

European Council - Five recommendations for growth

In view of the European Council of 1-2 March, EUROCHAMBRES presented specific recommendations to Heads of State and Government, relating to five policy areas of great significance to the business community.

“Based on Chambers’ experience, I believe that the delivery of these recommendations would provide a valuable boost to the business community and consequently contribute to Europe’s economic recovery,” said Alessandro Barberis, President of EUROCHAMBRES.

Enclosed is a sheet that demonstrates in figures the key role that European Chambers of Commerce and Industry play in supporting businesses in relation to the five priorities set out below.

1. BUSINESS CREATION, GROWTH AND TRANSFER

Establish a European Central Guarantee Fund. This fund should provide EU-level (counter-)guarantees both to cover the default risk and to reduce the capital requirements of financial Institutions. This mechanism should be managed by the European Investment Fund and make guarantees available to all member states, complementing existing national guarantee systems and plugging the gap in member states where such systems are not yet developed. Non allocated structural funds could provide an additional financial envelop.

2. SKILLS

Ensure that the proposed new EU programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, “Erasmus for All”, has a clearly dedicated budget for Vocational Education and Training measures, which is not currently the case. Dual training principle has proven to be effective in decreasing the youth unemployment.

3. INTERNATIONALISATION

Create an ‘EU Internationalisation Platform for SMEs’, with the objective of bringing together all private sector stakeholders and develop one common strategy at EU level. Reintroducing the “mutual benefit principle” in the developing cooperation funds will encourage European business in approaching markets abroad.

4. INNOVATION

Include in Horizon 2020 a new SME instrument with a three stage approach (feasibility – R&D – commercialisation). This instrument must be retained during inter-institutional negotiations and indeed reinforced, ensuring that considerably more than the anticipated 15% of the programme’s budget is allocated to supporting and stimulating innovation in a wide sense among SMEs.

5. ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Targets and deadlines may make the headlines, but the cumulative impact of sensible, bottom-up solutions is critical to the EU achieving its energy efficiency goals. In particular, the effective provision of information and support to SMEs, a considerable yet still largely untapped source of energy efficiency improvements, can have a very positive impact. Chambers urge policy makers not to overlook this important aspect in finalising discussions on the revision of the Energy Efficiency Directive and implementing strategies for its delivery.

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Core Chamber activities **every year**

European companies are facing major challenges: an unprecedented financial and economic crisis, the growing impact of emerging markets, the impact of climate change and a shifting EU demography. European Chambers of Commerce and Industry have identified five key areas to support the competitiveness and growth of the European business community.



Facilitators for the creation, growth and transfer of **businesses**

Businesses assisted in their creation	1,300,000
Business participation in Chamber-run start-up information sessions	575,000
Businesses receiving direct start-up support from Chambers	265,000
Chambers supporting businesses seeking to trade within the EU Internal market	91%
Chambers providing access to finance services to businesses	88%
Chambers providing business transfer support	60%

Key players in raising **skills**

People receiving training qualifications from Chambers	2,600,000
Apprenticeships managed by Chambers	900,000
People following Chamber distance learning courses	40,000
Chambers cooperating with education and training institutes	81%
Chambers involved in governance of national vocational education and training	75%
Chambers directly delivering vocational education and training	60%



Lead role in the **internationalisation** of companies

Trade documents issued by Chambers	4,500,000
Businesses benefiting from Chamber internationalisation services	1,200,000
Businesses participating in Chamber trade missions	90,000
Businesses participating in Chamber seminars and workshops on international issues	85,000
Trade missions organised by Chambers	5,000
Chamber staff working on internationalisation of businesses beyond the EU	4,000

Valued providers of **innovation** services

Companies benefiting from Chamber innovation services	250,000
Businesses participating in Chamber innovation events	128,000
Innovation events organised by Chambers	4,500
Innovation partnerships facilitated by Chambers between businesses or businesses and research institutes	1,500
Chambers providing innovation information or consulting services to businesses	90%



Catalysts in improving **energy efficiency**

Businesses receiving energy efficiency support from Chambers	202,000
Chambers collaborating with other stakeholders to deliver energy efficiency services	100%
Chambers focusing on EU legislation in delivery of energy efficiency activities	65%

Connecting **business to Europe**

EUROCHAMBRES – The Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry represents over 20 million enterprises in Europe – 93% of which are SMEs – through members in 45 countries and a European network of 2000 regional and local Chambers.