



SPEAKING NOTES

29 February 2008

BUSINESSEUROPE PARTICIPATION IN THE OPEN DAYS

ADDRESS BY MARC STOCKER, ECONOMICS DIRECTOR

29 February 2008: Launch event of the 2008 Investor's Café, the networking and communication forum for public and private partners participating in the OPEN DAYS European Week of Regions and Cities (6-9 October)

Dirk Ahner, Director-General of the European Commission's Regional Policy DG, and Gerhard Stahl, Secretary General of the Committee of the Regions, take part in the event

WHO ARE WE?

BUSINESSEUROPE is the Confederation of European Business. Our members are 39 industrial and employers' federations from 33 countries, and through them we represent the voice of around 20 million small, medium and large size companies.

Our daily activity is to promote the role of companies in Europe, advocating for a favourable and competitive environment, for sustainable economic growth and sound economic governance

WHAT DO WE DO IN THE FIELD OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

BUSINESSEUROPE is committed to working closely with the EU institutions in framing an effective cohesion policy which supports competitiveness and regional development.

Our work in this area has focused lately on:

- the future of cohesion policy, and in particular the effective earmarking of funds towards competitiveness. In September BUSINESSEUROPE issued a position paper that puts forward several key areas of action in which the EU cohesion policy should concentrate in the future.
- the EU budget review, which offers a great opportunity to make EU funding a more effective instrument to develop a true knowledge-based economy
- the implementation of the partnership principle, which has not been well achieved in certain countries and is essential to improve investment focus and transparency. In the context of the annual consultation between the European Commission and

social partners on regional and cohesion policy, several BUSINESSEUROPE member federations provided feedback on the way the partnership principle is being implemented in their countries.

- Risk sharing facilities in the form of PPP-type arrangements for local development, such as Jeremie or Jessica, which seek to leverage the effects of EU funds with the private sector
- exchange of best practises, learning from the experience of our federations on capacity building

WHY ARE WE PARTICIPATING IN THE OPEN DAYS?

Just a few words on our participation in the Open Days this year:

First, we find the Open Days a great success and we think they offer a unique opportunity to present the views of business on regional development. This explains why BUSINESSEUROPE but also UEAPME are partners in this important event.

BUSINESSEUROPE has long advocated that regional development and the success of Europe's cohesion policy hinges critically on the effective involvement of local actors. Businesses operate locally and successful networks and clusters generally develop in a particular geographic area. The involvement of local actors is key to ensure that EU programmes respond effectively to local needs and are able to kick off endogenous growth in the regions.

The second reason for our strong involvement this year is that BUSINESSEUROPE is turning 50 this summer and we cannot find a better place to celebrate this anniversary than in the Open Days, among business and policy leaders from across Europe.

I take the opportunity to invite all of you to participate in the high-level event that we will organise during the Open Days, which will focus on the importance of striving companies for regional development. The business community to speak out their views on cohesion policy, public-private partnerships and what hinders innovation and business development and how Europe can help. We count on the presence of key representatives from the commission, committee of the regions, local authorities and the business community to debate the role of companies in the regions.