

**PRESS RELEASE**

## **Neither the French outcome nor the early German elections should delay decision on new Financial Framework**

**Framework must create centre of excellence in ICT and focus on SMEs, Chambers say**

In the discussion about the new financial framework of the EU, EUROCHAMBRES stressed the crucial role ICT must play to revitalise the EU economy. The business organisation reaffirmed its opposition to cuts of financial allocations on competitiveness in the proposed financial perspectives (Chapter one).

EUROCHAMBRES' President Christoph Leitl said: *"Discussions focus on how much money should be spent and who has to pay for it, instead of discussing how we spend money best to improve our competitiveness. We must turn to an approach which is beneficial for the economy and provides the maximum leverage effect for each euro spent: ICT gives an excellent return on investment - 1 euro investment in ICT creates 7 euro on average! There is plenty of room for improvement in this field, especially amongst SMEs."*

For the EU budget 2007–2013, Chambers urge a top priority for ICT, education, research and training in order to make Europe more competitive compared to world economic players like the US or China.

### **The enormous ICT potential of SME remains untapped**

Mr Leitl also addressed Viviane Reding, the Commissioner in charge of information society and media, who will bring forward the new i2010 initiative tomorrow and who was recently a guest speaker at EUROCHAMBRES' plenary assembly.

*"Commissioner Reding has made the key role which ICT plays for competitiveness very clear – and also the importance of ensuring that SMEs are fully involved. SMEs need support to keep pace with the rapidly changing ICT-world. Chambers welcome that the funds for ICT research in the proposed FP7 will be almost doubled."*

Chambers will continue to actively support the Commission's efforts to improve the uptake of ICT, to enforce the regulatory framework for electronic communication and to provide better, faster and cheaper services to companies through the use of ICT. Mr Leitl also referred to the rapid expansion of "online services" for companies by Chambers all over Europe and their work to raise ICT awareness among SMEs.

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**EUROCHAMBRES has member organisations in 44 countries representing a network of 2,000 regional and local Chambers**