

PRESS RELEASE**FP7: Chambers endorse Commission proposals**

Commenting on the 7th Framework Programme (FP7), EUROCHAMBRES, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry, stressed the urgent need for European institutions and decision-makers to support the proposal.

Christoph Leitl, President of EUROCHAMBRES said: *“R&D investment is a key factor for Europe’s economic future – yet we do not boast a successful track record in this field. According to a recent EUROCHAMBRES’ study, Europe’s R&D investment is more than 20 years behind leading economies like the US. We need a quantum step in European R&D thinking, and we need it urgently.”*

For Chambers, core elements to boost R&D investment by the EU are:

- **Shorten and dramatically simplify the funding process:** This will ensure more high level research and more flexibility of projects. Furthermore, a better integration of IT and electronic accessibility are crucial - e.g. digital signatures and electronic archiving should be used.
- **Increase the research funding for SMEs:** SMEs are the backbone of the European economy and need full access to research funding and tailor-made instruments. Chambers urge a significant increase of the budget for the CRAFT, Collective and STREPs programmes.
- **Link the FP7 with the Framework Programme for Competitiveness and Innovation (CIP):** These programmes must be complementary. EUROCHAMBRES recommends strengthening policies which foster the exploitation of R&D results into marketable innovations.
- **Boost R&D via structural funds:** Structural funds must reinforce regions with low R&D in order to allow the emergence of new pools of excellence in research.
- **Open the European Research Council to business:** For a better exploitation of research results business representatives should become part of the European Research Council. Geographical and gender equality should also be respected.

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