

PRESS RELEASE

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Taking women "On Board" Chambers launch new equality project

2007, the European year of Equal Opportunities, brings fresh wind for EUROCHAMBRES Women Network (EWN) which announces the election of its new President and the launch of its third project for the promotion of female entrepreneurship.

Sophia Economacos, President of the Greek National Chamber's Women Network, was appointed at the head of the Network, taking over from Isabella Moore. Mrs Economacos said: *"Women are a significant part of the work force, but their skills, ambitions and talents remain wholly underutilised so far. As long as this potential remains untapped, Europe will not achieve its ambitious Lisbon goals, and the theory of gender equality will not translate into reality."*

"Chambers – which are responsible for the promotion of entrepreneurship regardless of sex or any other factor – can forward women into the work force thanks to their proximity to the local business communities. In this respect, I am confident that EWN's new project will give a strong impulse towards a more women-friendly business environment."

The project "Women On Board Local Development" – in short "On Board" – will assist women to reach a higher share in local economic environment. To this end, it will address three main areas of concern:

1. **Women on Chamber boards** (fostering the role of women in economic decision-making). An analysis of the reasons for under-representation of women on boards of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and development of guidelines for increasing female participation.
2. **Linking local actors** (towards the reconciliation of work and family life). The project partners will establish links between Chambers and other stakeholders that will lead to a better understanding and handling of the reconciliation question.
3. **Access to finance** for female start up entrepreneurs. The objective is to improve the business environment for female entrepreneurs-to-be by easing and furthering their access to finance at local level.

Three working groups will be created to carry out the above activities. "On Board" will last for 15 months involving 16 Chambers of Commerce from 12 European countries*. It is funded with the support of the European Community Programme relating to the Community framework strategy on gender equality.

* Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Romania and Slovenia.

FURTHER INFORMATION: Mrs. Birgit Arens, tel.: +32 2-282 08 57, arens@eurochambres.eu
PRESS CONTACT: Ms. Guendalina Cominotti, tel.: +32 2-282 08 66, cominotti@eurochambres.eu

EUROCHAMBRES has member organisations in 45 countries
 representing a network of 2,000 regional and local Chambers with over 18 million member companies.