

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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The event '[Setting out a New Vision for the Future of Europe](#)' brought together a number of innovative CEOs, EESC members, representatives of the EESC Employers' Group partner organisations, representatives of European sectoral organisations and the online audience, with the special participation of Herman Van Rompuy, President Emeritus of the European Council.

Organised as part of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), this launch event of the Employers' Group Manifesto entitled "[Making the EU Capable of Action](#)", was the perfect opportunity to help shape a new vision for Europe's future.

Based on the speeches by the keynote speakers, the panel debate, comments and questions from the audience, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Re-infuse hope and optimism into the European project

As the pandemic continues to evolve, Europe, European institutions and European employers need to be creative and courageous in order to reassess and adapt to the fast-paced, complex and unpredictable global environment. **Building forward better** can only be done successfully if an entrepreneurial mindset is added to the recipe - to deliver competitiveness, resilience and flexibility, and ultimately **build a more inclusive society**.

However, we must not forget that we are not starting from scratch. The European Union remains a historically unique **project of peace and freedom, stability and prosperity**, with its social market economy balancing the inclusiveness and wellbeing of its citizens with economic growth.

What is certain is that the Conference on the Future of Europe must **re-infuse hope and optimism into the European project** and raise awareness of the **cost of non-Europe**.

2. A more competitive Europe: enhancing prosperity for present and future generations

For enterprises and employers across Europe, the Conference should concentrate all its efforts on delivering **tangible results** in the post-COVID rebuilding of the economy, ensuring that Europe becomes the most attractive place to start, run and grow a business.

The discussion highlighted the need for an **effective, strong and more competitive Europe** – a Europe that leads the world in the green and digital transitions while **maintaining and enhancing prosperity for present and future generations**.

To achieve this, the EU's main tasks should be the **completion of the Single Market**, the promotion of a **strong industrial base** and **resilient international supply chains**, innovation in key **enabling technologies**, and a **forward-looking climate policy** coupled with industrial competitiveness and reliable framework conditions.

3. Making full use of the current institutional framework

In this new context of permanent crisis, with all its discontinuities and unpredictability, rather than revisit the Treaties, which would consume years of political energy, **the EU should make full use of the existing institutional framework**. Undoubtedly, the Union can achieve many of its objectives without amending the Treaties, as the texts still provide for almost unused means of speeding up decisions. As a matter of fact, the pandemic has proven that a recovery fund could be set up and joint purchasing of vaccines decided with the current division of powers.

4. Breaking the silos: cross-sectoral partnerships to enable innovation and growth

In a highly volatile world, the networking **capacity of working across silos**, forming highly **agile networks** both locally and globally across digital ecosystems, represents a key element to **enable innovation and growth**, promoting a **sustainable growth model for Europe**.

A culture of partnerships and collaboration should be strengthened in Europe, particularly **between governments and enterprises** (large and small alike) at all levels. Cities and regions, where **innovation hubs**, SMEs, universities, and research labs are co-located can lead to the call to reinvent Helmut Kohl's Europe of regions as an inclusive participatory approach that enables **innovation and growth**.

5. Collaboration between governments and enterprises to succeed in the twin transition

To accelerate the green and digital transitions, various initiatives need to be brought together in one coherent policy, allowing us to systematically identify the opportunities, trade-offs and compromises between these two transitions.

While it's undeniable that European industry has lost many battles in the last two decades when it comes to technology and the ability to monetize it, Europe is well-positioned to win the renewable energy battle. **Collaboration between governments and businesses** is key to developing a clear strategy and new environment-friendly and sustainable business models with reduced energy use, renewable energy targets and sustainability as the core business growth strategy. To achieve this, we need **clear and transparent information systems** and simple digital tools for data collection, validation, mining and linking data to products to increase the level of trust and transparency. This is true for old economies such as steel, as well as the new digital economy, in the twin transition to the green and digital transformation.

Particular attention should be paid to SMEs. We need to bridge knowledge gap of **SMEs to attain green deals and climate neutrality**. To achieve this, education, the deployment of disruptive technologies and a **bottom-up approach** will be of utmost importance.

6. New sustainable business models

Europe's future is closely linked to the future of its industry and strong ambitions require strong and innovative companies. The future of businesses depends on their ability to **adapt and reinvent** themselves through new, more sustainable business models. The transversal activation of **transformation at all levels of an organisation** – especially in large corporations - is the basis for activating new business models. Engaging employees at all levels of an organisation, as well as all stakeholders in the ecosystem, is a condition for triggering the **shift from linear to circular economic growth**. A layer is needed to ensure the interoperability of data and connectivity across diverse technology platforms.

Without the engagement of stakeholders inside and outside organisations, and without enabling technologies, Europe will not achieve a carbon-neutral continent and ensure that others act in the same way. In this context, data transparency creates trust and is key for network intelligence.

7. Talent, education, and skills fit for the future

To succeed in the digital and green transition in a way that will benefit the whole of society, businesses and governments have a particular responsibility to build a strong dialogue. The importance of **skills and education** is a **core shared responsibility** to innovate across the entire ecosystem - critical for Europe's competitiveness. This is about entrepreneurial learning, activating risk-taking and mistake-making, building **a new mind-set and a pioneer mentality** to attract the top talent to Europe - both women and men. Part of this responsibility is making sure that **education is fit for the labour market and that digital skills** are taught across the entire population.