

Enterprise Europe Network: a key component of EU SME support

During the opening session of the annual conference of the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) today in Warsaw, EUROCHAMBRES President Alessandro Barberis reiterated the Chambers' continuing support for the network, while highlighting two ways to improve its impact and efficiency.

"The EEN has a crucial role to play in supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), especially in benefitting from the internal market and accessing international markets. This service is more important than ever in the current economic climate. Chambers look forward to working with the Commission and the Network to deliver even more valuable support to EU SMEs in the years ahead," said President Barberis in his speech at the conference.

EUROCHAMBRES welcomes the continuation of support for SMEs and for the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) in the Commission's proposal for the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework. The network must in turn respond and demonstrate its ability to adapt to SMEs' changing requirements and opportunities.

Chambers, which account for 35% of the EEN host organisations, highlight two key areas for improvement. In terms of governance, EUROCHAMBRES firmly believes that the EEN host structures must be more centrally involved in the strategic management of the network. This would help ensure that the EEN's vision is complementary to the vision of the host structures and their local, regional and national SME support partners.

As for internationalisation, Chambers call for a coherent approach to developing EEN activities and partnerships outside the EU. It is important to ensure synergy in the provision of support to European SMEs in third countries. Examples are the EU SME Centres established with EU financial support in India, China and South East Asia, which are logical partners for the EEN in those economies.

In EUROCHAMBRES' view, progress on these two important aspects - governance and internationalisation - will greatly increase the impact and efficiency of the EEN, which already provides a highly valuable service to the SME community.

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