

PRESS RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

SECRETARIAT GENERAL
1, AV. DE LA JOYEUSE ENTREE
B-1040 BRUSSELS
T: +32 2 280 34 25
F: +32 2 280 33 17
E: SECRETARIAT@YES.BE
W: WWW.YES.BE

VMA-YES EXECOM Meeting & Conference Antwerp, Belgium, 8-10 May 2008

Brussels, Belgium, 26 May 2008 – YES-The European Confederation of Young Entrepreneurs, the pan European organization bringing together 16 national federations and representing up to 40,000 individual entrepreneurs, held its EXECOM Meeting and Conference from 8th to 10th May 2008. The event was hosted in Antwerp by the VMA Young Managers, the Vlaamse Management Associatie, with the kind support of the **Flanders Investment and Trade agency**.

Byron Soulopoulos, President of VMA Young Managers, opened the Conference presenting the topic of the day “Young entrepreneurs and Business Growth challenges” and handed over the floor to Martin Ohneberg, president of YES.

President Ohneberg warmly welcomed participants representing many member federations from all over Europe and thanked the event organizers for their contribution to organising this one-day gathering. President Ohneberg briefly presented YES activities and objectives for the future: Among them, he mentioned facilitating networking opportunities among members, voicing young entrepreneurs at EU level and helping members to develop at international level as the key elements in its strategy. Reaching his conclusions, he announced all outstanding speakers for a one-day exciting discussions moderated by our host, Byron Soulopoulos.

Dennis Karpes addressed the audience to tell his entrepreneurial story and illustrate his own “growth” challenge, when he decided to quit his career as Marketing director of leading fashion brands (ie. Levi Strauss Europe) to accomplish something more personal and more fulfilling and finally initiate the “**Dance4Life**” project, an initiative which lead him to be nominated today as “**Young Global Leader 2008**” by the **World Economic Forum**. Presenting the “Dance4life” TV spot to the audience, Dennis told us how his marketing experience and knowledge about media helped him to turn his original idea into a project with true social aim (ie. fighting AIDS and developing prevention globally using “dance” as the main “media” to youngsters) and how he succeeded turning it already into a global success with top level patronage (ie. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Peace Nobel Prize Kofi Annan or world-famous DJ Tiësto). All participants recognized Dennis’ accomplishments and felt his overwhelming passion and enthusiasm for this project, which resulted for him in a truly new way of life.

Aged 33, **Bulat Subaev**, presented his own background, growing up and studying in Russia, spending his first times as a qualified engineer working on oil plants in Siberia, which now lead him to become LUKOIL CEO for Western European operations (**LUKOIL** is the second largest oil & gas company Worldwide and one of the most important Russian

players on the oil and energy market). Bulat shared with us current and future challenges he is facing with implementing his company' redefined strategy in Belgium, and especially with the incredibly fast and efficient merging and rebranding of several retail oil brands in Europe (ie. JET currently rebranded LUKOIL in Western Europe).

Part of the meeting was dedicated to explore specific logistics aspects of the topic. **Professor Alex Van Breedam**, Director of the Flanders Institute for Logistic highlighted the strategic position of Flanders and described its key role in terms of logistic and supply chain. He stressed the importance of sustainability for company operations development and described the local "logistic clusters" Flanders are currently implementing and promoting in order to fight climate change and to cut logistic costs at the same time. **Jan Withofs** addressed the urban and road mobility challenges and described the future plans for road infrastructures developed by BAM NV in the Antwerp area.

The EXECOM Meeting and Conference in Antwerp was the occasion to release the **YES Business Mission to St-Petersburg, Russia on 2-5 July 2008**.

Axana Pozdniakova presented this opportunity, organized in cooperation with **Young-EU-Russia**, to bring a delegation of young European entrepreneurs to Russia in July 2008 and aiming at creating a communication platform between the new generation of Russian and European businesspeople. More information and registration is already available from the YES website : www.yes.be

Paying tribute to online technologies, President Ohneberg held a web-based interview hosted by **Join2grow** during lunchtime. This one-hour online chat was an opportunity for many young entrepreneurs to discuss with him directly from abroad.

The YES EXECOM Meeting and Conference concluded by the gala dinner, hosted in the beautiful premises of the Antwerp world-renowned zoo, and was honored by the participation of the **Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Karel de Gucht**. In his keynote address to the audience, presenting his views towards Europe, Minister De Gucht underlined the effort made by his government to support economic growth and pointed out the key role devoted to young entrepreneurs in European countries in general, and in Belgium and the Flanders region in particular, in order to take on current challenges on economic growth and employment.

This event took place in a colourful and friendly environment with an untypically Belgian sunny summer day and all participants really enjoyed the substantial programme together with a friendly and relaxing atmosphere.

"Substance, inspiration, friendship, and wonderful venue, ...Another successful event can be added to YES track record", concluded President Ohneberg.