

**PRESS RELEASE**

## **Western Balkans: EUROCHAMBRES launches capacity-building programme for national and local Chambers**

The first capacity-building programme for the Western Balkans business sector has been launched today at a kick-off meeting in Skopje (FYRM) by EUROCHAMBRES, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

“PARTNERS” is a two-year project under the EU CARDS Regional Programme for the development of national and regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro. It has a total budget of €2.15 million.

Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES said: *“PARTNERS aims to reinforce the capacity of Chambers in the West Balkan countries to promote intra-regional trade and trade with the European Union which is the most important trading partner of this region. Chamber organisations will be empowered to promote local development and attract investments as well as to support the local companies to intensify their trade relations with the EU single market*

*“We are launching the new programme at a time when the European Union is growing to 25 Member States; reinforcing our links with the Western Balkan region is a natural next phase in the European integration process.”*

Activities include a competitiveness survey, Chamber twinning schemes, training seminars for Chambers and workshops for local companies:

- The survey will assess the level of competitiveness of Western Balkan companies and their familiarity with the *acquis communautaire* and identify areas where companies need more information and technical assistance.
- Chamber twinings between selected Western Balkan and EU Chambers will encourage within the Western Balkan Chambers a management change and innovative services in the area of internationalisation and local development.
- Seminars for Chamber representatives will cover trade-related topics as well as the information that Chambers need to contribute more actively to the Stabilisation and Association Process and to prepare companies for eventual EU accession. The information will be further disseminated to local companies via workshops.

-----  
FURTHER INFORMATION: Ms Nailia Dindarova, tel.: +32 2-282 08 76, [dindarova@eurochambres.be](mailto:dindarova@eurochambres.be)

PRESS CONTACT: Ms. Tosca Purr, tel.: +32 2 -282 08 53, [purr@eurochambres.be](mailto:purr@eurochambres.be)

All our press releases can be downloaded from: <http://www.eurochambres.be/press/>

EUROCHAMBRES has member organisations in 41 countries representing a network of 2,000 regional and local Chambers with over 17 million member companies.