

**PRESS RELEASE**

## **Regional Policy: Structural Funds should be the motor of sustainable economic dynamism and not lead to permanent assistance**

Chambers fully endorsed the new focus of the future Regional Policy on the Lisbon targets. However, EUROCHAMBRES insisted on the fact that Structural/Cohesion Funds should help the regions that are lagging behind to catch up and develop a proper economic dynamism but not lead to a situation of dependency on permanent assistance. The "Convergence" Objective must provide instruments to finance infrastructure capacity and to strengthen human capital (education and training) while ensuring that community money is used for general support measures for SMEs and actions aimed at enterprise start-ups, Chambers said.

EUROCHAMBRES welcomed the Structural Funds related Regulations released by the European Commission on 14 July and urged the Commission to complete the consultation process with all Member States by the end of 2005 in order to stick to the timetable proposed. Creating a positive business environment is crucial for economic growth and social cohesion and cannot suffer any delays

Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES, said: *"The business community recognises that big efforts have been made to simplify the administrative processes. It is now of key importance that the Commission sets common standards for the timing of the different Regional Policy processes, and speeds up decision-making. This will help the business community to better take part in the relevant programmes, as time is money."*

The systematic, early and continuous involvement and consultation of the business community in both planning and implementation will bring added value to the Regional Policy process. Additionally, the Commission should foresee control mechanisms which measure the involvement of the business community in the different Member States. *"This would ensure the effectiveness and efficiency, in case the Member States do not apply the partnership principle"*, Abruzzini said.

-----  
*FURTHER INFORMATION: Ms Birgit Arens, tel.: +32 2-282 08 57, [arens@eurochambres.be](mailto:arens@eurochambres.be)*

*PRESS CONTACT: Ms. Tosca Purr, tel.: +32 2-282 08 53, [purr@eurochambres.be](mailto:purr@eurochambres.be)*

All our press releases can be downloaded from: <http://www.eurochambres.be/press/>

**EUROCHAMBRES** has member organisations in **41** countries representing a network of **2,000** regional and local Chambers with over **17 million** member companies.