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Europe should fight together against crisis, but biggest EU SME organization still excluded from Tripartite Social Summit

“The Tripartite Social Summit which will take place before the next Spring European Council is not representative for Europe’s business community. The Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry, EUROCHAMBRES, which is the biggest EU business umbrella organization representing 19 million member enterprises – 96% of which are SMEs – with 120 million employees is still excluded from this important dialogue”, SME UNION President Christoph Leitl pointed out in the run-up to the meeting of EU Heads of State and Government this Thursday and Friday in Brussels. “Especially in difficult economic times like these, all partners should pull together to find solutions for the European economy. Otherwise, European entrepreneurs and their employees will be the ones to pay the price”, explained the President of the EPP’s business organization.

As a matter of fact, EUROCHAMBRES has been recognized as a specific social partner organization by the European Commission. “Hence, EUROCHAMBRES should - where appropriate - be included in the employer’s delegation as it is foreseen in a decision by the European Council, even more so as the next Tripartite Social Summit will discuss topics such as the current financial and economic crisis which are definitely beyond the scope of the classical Social Dialogue”, underlined President Leitl. “The Tripartite Social Summit is weakened by the exclusion of EUROCHAMBRES”, concluded the President of SME UNION. “In its current form it remains a ‘gathering with ribs but without the backbone’.”

Leitl called for swift and joint action at the European level in order to restart Europe’s economic engines. “If we continue like this, other countries like the USA will re-emerge much quicker and stronger from the current crisis.” More investment in research and development and more retraining possibilities for unemployed are needed to help Europe to emerge stronger from the crisis, underlined President Leitl. He also proposed to set up an EU Guarantee Fund for SMEs providing re-insurance for national and regional guarantee institutions targeting especially SMEs.

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SME UNION (Small and Medium Entrepreneurs Union) of the EPP (European People’s Party) is the network of pro-business Christian-Democrat, Conservative and Liberal politicians and political organizations. Its main objective is to help in shaping EU policy in a more SME friendly way. www.sme-union.org