

State of the Union 2023: business competitiveness and tackling regulatory burdens must be priorities

On 13 September, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, delivered this year's State of the Union (SOTEU2023) address – her last of the current mandate - before the European Parliament. She covered the European Green Deal, the efforts to facilitate a competitive European industry, the need for open but fair trade, the bloc's future expansion, and the continuous support for Ukraine.

As we enter a new phase on the European Green Deal, we remain available to contribute to the Clean Transition Dialogues. Ambitious promises however need to be backed up with ambitious action. Many obstacles encountered by our businesses need to be addressed, including the need for skilled workers. One of the most critical is the question of access to financing, which will be a key facilitator of the competitiveness of European businesses as they transition to a more green and digital economy.

Eurochambres also welcomes the signal of a push to complete free trade agreements with Australia, Mexico and the South American Mercosur bloc by the end of the year, as well as potential deals with India and Indonesia.

SOTEU2023 in fact contained several positive messages for chambers and their members that correlated with [our requests](#). At the same time, we are attentive to what was left unsaid, or remains unclear. The absence of any reference to the single market was striking as we mark its 30th anniversary. Further integration of the single market is needed to strengthen the European economy, stimulating innovation, and ensuring that the EU remains an attractive manufacturing location for both already established businesses and foreign investors.

Commission measures to reduce reporting requirements on businesses by 25% remain pending. They must go beyond improvements of the better regulation tools and focus on the substantial input provided to the Industrial Forum to map a list of 20 EU regulations ripe for this exercise if they are to fulfil President von der Leyen's aim to "make business easier in Europe". And the scope must cover not only existing reporting obligations, but also those linked to pending and potential new legislative requirements.

The President's announcement of a report on the future of European competitiveness by Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi's is welcomed. This can set the tone and parameters to complete the current legislative term in a business-friendly manner and to carry this over into the 2024-2029 period. Eurochambres and the chamber network look forward to contributing to this agenda.

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