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## **YOUNG EUROPEAN ENTREPRENEURS' SEMINAR 2011**

**EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE  
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### **Final debate – “How to give entrepreneurs a European identity?”**

**Comments by Daniel Cloquet,  
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Ladies and gentlemen,

At the end of a day that has reviewed, on the one hand, the many challenges to be tackled by young entrepreneurs and, on the other hand, the direct or indirect support that the EU can provide them, I am happy to make a contribution on the rather different – but in my eyes equally important – topic of “How to give entrepreneurs a European identity?”

I would like to do this by addressing two issues. First the “why” issue: why should we care about enhancing that feeling of European, identity, or of European consciousness? Then the “how” issue - how to do it.

Feeling a strong identification is of course always important in life.

By the way, for me it is possible to manage a number of identities, if they nicely complement each other.

So, for me, the question of “why” is not: “why is it important to have a European Entrepreneur identity instead of a national Entrepreneur identity?”

It is more “why is it important that Entrepreneurs develop a strong European identity in addition to other types of identities?”

A key reason why I think it is important that Entrepreneurs build some form of European identity is that Europe is capable of developing policies and solutions that Member States can often no longer manage on their own.

Fighting climate change, ensuring sustainable mobility, designing sustainable energy systems, fostering healthy ageing are challenges that cannot be tackled efficiently without shared European strategies for these areas.



And if we want win-win strategies which address these challenges while creating wide and innovation-friendly markets, we also need more Europe.

Every European entrepreneur should, I believe, be aware of such realities and therefore push forward the European idea in his or her community.

I would like to give you a historical perspective illustrating the value of some European policies, and highlight the fact that these policies don't fall from the sky just like that. Let's take the example of the European research and innovation policy.

The budget proposal today for this policy for the period 2014-2020 is 80 billion euros, which is quite something. We should certainly not look at this policy as something that is self-evident and that has always existed.

This would amount to forget that many years were needed to build this research and innovation policy, which was not envisaged in the 1957 Treaty of Rome. In the early years of the European Community, research was only **addressed** in the nuclear area, under the Euratom Treaty. It was only in 1972 that the first European R&D cooperation actions started in the non-nuclear energy sphere. The approach was largely intergovernmental, with a lot of cooperation between public laboratories. In the beginning, cooperation was deployed on small, fairly disparate projects and lacked a strategic vision. Then, thanks to perseverance, the Commission managed to convince member states to deploy broader cross-border cooperation actions involving companies, universities and public research centres which were organised within the first R&D framework programme starting in 1983. This more strategic and business-like approach was initiated with the design of the ESPRIT programme in 1981 (European Strategic Programme of Research in Information Technologies).

This doesn't mean that all European policies are perfect; for some of them, there is still a great deal of work to be done to fully grasp the potential for effectiveness at European level.

This should in fact be seen as an additional reason for developing the European consciousness of entrepreneurs, and for encouraging them to raise their voice in the European democratic debate or technical discussions.

The extra European value-added deriving from projects carried out at European level is clearly not generated only by good ideas from policy-makers.

Cross-borders investment and cooperative action by private actors is clearly also a major driving force (in fact the most powerful one) generating extra added value. It is therefore vital that every entrepreneur, driven by a sharp European identity, looks creatively for opportunities in that respect.

Let's move to the "how" issue.

Strengthening the entrepreneur's European identity should be done by developing multiple initiatives in parallel. I have made here a short illustrative list of them:



- First, Europe should communicate much more actively on its successes **and** pioneering initiatives. As an example, some communication should have been organised to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of the ESPRIT programme in 2011, with its new financing and management model. This opportunity was unfortunately not seized.
- Second, Europe should continue putting in place European information tools and support services which all entrepreneurs can access easily. For example, it is more and more important to have good information tools about the regulatory environment in non-European markets, so that companies' internationalisation plans can develop successfully. BUSINESSEUROPE welcomes the fact that the European Commission is going to check where there are gaps in the current public and private information services and how they can be filled.
- Third, encourage the establishment of cross-border clusters and networks which support internationalisation of SMEs.

As a last point on this short list, I would like to mention an action item, which relates to promotion of the European Identity not in the minds of entrepreneurs, but in the minds of our international trade partners.

I think that this external dimension of the European identity is also very important.

Europe has now an External Action Service, with offices in many regions of the world.

This External Action Service should both help SME internationalisation and give to our trading partners an inspiring view of what can be achieved by European companies working together.

Thank you.

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