



**I**n a modern world, the presence of chambers in the business world and in organising the economy is indispensable. The example of developed and successful countries shows that the more successful and better organised a country's chamber system, the more experienced the actors of the economy are, and the better performance the country can show.

Established more than 150 years ago, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry has voluntary membership as of November 2000. Our objective is to contribute to creating such a business environment, which strengthens the Hungarian economy. The philosophy of the Chamber is to be free of, but at the same time to conduct an efficient dialogue with politics, in addition to trade promotion aimed at safeguarding the interests of the economy and the entrepreneurs. In the organisational structure of the chamber, trade colleges play an important role, and they cover the most important areas of the business world. The bilateral committees play an important role in the international activities, and for some years the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) has been contributing to the joint work of European Chambers as a member of the Brussels-based Eurochambres.

To make sure that Hungarian businesses have a good position in the central east European area, it is important to strengthen and increase the competitiveness of SMEs, while creating fruitful cooperation among small and multinational companies. The Chamber's tasks comprise organising the economy, developing trade, contributing to the establishment of a qualified workforce, and making sure that businesses have access to lower priced loans, like the Széchenyi Card, i.e. any activity that enhances the general conditions and opportunities of businesses and other economic actors. Although the performance of large international and Hungarian companies is crucial from the aspect of the development of Hungarian macro-economy, it is indispensable that small enterprises as a whole have a positive attitude towards EU membership, and that they see integration as a new chance for development and transformation, instead of an uncertain or in fact risky undertaking.

Today the voluntary chambers are supported by more than 40,000 businesses. This grants us great legitimacy as we voice opinions on issues. The Chamber currently represents more than two thirds of the generators of Hungarian GDP. It is my firm belief that we can only be successfully integrated in the EU, if our institutions become similar to those in more developed countries. And this makes the strengthening of chambers also inevitable.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Parragh'.

Dr. László Parragh  
President