

## PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2008

### Positive development of European SME policy has to be evident on local level

Opinions of the MEPs and representatives of the business sector discussed European SME policy and the process of implementation of a Small Business Act for Europe (SBA) into the legal framework of the EU. Moreover, the impact of the ongoing financial crises on the economy and especially on SMEs was emphasized. Priorities of the incoming Czech EU Presidency in SME sector were introduced at the meeting.



More than thirty representatives of the European Parliament, entrepreneurs associations and entrepreneurial regions discussed the current developments of SBA at the Competitiveness Council and the European Parliament level. First speaker, **Jiří Plecíty**, Member of the Cabinet of Vice-President Verheugen, introduced the main priorities of SBA and stressed that unlocking further the potential of SMEs must be seen as part of the solution to the economic problems linked to the financial crisis. He stressed the need for acceptance of the SBA principles and their full implementation at European as well as national and regional levels. *"The devil is often hidden in the practice on the ground, rather than in the legal framework or in a lack of ideas"*. Czech Competitiveness Attaché **Petr Dolejší** pointed out that the aim of the Czech Presidency is to deliver concrete measures to implement the SBA. Czechs will support especially full implementation of "one-stop-shops" and reducing administrative burden. *"The average time needed for starting up a company and the respective costs have to be reduced as well"*, he said.

On the other hand, **Jan Březina**, Member of the European Parliament (member of the ITRE Committee) mentioned that "The SBA is not miraculous... but it would be a great success if at least the "only once" principle was fully implemented in all the Member States." Secretary General of UEAPME **Andrea Benassi** expressed satisfaction of business community with the content of SBA. Nonetheless *"...declaration of intentions is not enough"*, he said. *"What really counts the implementation of SBA principles"*. Director of European Affairs at EuroChambres **Ben Butters** pointed out that *"...Improving the environment for SMEs is more of a priority than ever in light of the economic crisis."*



During the following debate participants and speakers discussed the impacts of financial crisis on SMEs agreeing that effective SME policy has to be part of the overall European solution. Other topics such definition of SMEs and reduced VAT rates were tackled.

The Business Breakfast that hopefully brought smile into participant's faces was organized by CEBRE – Czech Business Representation in cooperation with Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU in the Czech Centre - Czech House on Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

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