

Informal Competitiveness Council: Action and commitment the keys to SME growth

Speaking at the Informal Meeting of ministers for Competitiveness in Brdo (Slovenia) today, Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES, reiterated the need for a political commitment at all levels in favour of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), in particular in relation to the forthcoming Small Business Act.

“Individual businesses can’t bring down governments, but governments can certainly bring down businesses, both through action or inaction. SMEs deserve greater attention and commitment from policy-makers at all levels,” said Mr Abruzzini. *“In practice, commitment means setting precise targets, clarifying responsibility for their delivery and setting up rigorous feed-back mechanisms. This should be kept in mind when drafting the Small Business Act for Europe.”*

To effectively stimulate SME growth, the Small Business Act should include the following measures:

1. **Innovation:** the use of E-signature and E-invoicing should be encouraged. A Community Patent should be developed to protect European innovative products.
2. **Market access:** companies should have easy access to cross-border markets, both within and outside the EU. The internal market should therefore be simplified, and entry into foreign markets should be made easier for SMEs. The network of European Chambers Abroad can play a significant role in this respect.
3. **Entrepreneurship:** Europe needs more young entrepreneurs ready to take up innovative ventures. This implies a greater risk-taking attitude among young people. Higher education centres can provide this mindset by including more business-friendly courses in their curricula.

SMEs: the undeniable backbone of European economy

According to 2005 Eurostat data, 99.8% of the almost 20 million enterprises active in the EU27 within the non-financial business economy are Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. Of these, 92% are micro enterprises (with 1-9 persons employed). Micro enterprises account on average for 30% of those employed and create 1100 billion EUR of value added, i.e. 21% of total European value added.

**EUROCHAMBRES’ Position on the Small Business Act can be downloaded from
www.eurochambres.eu/content/default.asp?PageID=1&DocID=927**

Further information: Mr Arnaldo Abruzzini, tel. +32 2 282 08 51, abruzzo@eurochambres.eu
Press contact: Ms Guendalina Cominotti, tel. +32 2 282 08 66, cominotti@eurochambres.eu
All our press releases can be downloaded from www.eurochambres.eu/content/default.asp?PageID=153