



EUROCHAMBRES' 16th Congress Declaration

Prague, 14-15 May 2009

400 representatives of Chambers of Commerce and Industry from across Europe met in Prague on 14 and 15 May 2009 during the first European SME Week for the 16th Congress of EUROCHAMBRES.

The Congress discussions confirmed that businesses throughout the Chamber network remain deeply concerned about the economic and social impact of the recession. In the framework of the 'Business Without Barriers' theme of the Congress, Chambers therefore demand the prompt implementation of economic recovery plans at EU and national levels.

Chambers underline that the fight against the crisis and its consequences should not, on any account, be used as a pretext for protectionist measures, or be allowed to undermine either the objectives of the single market or the principles of competition policy. This must be reflected in the handling of specific economic sectors hit by the crisis, which must under no circumstances discriminate against other sectors or other European economies.

At the same time, Chambers call on Europe's policy makers in this period of crisis not to overlook long-term strategic targets that would enhance European businesses' global competitiveness, so crucial to the Union's future stability, prosperity and sustainability. The congress outlined the following key recommendations to advance Europe's competitiveness:

1. Optimise Europe's human capital through more and better education and training, improved skills forecasting, flexible labour markets and the promotion of an entrepreneurial mindset;
2. Secure an open global market and support European businesses in accessing third markets through our existing Chamber network, both in Europe and abroad;
3. Reduce further regulatory and administrative burdens, while continuing to break down the remaining obstacles to the completion of the internal market;
4. Stimulate innovation and increase significantly support for research and development;
5. Alleviate SMEs' perpetual cash-flow difficulties through the provision of affordable and accessible financing instruments;
6. Position Europe as a global leader in energy efficiency and related environmental and energy technologies.

EUROCHAMBRES, serving the interests of 20 million enterprises via 2.000 local and regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry and 45 national associations, is Europe's largest and longest established business platform. As such, it acknowledges its responsibility to work closely with the EU institutions in the pursuit of these recommendations. Reflecting this, Congress participants overwhelmingly agreed to use this platform in the pursuit of constant improvements in the business environment.

Prague, 15 May 2009

