

PRESS RELEASE

EUROCHAMBRES stresses importance of reinforced co-operation between the European Union and Israel

During his visit to Israel (on 25-26 February) EUROCHAMBRES' President Christoph Leitl called for closer cooperation between the European Union and Israel.

Christoph Leitl said: *"The success of the R & D 5th and 6th Framework Programmes shows that Israel can be considered as a natural partner of the EU. The allocated budget for the R & D 6th Framework Programme for the years 2004, 2005, 2006 stands at € 14 bln. and Israel should be more involved in the R & D projects with the EU."*

Mr Leitl also highlighted the need to remove trade obstacles and increase trade relations between both regions. He referred to a EUROCHAMBRES' survey on relations between the EU and the MEDA countries according to which EU Chambers put bureaucratic customs procedures first among other market access problems.

The EUROCHAMBRES' President highlighted the role Chambers have as facilitator and promoter of trade. The Israeli Chambers – member of EUROCHAMBRES since 1978 – have already participated in the ArchiMedes programme, run by EUROCHAMBRES from 1999 till 2001. In order to facilitate and promote economic co-operation, the programme, co-financed by the European Commission, has established a network between EU and Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce e.g. through training seminars, transfer of best practice, exchanges of staff and strategic assistance.

During his visit Mr Leitl met with key Israeli economic and political interlocutors including Finance Minister, Benyamin Nethanyahu, the Minister of National Infrastructure, Yosef Paritzky, and the President of the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce, Uriel Lynn. He will meet with the Minister of Industry, Trade and Labour, Ehud Olmert this evening.

EU-Israel Trade* of increasing importance

Israel has become increasingly important as a trade partner of the European Union. From 1990 to 2001 EU imports from Israel have approximately tripled (2001: € 9,568 million; 1990: € 3,626 million) as well as EU exports to Israel (2001: €14,449 million; 1990: € 5,456 million).

The European Union is Israel's major trading partner. It is the number one in Israel's imports and ranks number 2 in its exports. The EU share in total Israeli imports



amounts to 40% (2002: € 10,408 million) while the share of EU in total Israeli exports amounts to 29.5% (2002: €5,638 million).

*Website of the European Commission: The EU's relations with Israel;
http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/israel/intro/index.htm

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