

Ministers from 11 member states agree to launch a project for a new European think tank on international economics

Finance ministers from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the UK have taken the initiative of supporting the creation of a new European think tank in the area of international economics. Based on a balanced public-private partnership, the centre will focus its future activities on economic research and policy advice, thereby providing both European views on global issues and a global perspective on European issues, supporting the Lisbon agenda.

This project should contribute to a more open, effective and facts-based policy discussion in the EU, thus contributing to Europe's growth and competitiveness in an increasingly integrating world economy and fostering its leadership in international debates on economic, financial and trade policy.

The idea was initially proposed by France and Germany. The project has been developed in recent months through an extensive discussion with members and acceding members of the EU, and consultations with experts. The European Commission and the ECB have taken part in discussions on the project's specification.

The involvement of both public and private partners is a key feature of the project and will be reflected in its governance structure, its funding and its operation. Building on the commitment provided by 11 states, a project team will now seek the participation of leading European corporations, in order for the centre to be able to start its operations by the end of 2004.

Furthermore, the centre's membership shall be open to the full range of citizens and organisations which together constitute the European civil society.

The centre will take as its benchmarks the leading existing international think tanks and will establish cooperation with a network of partner research institutions. Research will be carried out in strict independence from both states and companies and all productions will be published. The Centre will not seek any institutional role in the Community decision-making process.

The centre, which will be located in Brussels, will thus aim at:

- providing first-grade, independent research-based analyses and recommendations;
- establishing working relations with European policymakers, thus serving as forum for informal policy dialogue;
- developing exchanges between the research, policy and business communities;
- creating a platform to enhance the interaction with other major players in the world economy;
- contributing to public discussions on the economic and financial dimensions of globalisation.

Membership remains open to all EU member states which are not already participating in launching the initiative.

For further information on the project, please contact Jean Pisani-Ferry, 33.(0)6.22.80.85.09