

PRESS RELEASE

New SME Policy: EUROCHAMBRES supports, urges follow-through action

EUROCHAMBRES welcomes the Commission's Communication on a New SME Policy, announced today by Commissioner Günter Verheugen. The Communication re-focuses SME Policy on the most essential elements and aims to streamline Community actions in this area to improve their effectiveness.

Paul Skehan, Deputy Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES, commented: *"In recent years the Commission has produced a plethora of policy documents in this area but little has changed on the ground. It is important that this document becomes more than just yet another political statement. Chambers hope that the new SME Policy will really focus the minds – and actions - of Europe's decision makers on the importance of SMEs as the backbone of our economies and a key driver of competitiveness."*

- EUROCHAMBRES is encouraged to see the **focus on education** - as skills and an entrepreneurial spirit are vital to the dynamism of the European economy.
- Furthermore, the business organisation representing over 18 million enterprises welcomes **the commitment to improving consultation of the business community** which should focus on representative stakeholder groups who can aggregate the views of all businesses.
- Chambers also support the **initiative to facilitate SMEs access to Community programs and to simplify rules for state aid**. In addition, the EU must promote internationalisation programs for SMEs as well as cross-boarder clusters and increase the SME share in the structural funds.
- Finally, much of regulation affecting enterprises comes from the EU. **Improving the regulatory environment remains the top priority** for an effective SME policy.

Mr Skehan concluded: *"The role and resources of the SME Envoy within the Commission must be strengthened to ensure that all new regulation is SME friendly, including on such key issues for competitiveness as the Working Time Directive, REACH and the Services Directive. The recently announced simplification programme must make real progress on reducing the burdens for small companies."*

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