

Competitiveness Council: Chambers welcome focus on Single Market and SMEs

EUROCHAMBRES welcomed the strong signals on the single market and SMEs set out in the Competitiveness Council online meeting conclusions published today. A coordinated approach to COVID-19 related restrictions and a concerted effort to remove the main pre-existing barriers to free movement of goods, services and workers are considered vital elements in the economic recovery by the chamber network.

The single market is one of the most effective recovery tools in the EU's policy box, but it has become more fragmented over the last six months as member states introduced unilateral measures in response to COVID-19. *"A fully functioning single market should be ensured at all times, all the more so in response to this deep crisis and it is good that ministers acknowledge this and are committed to improved coordination,"* said EUROCHAMBRES President, Christoph Leitl.

Even before the pandemic, many barriers prevented SMEs from capitalizing on the full potential of a market of 500 million people. EUROCHAMBRES thus supports the push to identify and tackle the main remaining barriers to free movement. Now, the Commission and member states must work together to deliver on the decisions taken. *"It has taken many years to develop the single market, but businesses cannot wait many years for further improvements, they need progress now!"* stressed President Leitl.

EUROCHAMBRES also supported the ministers' messages on SME policy. The acute challenges that SMEs across Europe are now facing must be addressed if the economy is to bounce back. SMEs certainly need liquidity and financial resources, but they also need relief from the many unnecessary administrative burdens, regulatory bottlenecks and market barriers that hinder their competitiveness.

Further information: Frederico Martins, Tel. +32 2 282 08 54, martins@eurochambres.eu
Press contact: Ms. Karen Albuquerque, Tel. +32 2 282 08 62, albuquerque@eurochambres.eu
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