

PRESS RELEASE**EUROCHAMBRES meets Slovenian Prime Minister**
“Let new Presidency bring new impetus to the EU!”

President Pierre Simon and Secretary General Arnaldo Abruzzini met with Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša in Ljubljana today, and outlined the key issues that European businesses would like to see addressed by the next EU Presidency, as of 1 January 2008. Slovenia will be the first “new” Member State to hold the Presidency of the EU; EUROCHAMBRES hopes this will bring fresh blood to European decision-making, with special focus on the Lisbon Strategy and broad economic policy.

“Let’s inaugurate the new year under renewed and enhanced commitment for the European economy!” said Mr Simon. *“The recent financial turmoil, the growing strength of the Euro and rising oil prices can seriously endanger Europe’s fragile economic outlook. The Lisbon Strategy is and remains the EU’s best response to current and future economic and social challenges. We urge the Slovenian Presidency to make consolidation of the EU economy a priority, and are confident it can make a significant contribution in this respect.”*

When it comes to strengthening European competitiveness, some dossiers are of particular importance to EUROCHAMBRES:

The European Private Company Statute (EPCS)

Chambers welcome the recent announcement that the Commission will finally go ahead with the establishment of the European Private Company Statute. EUROCHAMBRES urges the Council to follow up closely the dossier and not accept any delay in the proposition of a regulation on the EPCS.

The European Institute of Technology (EIT)

EUROCHAMBRES strongly supports the setting up of the EIT. Europe needs an instrument that can foster the commercial exploitation of research results within an integrated approach of teaching, research and technology transfer. Chambers urge the Council to make the EIT a successful model of excellence in innovation, involving SMEs as much as possible, specifically in the governing board.

Energy policy

The energy issue is a top priority for EUROCHAMBRES. The Slovenian Presidency has the task to start negotiations on proposals that will transform the common European energy strategy into practical measures.

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EUROCHAMBRES – The Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry represents over 19 million enterprises in Europe through 46 members and a European network of 2000 regional and local Chambers.

These have to be correlated with the Lisbon goals to ensure the availability of a secure and sustainable energy supply at an affordable price. Crucial in this respect is a combination of a functioning internal market, improved energy efficiency and an increased production and use of renewables.

Education and training

EUROCHAMBRES urged the development of an Erasmus-like apprenticeship scheme for entrepreneurs, to make sure skills developed on the ground meet the real needs of the labour market.

Finally, the meeting with Mr Janša was an opportunity for EUROCHAMBRES to reiterate the request for effective participation of the relevant social partners in the Competitiveness Council. The Competitiveness Council should be open to other categories of social partners when economic, growth and competition issues are on the agenda; but this is unfortunately not yet the case.

Mr Simon and Mr Abruzzini were reassured by the Prime Minister that EUROCHAMBRES' requests will be taken into appropriate consideration.

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