

PRESS RELEASE

Charter of Small Enterprises: Maintain the momentum, Chambers urge

Today in Vienna, Christoph Leitl, Immediate Past President of EUROCHAMBRES, addressed the opening of the Small Enterprise Charter conference, *“a worthy initiative, which must continue and grow.”*

He underlined the role of the Charter in improving the environment for SMEs and entrepreneurship, but urged that the genuine focus on small companies is not lost because the Charter is subsumed under the general Lisbon reporting process.

European Chambers of Commerce, which have always supported the traditional format of the Charter, remain unconvinced about the effectiveness of the new approach. For the first time this year, the Charter reporting has been incorporated with the National Reform Programmes and SME concerns are bundled in with broader economic goals. As such, a degree of the SME-specific focus, which has been central to the Charter's success, has been lost.

Mr Leitl said: *“The Charter format has to date proved a very successful one. It has provided a positive example of how Member State co-operation, guided by the Commission, as well as the exchange of experiences, can really make things happen for small business across the EU. It is important that we don't lose that momentum with change under the new format.”*

Additionally, Chambers express their concern about the fact that the Commission no longer produces an annual evaluation of the Charter process. As such the opportunity for peer review and mutual learning is somewhat lost.

Previously, the annual Charter reporting process highlighted both progress and weaknesses in each Member States and singled out examples of good practices. This allowed Member States to develop a feeling of 'ownership' of the process.

Chambers, which have been involved in the Charter process since the beginning, urge the Commission to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation element which has greatly contributed to the success of the Charter and ensured that the voice of business is also heard.

FURTHER INFORMATION: Ms. Sarah Lee, tel.: +32 2-282 08 80, lee@eurochambres.eu
PRESS CONTACT: Ms. Guendalina Cominotti, tel.: +32 2-282 08 66, cominotti@eurochambres.eu

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