

Chamber leaders criticise ongoing absence of EU SME Envoy

Senior representatives of EUROCHAMBRES today made an urgent call to the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, to finalise the much delayed appointment of the new EU SME Envoy. Over 18 months into the 2019-24 EU legislative term and after more than a year of a pandemic that has heavily impacted small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) across Europe, chambers are increasingly frustrated that this important position to champion the concerns of SMEs across the Commission remains vacant.

Speaking after today's online meeting of the EUROCHAMBRES Presidency, the association's President, Christoph Leitl, said: *"A new head of the US Small Business Administration was sworn in just a few weeks after President Biden took office. Meanwhile, we are still waiting for an EU SME Envoy even though President von der Leyen committed to this appointment back in 2019. What kind of signal does this send to entrepreneurs across Europe struggling to keep their businesses afloat?"*

EUROCHAMBRES takes part in the SME Envoy Network, along with national SME Envoys from all EU member states. This network has been active throughout the crisis despite the absence of an EU SME Envoy, helping to coordinate measures taken to mitigate the damage of the economic downturn on smaller businesses. But as attention turns to the recovery and as the European Commission's ambitious policy agenda gathers momentum, chambers consider the appointment of an EU SME Envoy increasingly pressing.

"Policy-makers repeatedly refer to SMEs as the 'backbone of the economy'. But these statements are frankly meaningless if they are not matched with policies that help smaller businesses to survive and recover. The EU SME Envoy is a crucial element in ensuring that the 'think small first' principle is respected across the Commission departments", added President Leitl.

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