

Social Affairs Council: **Big issues cannot be addressed without small businesses**

Today's informal meeting of ministers for employment and social affairs in Chantilly (France) touched upon three of the greatest challenges facing Europe: globalisation, climate change and demographic change.

Big issues require small business engagement, which is why EUROCHAMBRES regrets its continued exclusion from Employment Council discussions.

Globalisation – Opportunity, not threat

Some European governments ask for stronger policies and actions to protect their citizens against the negative impacts of globalisation. EUROCHAMBRES and its network of Chambers are convinced, on the contrary, that the EU institutions must adopt a clear and persuasive policy to ensure that the globalisation trend will bring opportunities to European companies and thus enhance European prosperity.

Climate change – Businesses must lead the way

The EU institutions have set the pace for the European response to climate change. They must now ensure that businesses can lead the way in implementing the response and are able to capitalise on Europe's pioneering innovations in environmental and renewable energy technologies.

Demographic change – Employment creation, rather than job protection

Member States have highly divergent labour market. The EU has an important role to play in ensuring that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have access to skilled and flexible labour markets, which is why EUROCHAMBRES was disappointed to find no reference to such issues in the recent Small Business Act. The focus must be on employment creation, rather than job protection.

Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES, said: *“Since this Council is not only discussing items referring to the Social Dialogue, it cannot remain a closed shop. If policy makers are to understand the SMEs' views on such crucial issues, Chambers of Commerce, and the 19 million enterprises they represent, ought to be involved. We cannot understand why, instead, they are systematically excluded. EUROCHAMBRES remains willing and able to contribute to these discussions and will continue to press its claims for involvement at the highest levels.”*

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