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PRESS RELEASE

The Manifesto of European Chambers: **4 proposals for a new take-off of growth and jobs**

The Manifesto of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry: a four-point plan to help the European business community to flourish and grow. This is the outcome of EUROCHAMBRES' 14th Annual Congress – "Communicating Europe: Sharing the Vision, Delivering the Results" – concluding today in Thessaloniki (Greece).

The document, containing specific recommendations to European and national decision-makers, collects best practices and proposals of 2000 Chambers of Commerce from 45 countries on four key aspects for European competitiveness:

1. Business creation, development and transfer;
2. Education, vocational training and apprenticeship;
3. Internationalisation of European businesses;
4. Innovation for business (in particular via energy efficiency and use of clusters).

Pierre Simon, President of EUROCHAMBRES, said: "*What we witness now among political leaders is a lack of common vision on what kind of Europe we seek to build. The citizens and businesses of Europe deserve better! Politicians must deliver a business-friendly environment, and we must ensure European companies profit from it. We must deliver the results.*"

"The Chambers' Manifesto offers both vision and results: it contains not only a set of recommendations to decision-makers, but also the Chambers' vision and concrete commitments for a more competitive and business-friendly Europe. Chambers are ready to implement these proposals, but demand for the active support of the public authorities in this process. Then the Lisbon Agenda will be ready for a new take-off, and 'communicating Europe' will no longer be the problem issue that it is today."

1. Business creation, development and transfer – SME Statute needed

European Chambers annually assist the creation of more than 700,000 companies. Similarly, development and transfer of companies are among the widest areas of work by Chambers, who provide firms with access to finance, lobbying for better regulation as well as services for internationalization, training and innovation. Chambers support a European Statute for SMEs, demand a better access of SMEs to public procurement markets, will prepare enterprises to reap the opportunities of the forthcoming Services Directive and will monitor the impact on SMEs of Basel II and REACH as they are implemented.

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EUROCHAMBRES has member organisations in 44 countries representing a network of 2,000 regional and local Chambers with over 18 million member companies.



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2. Training and apprenticeship – Apprentice mobility to be encouraged

Every year, nearly 2.7 million people are trained by the Chambers' training system. Chambers propose the introduction of a European programme dedicated to the mobility of apprentices, based on the Erasmus model.

3. Internationalisation – European business delegations should be launched

Every year, nearly 1 million companies in Europe are assisted by their Chambers to 'go international'. Chambers suggest that high level political missions, e.g. by President Barroso, should be accompanied by a European business delegation, as is common practise by any nation in the world.

4. Innovation – Towards energy efficiency and innovating clusters

Energy and Clusters are the two main innovation fields where Chambers possess specific expertise. Chambers help companies save energy and enhance their understanding and implementation of the energy-efficiency action plans. They are also constantly committed to making companies aware of the cluster approach. Chambers demand to be recognised as the drivers of energy efficiency for SMEs, as well as the promoters of innovating clusters.

Four action groups for each of these issues will be set up, in order to ensure implementation of the Manifesto recommendations.

The final version of the Manifesto will soon be available on www.eurochambres.eu

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