EUROCHAMBRES women network gives boost to female entrepreneurship

A women's network aimed at supporting female entrepreneurship in Europe was launched by EUROCHAMBRES, the association of European chambers of commerce and industry, on 10 September at the European Parliament. The purpose of the network is to establish a European platform of information to promote equal opportunity rights and professional women's viewpoints and interests, with a view to increasing their participation in business, and accelerating the entrepreneurial process.

Women entrepreneurs are a rapidly growing sector of the business population, but statistics in 2000 show that the percentage of self employed women is still relatively low, accounting for only eight per cent of the total number of women in work, of which three per cent can be categorised as entrepreneurs.

In his speech at the launch, President of EUROCHAMBRES, Christoph Leitl, noted that female entrepreneurial activities and the better integration of women into the working process are important factors in increasing EU competitiveness in line with the Lisbon target of becoming the world's most competitive knowledge-based society by 2010.

'In view of the tough international competition Europe faces, we cannot afford to leave untapped the high potential of qualification and know-how of women and especially female entrepreneurs,' warned Mr Leitl.

This point was also taken up by EU Commissioner for Enterprise and the Information Society Erkki Liikanen, who noted that: 'If Europe wants to become more competitive as agreed in Lisbon, we need more entrepreneurs - and we definitely need more women entrepreneurs. Earlier this year, we published a green paper on entrepreneurship in Europe. Women entrepreneurs occupied a prominent part of this policy paper and I will work hard to ensure that women entrepreneurs are an integral part of the action plan to follow up this paper.'

For its part, the newly established network will collate best practice in the field of support services to women in business and women entrepreneurs from chambers of commerce across Europe, with a view to establishing a development programme for 2004.