

PRESS RELEASE

Mid-term review on SME policy: Chambers suggest move from thinking to acting

The outline of the mid-term review on modern SME policy, presented by the European Commission today, leaves EUROCHAMBRES with ambivalent feelings. While acknowledging that the integration of the "Think Small First" principle into Community and national legislation is slowly becoming a reality, EUROCHAMBRES regrets the lack of commitment displayed by EU leaders when it comes to actually acting small first.

Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES, said: *"After two years of existence, the Commission's SME Policy has indeed helped raise awareness among European politicians on the necessity to release the full potential of SMEs to create more growth and jobs in the EU. We welcome this positive change of attitude, but regret that words have not turned into action. What really counts is how the Commission and – more importantly – the Member States act on SME policy!"*

A striking example: the commitment adopted by Member States in 2006 to reduce to one week the time needed to set up a company by the end of 2007, is far from being achieved.

EUROCHAMBRES therefore urges the Commission and Member States to ensure that SMEs are given the tools to successfully face current and future challenges. In particular:

- Member States must live up to their promises on the **one-week set up deadline**. Lip service will not help entrepreneurs in any way;
- The Commission must make sure that a proposal for a **European Private Company Statute** for SMEs is tabled soon, to lift barriers to cross-border trade;
- Linking the future of the Single Market to **better regulation** strategies. There is no effective Single Market without effective SMEs, and SMEs cannot be effective if hampered by excessive or irrelevant regulation.
- More focus on **access to finance**, as too many companies face unfavourable or impossible finance conditions yet need capital to start, grow and flourish;
- SME-friendly implementation of **environmental legislation**: the Commission and Member States must avoid introducing excessive administrative tasks and support SMEs with easily accessible information and external expertise. Spur the **development of eco-innovative products** by SMEs through enabling unbureaucratic access to R&D funding.

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