



Sustainability for SMEs - criteria and certification schemes



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1. Executive Summary

Chambers of Commerce and Industry are aware of their unique role in assisting companies and especially SMEs across Europe in the transition to a more sustainable economy. To this end, many of them have launched specific initiatives, programmes and projects to identify business opportunities, help their members to include sustainability thinking in their planning, certify their efforts and achievements and much more.

EUROCHAMBRES, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry tries to connect them at European level in order to exchange best practices, share ideas and make them known to the political institutions. Some of these initiatives shall be presented in this publication. The goal is to showcase Chambers' projects centered on sustainable criteria and certification schemes to both representatives of the European Institutions and other Chambers, to increase synergies and collaborations with the Institutions as well as other business organisations and companies, and to raise awareness on sustainability throughout the public and private sector.

Eventually the publication shall give the relevant actors food for thought in the design of the right regulatory framework for SMEs to successfully tackle the transition to a more sustainable economy.



2. Chambers projects

BELGIUM



Brussels Enterprises Commerce & Industry (BECI)



The 303030 - City Climate Challenge

Background

The 303030 - City Climate Challenge is an initiative led by BECI, the Brussels Chamber of Commerce and Industries. The initiative was launched in 2019, following a growing demand from the private sector to take a leading role in regional climate policy by proposing and supporting the sustainability transformation of the city, the government, and companies based in Brussels through collaborative innovation.

By signing the 2030 Charter, the City Climate Challenge 303030 partners, convinced that the city of Brussels needs to become carbon neutral by 2050, committed to sharing their resources, know-how, advice and innovations to launch a dynamic aimed at reducing the Region's CO2 emissions by 30% in 10 years. The project was officially launched at the Brussels Meets Brussels event on October 16, 2019.

Between now and 2030, 30 collaborative projects will see the light of day in order to reduce CO2 emissions by 30% by 2030 compared to 1990. The 303030 movement is an unprecedented open collaboration initiative. This process will make it possible to invite other actors in the Region, whether public or private, to join the movement, and to work alongside the authorities.



Programme content

Both Beci and the partners are aiming at a real concrete, measurable and objective impact on Brussels' CO2 emissions with a dynamic, hands-on, innovative methodology set up together with the consultancy CO2logic and the think tank Dreamocracy. It's based on the following KPIs:

KPIs and criteria			
KPI	Indicator	Criteria	
Emissions reductions	30% on overall projects People impacted	Diversity of projects Maximise co-benefits	Minimise externalities
• Buildings	m2 renovated Delta kWh/m2	Mix residential/tertiary Mix public/private	
• Mobility	Delta car in modal share Delta green vehicles Delta shared mobility		
• Energy	Energy Share of renewables Delta energy use Delta energy bills		
Dynamic	Replicability Inspiration for others	Mix short/long term Mix quick/deep savings	
Communication & Impact		Visibility Clarity	

Two work streams were put in place:

1- Project enhancement track

This track was set up starting from the individual, existing projects put in place by the partner companies. By opening up their projects, the companies give the opportunity to other partner companies to join a project to share expertise and increase scaling opportunities. Among the collaborative projects tackled in this work stream:

- From Monomodality to Multimodality: Scaling of a B2B multimodal app
- Greening of Fleets: develop ways to greenify employee vehicles
- Large co-property boiler replacements: replace fuel boilers by sustainable alternatives in residential buildings
- Electric Avenue: 300 new electric charging stations in Brussels
- Up4North: development of a self-sufficient sustainable neighbourhood in Brussels Central Business District (CBD)



2- New ideas track

This track gave the opportunity to the partner companies to develop collaborative projects from scratch, based on the existing challenges the city copes with in terms of mobility, energy and circular economy. First, the partners were asked to allocate participants to the different "ideation sessions", that brought together not only the partners of this project, but also any other actors wishing to help us reach the goal (NGO's, public administrations, cabinets, companies, academicians, civil servants, startups,...). Obstacles, opportunities and synergies between partners using a concrete methodology were developed. The 5 challenges that were tackled: Modal Shift, Greening of the City, Electrification of Cars, Energetic performance of buildings, Sustainable Construction & renovation, & New Sustainable Jobs.

The second phase, that will be triggered in the second part of 2020, and will aim at bringing the ideas to a next level by accompanying partners in the development of a business model and financial plan, by clustering the relevant people and allocating the right resources, financial and human. Each cluster has a coordinator that will be responsible for the team together with the 303030 facilitators.

So far defined clusters:

- Energy performance of buildings
- Sustainable construction and renovation
- Low-Emissions mobility
- Multimodality

30

**Collaborative
Projects**

30

**30% less
CO₂**

30

**By 2030 in
Brussels**



In parallel, partners receive support through the provision of open co-working spaces where they can come and work with the project partners every 1st Friday of the month and occasional information sessions presented by external partners concerning available funding, coaching, legislation,... There is a possibility for teams to request facilitation ad hoc (e.g. ideation), support (e.g. coaching), specific work sessions (e.g. implementation, feasibility, measurement, business plan, financial plan, communications plan, ...).

Furthermore, the 303030 Project not only aims at accompanying partners in the development of new sustainable projects, the initiative also helps partners to create visibility for those projects. In that sense, the 303030 initiative puts at disposal different tools, activities and events to bring a project both to the general public as well as to the political level.

Among those tools, a “Green Book” was developed, a first set of political recommendations based on the challenges identified when developing projects in the sectors of energy, mobility and circular economy. The Green Book identifies both transverse and sectoral challenges. The transverse challenges identified are the need for public-private partnerships, administrative simplification, adapted fiscal and legal frameworks, open data... and sectoral challenges being the need for adapted infrastructure with regards to mobility (electric charging stations, sustainable mobility infrastructure,...).

Price

Participation fee for the project varies between 5,000-20,000€ depending on which package they choose.

Way forward

In the coming months, the objective will be to maintain momentum by triggering phase 2 of the New Ideas Track, called the Slow Sprints. This framework will help partners develop a concrete business plan with a measured CO2 impact. The next momentum is planned in October 2020, where an updated document of political recommendations will be presented to the members of the Brussels government.

From 2021 onwards, the possibility of introducing a certification scheme will be evaluated, as to create even more incentive for our partners to introduce sustainability, not only in their business models, but also in the office.



Partners

AG Real Estate, Air Liquide, BePark, Brussels Airport Company, Colruyt, Confédération Construction de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, Edenred, Engie, Europcar Mobility Group, ING Belgium, Interparking, Iris Group, G.M. Electronics (GME), Jeasys, LeasePlan, Micropole, Pasha Parking, Sibelga, SNCB/NMBS, Sodexo, Solvay, Total, Tractebel, Veolia and VINCI Energies Belgium.

In collaboration with CO2Logic, Dreamocracy, Hack Belgium, Spacious Agency and Whyte Corporate Affairs.

Links:

City Climate Change 303030: www.beci.be/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/City-Climate-Challenge-303030-Charte-FR-f.pdf

CO2LogiC: www.co2logic.com/

Dreamocracy: www.dreamocracy.eu/

For more information:

Ms. Camille Callens, Brussels Enterprises Commerce & Industry

+32 484 98 86 56 | cca@beci.be

www.303030.eu/fr

Flanders' Chambers of Commerce and Industry (VOKA)



Voka Charter Sustainable Entrepreneurship

Background

The Voka Charter Sustainable Entrepreneurship (VCDO) is an annual reward that certifies that the company took significant steps towards the realization of corporate sustainability. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) constitute the universal framework in this regard.

Voka is convinced that businesses can make an important contribution to achieving the SDGs and developed the VCDO based on these universal goals.

Basic principle

Each company that subscribes to the Voka Charter Sustainable Entrepreneurship, undertakes to:

- Integrate corporate sustainability in its company policy in a proactive manner
- Formulate goals and specific actions that are consistent with the United Nations SDGs
- Report on the results achieved to the evaluation committee
- Communicate externally on the actions implemented
- Continuously work on compliance with social, welfare and environmental legislation

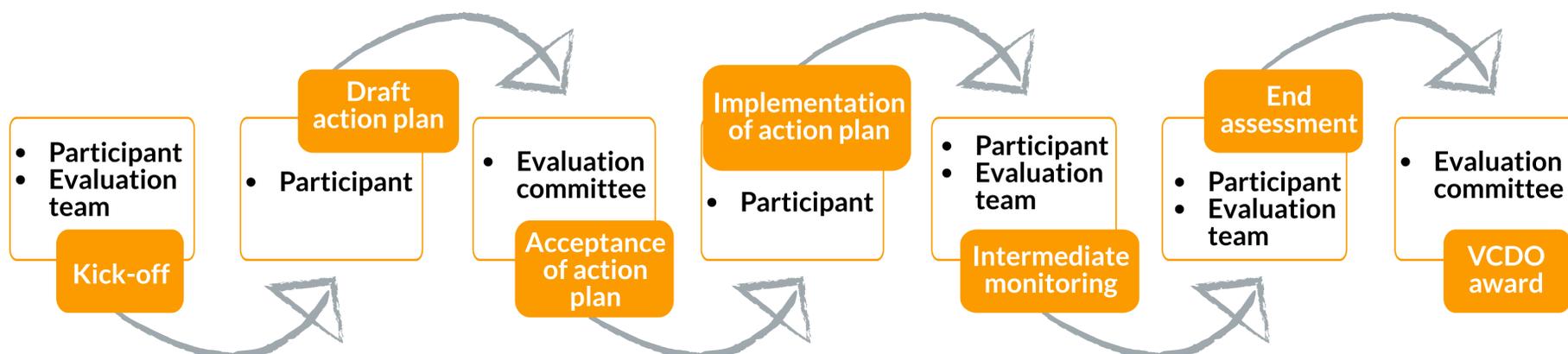
Who can participate?

Any business or organisation can apply to participate, regardless of the size of the company, the number of employees or the nature of its activities.

The only precondition is the commitment to comply with social, welfare and environmental legislation, and to draft and implement an action plan.



How is participation organised?



Evaluation Committee

An evaluation committee, led by an independent chairperson and comprised of independent experts and representatives from diverse government departments, organisations and the corporate sector, examines the extent to which the action plan has been achieved. This takes place as part of a constructive collaboration with the participating companies.

UNITAR Certificate

Enterprises that have participated in the VCDO three times within a time frame of maximum five years and have implemented an action in each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations during this period, receive a UNITAR certificate from CIFAL Flanders - UNITAR (United Nations Institute for Training and Research).

Sustainable Development Goals





The objective of CIFAL Flanders is to promote the declarations and principles of the United Nations, and in particular the Sustainable Development Goals. Being one of the 15 UNITAR training centres, it is part of an international network. It strives to help (local) authorities, institutions, organisations and the corporate sector to embed the Sustainable Development Goals in their company or organisation's strategy.

**Links:**UNITAR: www.unitar.orgCIFAL Flandres: www.cifal-flanders.org**For more information:**

Mr. Maarten Dheedene, Flanders' Chambers of Commerce and Industry

+32 9 266 15 64 | Maarten.Dheedene@voka.bewww.voka.be/vlaams-brabant/vcdo

CROATIA



Croatian Chamber of Economy (CCE)



HGK_COR AKCELERATOR

Background

HGK_COR AKCELERATOR is a platform that promotes partnership between the business sector, state institutions and the civil sector in achieving the goals of sustainable development in Croatia. It is an interactive online platform and a national SDG news bar that offers education, workshops and conferences on SDG implementation in Croatia. The platform gathers companies that understand, follow and implement SDG principles in their business activities and promotes them on a national level. Through various workshops, lectures and conferences, the platform aims to strengthen the understanding and importance of sustainable development goals in building an economically prosperous, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable society.

Project content

The main user of the HGK_COR AKCELERATOR platform are the business companies and the business community in general. The major benefits for companies are:

- promotion of their good practice in SDG implementation through the platform
- information on non-financial reporting and upcoming legislation on sustainable development policies
- better connection among various stakeholders with possibility to prepare joint projects or foster initiatives

Activities include

- Voluntary National Review: The platform gathered various successful case studies on SDG implementation in the Croatian business sector that CSR Affiliation used to prepare a chapter in the Voluntary National Review on business sector contribution to SDGs implementation in Croatia.



- We sustain sustainability conferences: The platform organizes conferences that focus on communication and implementation of SDGs within the Croatian business sector. The goal of the conferences is to gather key stakeholders on a national and international level to discuss on sustainable development.
- **Business Leadership Programme in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals:** The platform is promoting publications on successful case studies on SDG implementation in the Croatian business community.

HGK_COR AKCELERATOR is not a certification and validation platform. It is rather one of the many tools given to the companies with the aim to boost better performance and disseminate knowledge that is in line with the SDGs.

Links:

HGK_COR AKCELERATOR: www.hgk.hr/hgk_cor-akcelerator/hgk_cor_akcl_platforma

For more information:

Ms. Dijana Varlek, Croatian Economic Chamber

+385 1 460 67 64 | okolis@hgk.hr

www.hgk.hr

FINLAND

FINLAND
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Finland Chamber of Commerce



FCC's Climate Commitment 2035 programme

Background

The Finland Chamber of Commerce (FCC) decided in November 2018 to launch a new sustainability programme, which was approved as one of the focus areas of the regional chambers of commerce. The purpose of this work is to provide their member companies with the necessary tools to deal with climate change, human rights, social responsibility and environmental requirements.

After the appointment of a new sustainability adviser, FCC organised three roundtable discussions to plan its future sustainability work. The Sustainability Committee was established in May 2019 with sustainability experts from corporate and academic circles, as well as from the civil society.

The Sustainability Committee decided to start its sustainability work from CO2 cuts. It launched an inquiry to its member companies to find out about their energy and climate perceptions. Based on their replies, it prepared a draft programme for Climate Commitment, which was approved in September 2019.

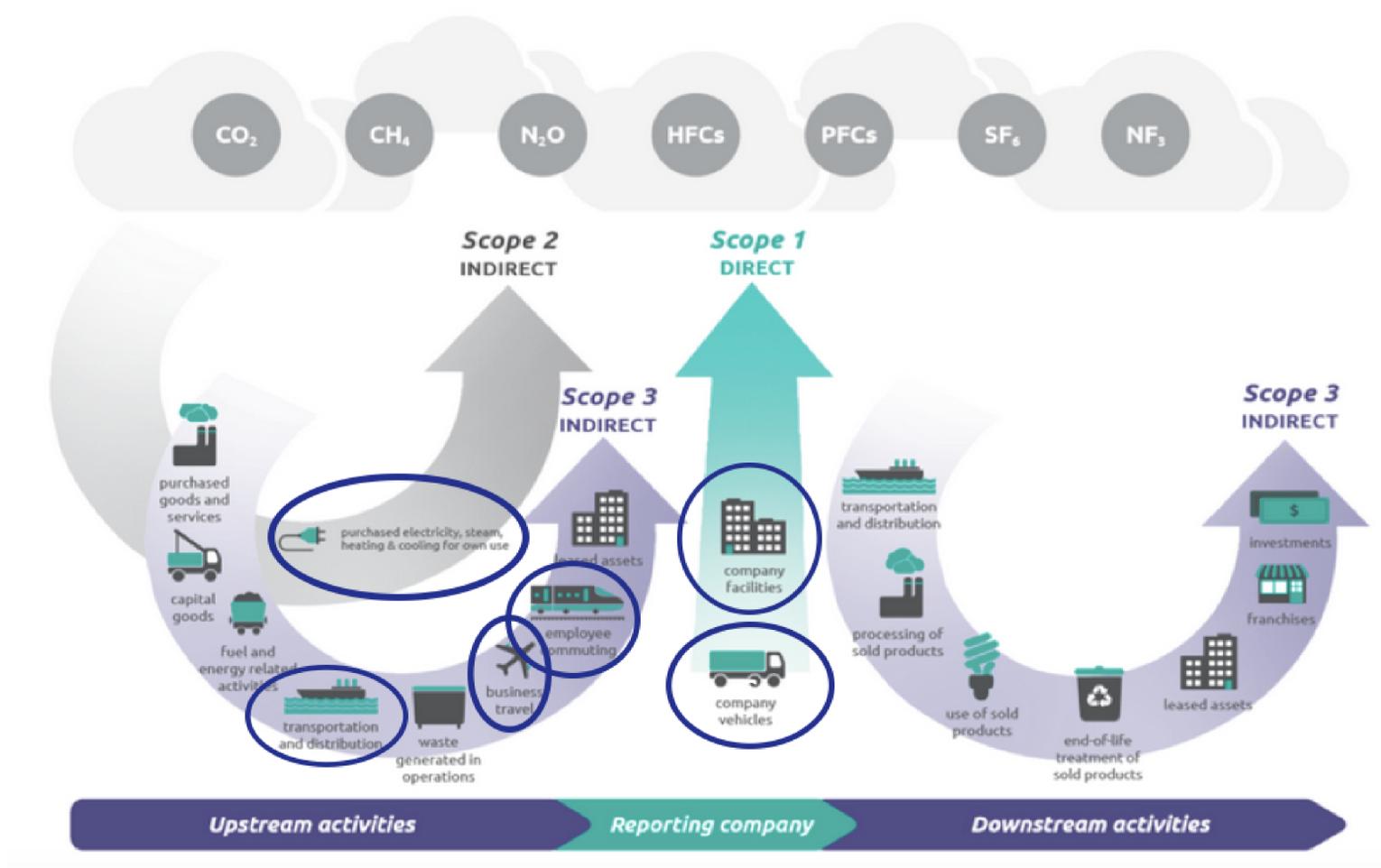
Content of the programme

The Climate Commitment programme is based on the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol, which is used in most international climate-related programmes. The GHG Protocol divides emission sources into three categories (Scope 1-3) depending on whether they are direct or indirect emissions.

FCC's Climate Commitment takes into account the following emissions:

- Scope 1 (direct emissions): emissions from the organisation's own facilities and vehicles.
- Scope 2 (indirect emissions from energy consumption): emissions from purchased electricity, steam, heating and cooling for own use.
- Scope 3 (indirect emissions from other sources): emissions from business travel, employee commuting, and transportation and distribution.
- In specific cases, the Climate Commitment programme takes also into account emissions from purchased goods and services in case they represent a major part of the company's overall emissions.

Emission sources covered by the Climate Commitment programme are highlighted in the picture below. The exception, purchased goods and services, can be found on the left side of the graph.



When counting the carbon footprint for the previous year, emissions are estimated per emission sources. The Finnish Chamber of Commerce has developed for this purpose an excel-sheet, where each source of emission has its own emission value. These values are found from nationally or internationally recognised sources, such as the ICAO Carbon Emissions Calculator. For certain emission groups, such as events, catering and accommodation, FCC uses the emissions calculator of Encounter CO2, a Finnish online service, as emission estimates are difficult to produce a posteriori to the present year.

As to the future, FCC has prepared concrete instructions, which should facilitate the calculation of these emissions. FCC has introduced specific recommendations, which will be implemented whenever planning future trips, events and catering by its employees. The purpose of the Climate Commitment programme is to support companies and public organisations in their efforts to reduce CO2 emissions. The aim of the programme is to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035 or by 2040, at the latest. In return for these reductions, companies can use the Climate Commitment logo in their corporate marketing.

The Sustainability Committee approves or rejects applications to the Climate Commitment programme. In the application, companies or public bodies have to present a roadmap to carbon neutrality, as well as a specific plan for the next five years, stipulating how and when the emissions will be reduced.

Up to 20% of the emissions can be compensated based on the compensation mechanisms recommended by FCC. Exceptions can be made if the company is specialised in services, whereby the majority of emissions come from immaterial sources. In the case of FCC, two-thirds of its emissions come from external events, such as seminars, training courses and large conferences, whereby the reduction of emissions is possible only to a certain extent. In such cases, the use of compensation mechanisms may be the only way to achieve carbon neutrality after all other measures have been implemented. The Sustainability Committee examines each application and, if approved, grants the right to use its logo for commercial purposes. Annual reporting is required to ensure that implementing parties are on track with their emission cuts.

Prices

The costs of the Climate Commitment programme are the following:

1- Submission of application and plan of action, submission of annual report

Depending on annual turnover

- Below 2 M€: 600€
- 2 M€ and above: 1800€
- 10 M€ and above: 3500€

2- Annual cost for the use of the logo

Depending on annual turnover

- Below 2 M€: 1800€
- 2 M€ and above: 3000€
- 10 M€ and above: 5500€

Internal recommendations to reduce carbon footprint

Travel and accommodation requirements

- Domestic travel by train or bus, flights should be avoided
- Compensate flight emissions on a monthly basis by FCC
- Add business travel information on travel distance, number of nights, travel mode and compensation of CO2 emissions
- When selecting place of accommodation, give preference to places where carbon footprint is already being counted
- Add reference of such places in your travel announcement

Meetings, seminars, conferences, gala events

- Organize events in places that can be reached by public transport
- Ask travel information of participants (distance, travel mode, number of stays overnight)
- Before selecting the location of the event, make sure the host can provide information on carbon footprint (catering, energy, accommodation)
- In catering, give preference to fish, vegetarian food and table serving (to avoid excess food)
- Reduce catering by 10-30% due to no show
- Avoid gifts that are immediately disposed of

Additional services

FCC offers training courses and support services for the Climate Commitment programme. Training courses are organised every spring and autumn in different locations that can be found from the following link (in Finnish only).

Costs for the support services (either outsourced or through personal guidance) can be inquired from consultancies, whose contact addresses can be found from the Climate Commitment homepage (in Finnish only).

Links:

FCC training: <https://kauppakamari.fi/hankkeet/tapahtumat/paastovahennyskoulutukset/>

Climate Commitment: <https://kauppakamari.fi/>

For more information:

Mr. Eero Yrjö-Koskinen, Finnish Chamber of Commerce

+358 50 347 8778 | eero.yrjo-koskinen@chamber.fi

<https://kauppakamari.fi/>

3. How can EUROCHAMBRES' work be used in the context of the Covid-19 crisis and economic recovery?

During the last months EUROCHAMBRES has produced a series of position papers as a response to the recent EU legislative proposals. It is the case, inter alia, of the “reaction on the new Circular Economy Action Plan” , published by EUROCHAMBRES in May 2020 that adds to delineating the Chamber’s vision covering the post-Corona recovery plan.

A strong message of rehabilitation and reconversion for small and medium enterprises can be offered: the harmonisation of end-of-waste criteria; the development of effective financial and regulatory incentives for high-quality recycling and innovative business models; the support of “take-back” or “from product-to-service” models, as well as stimulating the creation of new training programs, are some of the essential policy elements that can lead to a more resilient path for SMEs. On the other hand, in order to allow for an effective economic recovery, EUROCHAMBRES are very sceptical about proposals that risk to excessively increase the compliance cost for SMEs, for instance obligatory sustainable corporate governance provisions.

The Green Deal must be geared towards the best possible support for businesses to be able to overcome the economic crisis in a more sustainable way. This includes intensified efforts to enable SMEs to participate at all levels of policy making. Processes that shape the long-term vision and development of the single market, such as the Organisation and Product Environmental Footprint methodologies have to be designed to take their concerns into account appropriately. Public procurement, while EUROCHAMBRES recognise the need for stimulus for sustainable lead markets, has to be accessible to a maximum of competitors in order to find the most adequate solutions.

The Chamber projects featured in this publication shall present options and elements of how to design the future legislative framework in such a way that SMEs, the vast majority of our economic fabric, can benefit from the sustainable transition.

With the work achieved so far, and the soon-to-be released proposals and initiatives, EUROCHAMBRES commit to protect SMEs’ interests, in markets becoming more and more competitive, by enabling interesting opportunities for innovation and positive change.

EUROCHAMBRES – The Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry represents over 20 million enterprises in Europe – 98% of which are SMEs – through 45 members and a European network of 1700 regional and local Chambers.

Further information:

Mr. Clemens Rosenmayr,

+32 2 282 08 90 | rosenmayr@eurochambres.eu

Mr. Valerio Burlizzi, Junior Policy Advisor

+32 2 282 08 50 | burlizzi@eurochambres.eu

Press contact:

Ms. Karen Albuquerque, Press and Communications Officer

+32 2 282 08 62 | albuquerque@eurochambres.eu

Contact us:

<http://www.eurochambres.eu/>





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