

PRESS RELEASE

Services Directive: Chambers urge Parliament to back Commission proposal

In the run up to the European Parliament's hearing in the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection on 11 November, EUROCHAMBRES expressed support for the Commission proposal and called on Committee members to give it their full backing.

EUROCHAMBRES' Secretary General, Mr Arnaldo Abruzzini, said: *"Chambers urge the European Parliament and Member States to ensure that the proposal does not get watered down by extensive derogations or implementation delays. The realisation of an internal market for services is an important, yet difficult task and it will take considerable political will if it is to become a reality by 2010."*

EUROCHAMBRES welcomed the Commission's intention to introduce administrative simplification and the extension of the country of origin principle for services which are vital to removing unnecessary burdens – especially for SMEs.

Mr Abruzzini said: *"The country of origin principle is fundamental to the objective of the proposal, and essential if European consumers are to feel the benefit of greater choice, and greater competition among service providers. It would be completely counterproductive to impose on SMEs - which are the backbone of the European service sector - the necessity of learning the different rules of 25 countries! This would represent an insurmountable disadvantage to all but a few and totally undermine the opening up of service markets to competition."*

Chambers are opposed to the introduction of legislation on the quality of services as outlined in the proposal, and to overly strict minimum standards which would only add new burdens and costs with no clear benefits. More clarification of key terms of the Directive would ensure legal certainty and remove loopholes, EUROCHAMBRES said.

Services account for 70% of GDP and employment in most Member States. A true internal market for services would be a major opportunity for economic growth in the enlarged EU.

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