issues on behalf of our members. Subjects of general interest, namely the preferred tax treatment for foreigners and ordinary wages, have been raised by the ECCK. The decision on the first issue is still outstanding and expected for the beginning of 2014. The Supreme Court ruling on ordinary wages came as a disappointment for all businesses in Korea. It is with this decision that all economic policies and efforts made in the recent past to further improve and strengthen the competitiveness of companies operating in Korea have been made obsolete. The ECCK has addressed this issue since September, warning of its massive negative impact on competitiveness for all companies operating in Korea. It is clear that we are disappointed about that ruling as our voices and concerns have not been taken into account. This is for us a Christmas present we definitely would have preferred not to receive.

The Chairman of the Korean Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Yongmaan Park, has recently warned that there is a trend of overregulation and that the business environment should be more facilitated. This is an opinion we fully share, thus we will be committed to further working on that in 2014. Last but not least, the Chamber has conducted in December a survey on audits performed by Korean authorities such as National Tax Services, Korean Customs Services, or Korea Fair Trade Commission. The results are now being compiled and reconciled with other chambers in order to collectively address critical audit issues towards authorities.

I do hope that the year 2013 was successful and awarding for you all – for the ECCK it definitely was. The success of the ECCK is only possible by strong support from and cooperation with our members. I am convinced that we will keep working on your behalf in 2014, provide more services to you, create a better sentiment for European business, and work on improving the general business environment.

I thank all of you for the discussions, interesting exchanges of opinions, critical remarks, and valuable feedback. But now it is time to de-prioritize business and to place family first for the remaining days of the year. The Chamber will be closed from December 24, 2013, but we will be back and at your service as from January 2, 2014.

The ECCK wishes all of you a Merry Christmas and an excellent start into an exciting, prosperous year 2014.



Christoph Heider
Secretary-General
European Chamber of Commerce in Korea