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Conference
on the Future
of Europe

Employers' Group Event on the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE)

Setting out a New Vision for the Future of Europe

10 December 2021 | 9.30-13.00

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Objective and topics

Following the COVID-19 crisis, our generation is facing a tectonic shift towards climate neutrality and state-of-the-art digital technologies, which gives us the unique opportunity to shape a new vision that reconciles the anachronistic paradox between growth and prosperity – on the one hand, and a sustainable future for our planet, on the other. The acceleration of interconnected challenges we are facing today demand that we break down the silos and overcome internal and institutional barriers towards more collective efforts.

In this context, aligning the EU's green and digital goals carries enormous potential¹. Digital technology such as artificial intelligence (AI)², machine learning (ML), blockchain technology, cloud computing, IoT and automated drones can enable speed and scale in delivering the EU's decarbonisation goals. Similarly, green energy can help the ICT sector, which is currently one of the fastest growing greenhouse gas-emitting and energy-consuming sectors, to reduce its own carbon footprint.

The green and digital twin transitions have gained significant momentum and have become the mantra of the Union's efforts to create a competitive and sustainable climate-neutral economy. The European Commission's Green Deal – supported by the New Industrial Strategy, the Digital Strategy, and the Circular Economy Action Plan – have already recognized that the two transitions are closely linked.

Yet, much remains to be done to make sure that initiatives to accelerate the green and digital transitions are brought together in one coherent policy allowing us to systematically identify the opportunities, trade-offs and compromises between these two transitions. What is certain is that Europe's future is closely linked to the future of its industry: strong ambitions require strong and innovative companies.

It is clear that the pressure for change is high, global competition is fierce, and the transitions also involve risk-taking. To adapt to this highly competitive environment, it is important that the EU innovation ecosystems become more agile, allowing and encouraging multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary collaboration and self-learning.

¹ AI can reduce the energy consumption of buildings; Automated drones and deep learning can predict maintenance needs; Blockchain technology can create food transparency; AI can make carbon markets more transparent; Fire-fighter drones can help prevent fires; Sensors help us navigate air quality; Data-driven climate decisions will be more effective; Mapping and protecting wildlife can prevent extinction; Virtual reality can get people involved in climate change.

² According to [a study conducted](#) by a group of researchers, AI is estimated to have the potential to enable the fulfilment of 93% of the environmental Sustainable Development Goals targets.



A systematic and forward-looking research and innovation strategy is therefore a driving force in achieving the so-called twin green and digital transition.

Furthermore, throughout history, innovation and technology has not only transformed economies and societies but also been a major redistributor of power among states and a significant force shaping and reshaping international relations. New technologies can massively boost a country's economy and, therefore, global influence. If we want Europe to be a role model for the rest of the world and set the standards for the new economy, we must strengthen new partnerships, not least with our immediate neighbourhood and Africa.

This event titled **"Setting out a New Vision for the Future of Europe"** is organized in the context of the Conference on the future of Europe (CoFoE) and will be moderated by a renowned journalist in an interactive fashion.

The aim is to bring to the EU level the voice of CEOs from big and small companies acting on the ground, and addressing the following questions:

- How do companies link green, economic and digital goals in their day-to-day business?
- What are the difficulties that companies face in order to undergo structural change and fundamentally alter traditional business models?
- How can companies break down silos and foster collaborative action towards the achievement of the green and digital transformations while remaining competitive?
- How can the twin transitions be coupled with an enabling policy framework to ensure competitiveness and industrial transformation?
- How can the EU support innovation ecosystems and encourage multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary collaborations?

Other questions to be addressed

- How can the EU and its Member States ensure that the two transitions are given equal attention and strategic weight so that they can occur in tandem and bring integrated solutions?
- How can digital innovations be leveraged and help lead the charge in the green transition and the implementation of the European Green Deal?
- What are the barriers to private sector investments in low carbon and zero emission technologies, renewable energies, energy efficiency and circularity?
- How can public procurement and investments drive demand for sustainable, innovative and digital solutions?
- How can we accelerate our ties with emerging economies for a win-win partnership to solve global challenges and build prosperity 21.0?