

State of the European Union: economic recovery must be at the heart of the EU policy agenda

EUROCHAMBRES President Christoph Leidl drew many positives from President von der Leyen's SOTEU address today but stressed the need to ensure that the economic recovery is at the heart of the Commission's policy agenda for the year ahead.

"The Commission reacted quickly to the crisis in tabling the ground-breaking Next Generation EU proposal. But this needs to be backed up by a longer-term EU strategy that will enable the economy to grow sustainably and strengthen our global competitiveness. If the recovery is going to gain and maintain momentum, our businesses need a framework that ensures access to markets and encourages them to invest."

Some additional comments from President Leidl on key elements of President von der Leyen's speech:

On the single market: *"I welcome President von der Leyen's pledge to move forward with the single market. This must start with alignment of member states restrictions to free movement – of goods, services, and workers - in response to the pandemic, but we must be far more ambitious. Chambers fully support the announced objective to tackle red tape and remove the greatest barriers: a fully functioning single market should be ensured at all times, especially as we recover from such a deep economic crisis."*

On the Green Deal: *"President von der Leyen put it in a nutshell: if we can get other regions on board, we can successfully curb global emissions. We therefore call for realistic targets, coherent legislation, effective carbon leakage protection, investment in R&D and the scale-up of promising technologies, and strong climate diplomacy. Only with a competitive European economy will the EU be able to fulfil its political ambitions."*

On Europe's place in the world: *"I fully share President von der Leyen's view that Europe must reach out, while others retreat and destabilise. This philosophy must start with our established partners and with defending the multilateral trade system, but also apply to the development of relations with several major and emerging economies. The EU must lead from the front, pursuing measures to safeguard international trade."*

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