

Monday 18th February 2002

Make Barcelona a success

EUROCHAMBRES, EUROCOMMERCE, UEAPME and UNICE representing the business community in the European Union, call on all Member States to implement the targets they set themselves in Lisbon and to deliver the policies that are urgently needed to make Barcelona a success. Understand that without rapid structural reforms including in the labour market, the EU cannot achieve consistent high growth, and will not be able to create sustainable jobs and prosperity for its citizens. Without economic growth it is impossible to achieve sustainable development. A strong economy underpins a strong and cohesive society, and enables governments, companies and individuals to fulfil their role in a responsible way.

The March 2000 Lisbon summit created a new process in EU policy, but more importantly it marked a change in attitude by the Member States. For the first time, heads of State and Government set themselves clear and unambiguous targets for the completion of the Internal Market, recognising that failure to do so was restricting the EU's growth potential. The conclusions of the Lisbon summit were heralded a success by the business community.

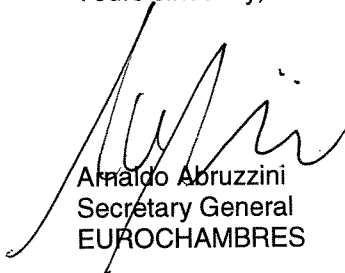
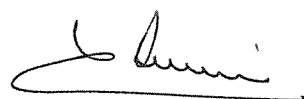
Two years on, the Spanish Presidency and Member States are preparing for the Barcelona Spring summit, which will assess progress made so far. This is a critical moment. Deadlines have been missed. Progress in implementing agreed legislation has been slow. In spite of the EU's potential and underlying economic strength, European economies are losing ground relative to the USA, their main competitor. Productivity growth is lower, leading to under-performance.

The European business community asks Member States to ensure that the ambitious Lisbon targets are matched by a willingness to carry out difficult structural reforms in key markets, and calls for action to convert Europe's potential into performance. The current difficult economic climate underlines the need for deeper economic policy coordination to reinforce the Stability and Growth Pact.

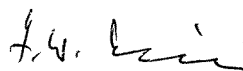
Furthermore, European business is concerned about the general orientation of the European debates on sustainability, corporate social responsibility and new governance. The importance of social and ecological development for a broad acceptance of Europe by all groups of society is recognised. However only a robust economy will be able to provide the basis for progress in these policies. Economic development is the prerequisite for sustainable development, and business therefore has an important role to play.

The Barcelona summit is the opportunity for Member States to make clear their commitment to really making the EU "*the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world*" while embracing a successful enlargement to candidate countries. The European business organisations and their national affiliates declare their full support for the Lisbon strategy. We will work together with national governments, parliaments, and the European Commission, to take the necessary decisions and to implement these policies. We are counting on you to make Barcelona a success - Europe's economy depends on it.

Yours sincerely,


Arnaldo Abruzzini
Secretary General
EUROCHAMBRES

Xavier Durieu
Secretary General
EUROCOMMERCE



Hans Werner Müller
Secretary General
UEAPME



Philippe de Buck
Secretary general
UNICE