

PRESS RELEASE

EUROCHAMBRES' President Christoph Leitl calls for a joint strategy to boost employment in Europe

EUROCHAMBRES' President Christoph Leitl today praised the Wim Kok Taskforce report on Employment as a *"concise and straightforward assessment"* and stressed the need for a real commitment by national and European players for its implementation.

At a roundtable in Vienna, Mr Leitl said: *"This is an outstanding report as not only does it identify key factors for a successful European Employment Strategy, but it also says in a very precise way what needs to be done to put Europe back on track towards the Lisbon target. Now it is vital that the recommendations made in the report be put into practice and followed up by a close monitoring system. A Wim Kok Report II to evaluate the progress achieved and the implementation by the Member States could be a helpful instrument."*

In order to increase growth and employment in Europe, Christoph Leitl highlighted the need for an "IQ-Strategy" based on Innovation and Qualification. As key points he mentioned:

- vocational training and training models close to businesses to keep track of enterprises' needs;
- a facilitation of a constant upgrading of skills – especially for employees aged over 40;
- encouragement for older workers to remain longer in the workforce - as for demographical reasons the European workforce will decrease.

Furthermore, the promotion of entrepreneurship – with a special emphasis on female entrepreneurship - and a boost in European exports are essential, Mr Leitl said. He called for a broad cooperation to increase European Competitiveness – as detailed in the EUROCHAMBRES "21 Point Plan for 21st Century Employment".

Leitl said: *"To make Europe the most competitive and knowledge-based region of the world with high employment by 2010, all national and European key players must be involved – the social partners as well as the ECB. Compared to the US, expected growth rates in Europe are significantly weaker and currently there is no risk of inflation. We need the ECB to play an active role to contribute to growth and competitiveness in Europe."*

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