

Competitiveness Council agenda shows lack of momentum

EUROCHAMBRES expressed its frustration at the lack of ambition and momentum reflected in the agenda for today's Competitiveness Council agenda. The Chamber association has for some time questioned whether this Council formation – potentially so pivotal in driving the EU's growth and jobs agenda – performs effectively; this condensed one day agenda, the content of which resonates little with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), reinforces these concerns.

“Meetings of the EU's 28 ministers responsible for competitiveness should be a focal point for representatives of the SME community. But with a couple of exceptions, today's agenda contains little that addresses the key issues of reducing regulatory burdens, stimulating entrepreneurship, tackling the acute shortage of finance or facilitating access to the internal market,” commented Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES.

For EUROCHAMBRES, the most noteworthy item on the agenda is the 'frontrunners' initiative by eight member states that are collaborating to address internal market obstacles. *“Member states need to do more to implement what's already in place, so Chambers applaud this plan to tackle practical cross-border obstacles faced by businesses and consumers. However, transferring the internal market from the law books to the market place should be core business for the whole Competitiveness Council rather than a fringe action by less than one-third of member states,”* said Mr Abruzzini.

With the European Commission and Parliament entering an inactive period, it is more crucial than ever that the Council drives the pursuit of a competitive Europe, an agenda that has faltered during the crisis and which cannot be allowed to grind to a halt totally until the autumn.

EUROCHAMBRES recently submitted a list of recommendations to improve the groundwork for Competitiveness Councils by better mobilising and coordinating relevant structures that should feed into ministerial meetings, notably the Council High Level Group for Competitiveness and Growth. Today's agenda underlines the importance of implementing such improvements and of a more thorough review of the mandate, role and effectiveness of the Competitiveness Council.

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