

Enable SMEs to drive the transition

Conclusion of the General Assembly on 9th June 2022

The General Assembly of SMEUnited welcomes the outcome of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE). The requests from citizens show a clear commitment to strengthen the European Union and to realise the transition to a greener and more digital economy. Citizens rightly call for the reduction of bureaucracy, acknowledgement of regional specificities, a deepening of the single market and the application of the “Think Small First” principle. Moreover, there is a clear demand to promote an entrepreneurial culture and enhance the competitiveness of businesses.

As a follow-up to CoFoE, SMEUnited calls on the European Institutions to carefully assess the proposals and include them in future work when justified by a thorough impact assessment, including the full application of the SME test.

SMEUnited insists that priority should be given to immediate actions responding to the post-covid recovery and the impact of the war in Ukraine. Any proposal requiring a treaty change should be assessed on its added value and should be implemented in an adequate timeframe.

SMEs suffer from high prices for energy and commodities, persistent disruption of supply chains and shortage of skilled labour, which puts them in an extremely precarious situation. This instability creates significant challenges to the achievement of the overall objectives of the twin transition and the resilience of Europe’s economy.

SMEs are the main actors to drive the transition. SMEUnited members, in order to allow SMEs to fully play their role, call on the EU to:

- create a more diversified, secure and less dependent EU energy supply by fostering the deployment of **renewable energy sources**, ensuring interconnectivity, developing energy storage solutions and stimulating **energy efficiency**;
- invest in and develop the **necessary skills** allowing enterprises to adapt, to implement new technologies and to innovate;
- invest public funds, especially RRF, particularly in the much-needed **infrastructure and support measures** for SMEs in view of the digital and green transition;
- create an environment that stimulates **private investment** and promotes public-private collaboration;
- boost **research and innovation** to develop and commercialise the required technologies to make the twin transition happen;
- ensure that **lessons learned** from the pandemic, such as emergency preparedness, openness of the single market, etc. lead to concrete actions to increase the resilience of the economy in the future.

SMEUnited calls on the European Institutions to act in the spirit of the Versailles Declaration, to create an environment that facilitates and attracts private investment. Crafts and SMEs are more and more concerned by increasing administrative burdens, such as reporting on sustainability and due diligence. Policy makers have to be aware that businesses are overwhelmed by the manifold challenges. SMEs require a simple and predictable regulatory environment.

SMEUnited, therefore, asks to “think small first” and act accordingly!