



PRESS RELEASE

Fourth European Business Summit: turning knowledge into growth

The European Business Summit will be organized for the fourth time by FEB (Federation of Enterprises in Belgium) with the support of UNICE, the European Commission and the EU Presidency on 16 and 17 March 2006. Under the title **Building a Europe of Excellence: turning knowledge into growth** the EBS provides an opportunity for business leaders and politicians to discuss the revised EU strategy for growth and jobs and present concrete proposals to enhance Europe's competitiveness.

Having received national reform programmes on growth and jobs from all the member states, the Commission last week presented its annual progress report on the Lisbon strategy. The report is mildly optimistic, but Commission President José Manuel Barroso said last week: "It is time to move up a gear. [...] Now the spotlight moves to delivery." Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen, in charge of enterprise and industry, compared the 25 member states to a group of ships. "The convoy has left the harbour and is slowly and jointly moving in the right direction - not all at the same speed, but the process encourages slower ships to step up speed."

Both President Barroso and Vice-President Verheugen will address the European Business Summit.

The key challenge: more growth and more jobs

"The aim of the Austrian Presidency is to revive the Lisbon Strategy and to give new impetus to it. Jobs and growth are the two main concerns of the people in Europe. To meet this challenge, we have to provide training and jobs, especially for young people and for those who are not yet sufficiently educated. The Austrian Presidency wants to do this by strengthening SMEs and bolstering research and development", said **HE Ambassador Gregor Woschnagg**, Austria's Permanent Representative to the EU.

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"The Commission progress report is a step forward in implementing the EU Growth and Jobs strategy. It is now time to move from diagnosis to therapy", explained **Philippe de Buck**, UNICE Secretary-General.

"The Belgian national reform programme contains a lot of good intentions and correctly focuses on more growth and more jobs. But there is uncertainty about the concrete implementation of many parts of the plan due to a persistent lack of information on how initiatives are financed and what their time-frames are", said FEB CEO **Rudi Thomaes**.

The EBS offers a unique programme

The conference programme consists of workshops, country discussions and plenary sessions. The thematic panels bring together European Commissioners, CEOs of multinationals, SME business leaders, professors, ministers, other EU institutions, employer federations, trade unions and more.

The innovation at the 4th EBS is the concept of six country groups: all EU member states and candidate countries - represented mostly at the highest ministerial level - will present their National Reform Programmes for implementing the Lisbon Strategy. This is the first time national practices will be exchanged in an open debate with European companies. Business people participating in the EBS can actively support their national governments by changing their vision in more practical directions and then push them to deliver on promise. This is how the EBS will demonstrate that we need now less talk and more concrete action.

Moreover, the Summit's conclusions will be officially adopted as business message to the EU Spring Council (one week later).

For further information, visit www.ebsummit.org or contact:

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