

PRESS RELEASE**CIP Programme:
EUROCHAMBRES urges key role for Chambers in new
integrated approach to Competitiveness**

EUROCHAMBRES, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry, has given its support to the new Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) to be presented to the Competitiveness Council by the Commission on Monday. The programme brings together Community actions in favour of ICTs and eco-friendly technologies as well innovation and entrepreneurship and should lead to more synergy and complementarity between these actions.

EUROCHAMBRES President Christoph Leitl welcomed the new programme, which heralds a more integrated approach to enterprise competitiveness. However, he emphasised the need for these broad guidelines to be translated into concrete actions. He said: *“What business really needs now is a focused set of effective programmes with clear objectives that will bring real results. We hope that this consolidated approach will lead to a reduction in bureaucracy and help to make the available support programmes more visible, transparent and user-friendly.”*

“We are pleased to see that SMEs are to be placed at the core of this new strategy,” Mr Leitl continued. *“The Community Financial Instruments in particular are vital to improving access to finance for SMEs and efforts must be made to improve their uptake and effectiveness.”*

Commission should follow Spring Council’s recommendations

Mr Leitl also underlined the importance of raising awareness of the programme on the ground. Companies need to be made more aware of all initiatives available to them and the procedures for accessing them. With this in mind he called on the Commission to work in close cooperation with Chambers in the provision of support services for enterprises.

“The Chamber network is unique in its proximity to business. The important role of Chambers has been explicitly highlighted in the Conclusions of this year’s Spring Summit and we expect the Commission to honour this commitment”, Mr Leitl said.

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EUROCHAMBRES has member organisations in 43 countries representing a network of 2,000 regional and local Chambers with over 18 million member companies.