

PRESS RELEASE

Commission Report on Lisbon Strategy: Chambers strongly welcome report – now ball is in the court of Member States

The mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy presented by EC President Barroso today is strongly supported by EUROCHAMBRES, the European Association of Chambers of Commerce & Industry. The assessment of the situation is accurate, the critique of inaction is valid, and the proposals made are practical and realistic. The report also acknowledges that only the creation of an environment in which competitiveness can flourish will safeguard employment and Europe's social model.

Christoph Leitl, President of EUROCHAMBRES said: *"We fully agree with President Barroso's focus on the economy. Negligible economic growth and 19 million unemployed are unsustainable and demand instant action and resolve. Concentrating on competitiveness and productivity, better regulation, R&D and innovation are the right choices. Now the challenge rests with the Member States – will they implement the necessary radical reforms without ifs and buts?"*

Leitl further said: *"Now the ball is in the court of Member States. The business community urges the heads of government to show true political leadership at the March Summit. We need a real commitment to delivery, not more deliberation. They are the ones who must decide on the future of Europe."*

For Chambers key elements in the Commission communication are:

- **Ensuring national implementation/National action plans:** National Action Plans are the backbone to ensure the success of the Strategy. The proposed streamlining of the report process, visible objectives and tangible measures at national level go hand in hand with the success of the Strategy. However, business urges that national parliaments should be also involved in the review of the National Action Programmes – not only in their initial design.
- **Ms/Mr Lisbon:** Chambers support the proposal to nominate a Ms/Mr Lisbon but urge that this position be filled by the Prime Ministers of each Member State. In addition, a single, key, high ranking economic Minister at national level should be the sole representative in the Competitiveness Council.
- **R&D /Innovation:** Only a Europe with significant boost of investments in R&D and with more innovation can survive in the international competitiveness race. A favourable environment by competition and tax policy and new initiatives - as outlined in the report - are catalysts in order to catch up with other regions.

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EUROCHAMBRES has member organisations in 43 countries representing a network of 2,000 regional and local Chambers

- **Social partners:** The envisaged broad coalition of partnership is necessary, and will help communicate the real value of the Lisbon agenda to a wide audience. However, business urges the Commission and Council to include a truly wide and representative group of partners in this effort – not limiting the action to the traditional, closed, industry-union social partners of the past.
- **Better regulation:** The aim of reducing the regulatory burden and implementing better regulation at EU and national level touches a sore spot in European competitiveness. Chambers especially appreciate the introduction of impact assessments for new legislation and await with interest further initiatives of the Commission in this field.

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