
PRESS RELEASE: Prof. Dr. Birgitta Wolff elected as the new ECRN President

BRUSSELS, 19 MAY 2011

The General Assembly of the European Chemical Regions Network (ECRN) today elected Prof. Dr. Birgitta Wolff as its new President. Prof. Dr. Wolff is the new Minister of Science and Economy in the government of the German state of Saxony-Anhalt. She also holds several academic and professional positions in business economics and international management. Prof. Wolff has extensive international experience, with visiting professorships at universities in Germany, the US, China, Brazil, and Russia, among others.

Prof. Wolff succeeds Dr. Rainer Haseloff, who was elected as Prime Minister of Saxony-Anhalt in April 2011. As Minister for Business and Employment of Saxony-Anhalt, he became President of the ECRN in November 2006. During his term, the ECRN grew from a network of 14 chemical regions to 21 regions covering the most important chemical sites in Europe. A major success in his term was the recognition of the ECRN as the regional stakeholder in the High Level Group of the European Commission on the Competitiveness of Chemical Industry in Europe.

Prof. Wolff thanked her predecessor for his inspiration and strong support for chemical regions in Europe. She underlined that the European Union must remain an important industrial region and highlighted the role of the regions in shaping and implementing EU policies on the ground.

The ECRN General Assembly also agreed on a joint position and the network's input into the European Commission's consultation on the Green Paper on the "Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation Funding", underlining the need to strengthen complementarities and synchronise regional funding activities with EU funding modalities. Furthermore, as the vast majority of the European chemical enterprises are SMEs, the ECRN emphasizes the need to engage and support SMEs, in particular in their innovation efforts at all levels throughout the innovation chain.

The General Assembly also elected Alberto Cavalli, the Undersecretary responsible for University and Research, the region of Lombardy as Vice President and Petr Fiala, the Chairman of the Financial Committee, the region of Ústí, as Treasurer of the network.

Prime Minister Haseloff and ECRN President Prof. Wolff also used their visit in Brussels for a joint meeting with the Vice President of the European Commission in charge of Industry, Antonio Tajani, to further strengthen the links between the network and the European Commission.

The European Chemical Regions Network (ECRN) is an association with 21 member regions from 10 European countries (Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, the Netherlands, and the UK). The aim of the ECRN is to improve the competitiveness of chemical regions, facilitate sharing of experiences and collaboration between regions, and to represent the common interests of the chemical regions in Europe.

For further information, please see the ECRN website (www.ecrn.net) or contact the Director of the ECRN Secretariat, Dr. Hanny Nover, +32 27410947, office@ecrn.net