

**PRESS RELEASE**

## **Spring Summit 2006: EU Chambers urge Prime Ministers to focus on 4 priorities**

In view of the upcoming Spring Summit, EUROCHAMBRES has sent a letter to the Prime Ministers of the Member States today, urging them to be more ambitious and take responsibility for pushing the Lisbon agenda forward at national and European level.

EUROCHAMBRES proposed 4 points of focus for the Summit leaders, which should already be discussed at the Competitiveness Council on 13 March:

- 1. More ambitious Reform Programmes and real commitment:** Heads of State and Government must set more concrete and ambitious targets especially on employment, labour market and the internal market. Implementation requires active partnership with socio-economic stakeholders, national parliaments and regions. Regular meetings to discuss progress should be held with them, allowing for rapid adjustments if needed.
- 2. Clarify the Service Directive and make it work:** the Council and the Commission should improve the current proposal textually, strengthen provisions on the freedom to provide services and limit the exceptions and derogations. The rapid creation of the proposed European-wide digital system of information exchange must be supported and a convention on the enforcement of administrative decisions created.
- 3. Develop a sustainable energy policy:** the Council must develop a long term energy strategy with a diverse energy base and in line with the Lisbon goals. Energy efficiency must become a priority – especially for SMEs – and more incentives should be created to provide organisational support and training to them. The internal markets for electricity and gas should be completed.
- 4. Support competitiveness:** EU leaders should rapidly reach agreement on the Financial Perspectives and restore their focus on competitiveness and innovation. The CIP, FP7 and SME initiatives should return to the resource levels of the initial Commission proposal.

Pierre Simon, President of EUROCHAMBRES, warned: *“Apart from the content, it is crucial that Member States really commit. Without implementation, any strategy will fail. We urge the Member States to show courageous leadership at the Summit and come up with bold and robust responses to the economic challenges facing Europe.”*

**page 1 of 2**

EUROCHAMBRES has member organisations in 44 countries representing a network of 2,000 regional and local Chambers with over 18 million member companies.

The re-launch of the Lisbon Strategy rightly focused on growth and jobs and EUROCHAMBRES supported the introduction of the National Reform Programmes (NRPs). However, most of the NRPs are insufficient and will not lead to the reforms needed to improve Europe's competitiveness.

Mr Simon concluded: *"Chambers of Commerce offer their full support to help communicate the benefits of the Strategy to citizens, and achieve results on the ground."*

**EUROCHAMBRES' message to the Spring Summit 2006 can be downloaded from [www.eurochambres.be](http://www.eurochambres.be)**

-----

FURTHER INFORMATION: Mr. Arnaldo Abruzzini, tel.: +32 2-282 08 77, [abruzzo@eurochambres.be](mailto:abruzzo@eurochambres.be)  
PRESS CONTACT: Ms. Guendalina Cominotti, tel.: +32 2-282 08 66, [cominotti@eurochambres.be](mailto:cominotti@eurochambres.be)

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