

PRESS RELEASE**EUROCHAMBRES urges greater, easier SME access to Research & Development funding**

European Chambers call for a continuous effort at all levels of the Commission to implement simplification procedures for R&D funding – also in line with the comments made by Commissioner Verheugen yesterday at the stakeholder conference on the future of SME policy that *“every effort be made to promote the participation of SMEs in research programmes... a major issue being... the simplification of rules and procedures”*.

“EUROCHAMBRES welcomes the proposed initiative by the Commission on the simplification in the FP7, the new EU programme for Research. The measures look promising but we know that setting out a plan is always much easier than delivering the results,” EUROCHAMBRES’ Secretary General Arnaldo Abruzzini said.

Both FP5 and FP6 were characterised by extremely complex procedures that became a hindrance to the optimal management and development of EU-funded research projects.

“Because of their limited resources, high administrative burdens are particularly difficult for SMEs to overcome”, Mr Abruzzini continued. The criteria which the business sector needs to fully participate in research and to concentrate on the innovative aspects of their business are:

- Ø simple administrative requirements for project proposals,
- Ø sufficient but limited amounts of reporting,
- Ø short time-to-decision and short time-to-payment,
- Ø legal certainty, transparency of information and
- Ø reliability in the amount and payment schedules.

“The European economy depends on SMEs, and it depends on effective research and innovation. We have not successfully joined these two together in the past. We must do so now”, Mr Abruzzini said.

FURTHER INFORMATION: Mr. Vincent Tilman, tel.: +32 2-282 08 67, tilman@eurochambres.be
PRESS CONTACT: Ms. Tosca Purr, tel.: +32 2-282 08 53, purr@eurochambres.be

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