

European SME Week: “I Want More!”

“If the democratic rule would apply, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) represent the majority of our business community, contributing to the majority of the GDP, employment and innovation. Therefore what is done for them is not enough. I’m not happy. I want more!” said EUROCHAMBRES’ Secretary General Arnaldo Abruzzini today in his speech during the opening session of the European SME Week Summit organised by the European Commission.

“Policy-makers do not create growth and employment, entrepreneurs do, but policy makers are responsible for providing the right conditions, and this week is an important occasion for our politicians and officials to listen to the 23 million SMEs and entrepreneurs in Europe and to take action to address their needs. Today, their number one wish is economic growth and stability,” continued Mr Abruzzini.

The 2010-2011 SME Performance Review released this week by the Commission suggests that Europe is facing a jobless recovery with a net loss of more than 823.000 SME jobs in the EU in 2010, highlighting the precarious economic situation and the need to support SMEs’ competitiveness.

In EUROCHAMBRES’ view, facilitating SMEs’ access to finance remains a top priority for the EU and for national governments. Recent data is not encouraging, confirming a trend of tightening credit conditions and lower credit provision to companies.

“We need a European instrument to share the risk with the financial institutions across Europe, both banks and venture capital, for the loans and equity granted to SMEs,” added Mr Abruzzini.

Other priorities highlighted by Mr Abruzzini and a range of Chamber representatives during the SME Week Summit include reducing regulatory burdens and facilitating access to markets. The underlying message from the Chamber network throughout the proceedings was clear though: SMEs, while seen by many as the solution to Europe’s problems, can only deliver jobs and growth if policy makers ensure favourable business conditions.

European SME Week is part of the European Commission’s efforts to raise public awareness of the importance of entrepreneurs to the EU. EUROCHAMBRES, while arguing that every week should be SME Week, strongly supports this action. This is reflected by the fact that Chambers across Europe hosted or contributed to hundreds of events under the SME Week banner.

The European Commission 2010/2011 SME Performance Review can be consulted at http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/performance-review/index_en.htm

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