



ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

EU Competitiveness in a Global Arena: Charting the Path Forward

Date: 10 April 2024

Time: 10:40 - 12:30 CET

Venue: Sofitel Brussels Europe, Pl. Jourdan 1, 1040 Bruxelles, Belgium

Agenda

10:40 - 11:00	Networking Reception	
11:00 - 11:10	Welcome	Horst Heitz – Chair of the Steering Committee of SME Connect
11:10 - 11:20	Presentation	Agata Boutanos – Director of the Representation to the European Union, Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers, Presentation of the ZPP report on “EU Competitiveness in a Global Perspective” Seyide Direk – Policy Analyst, European Enterprise Alliance Presentation of the ZPP report on “Exploring CEE and Northern Underrepresentation in EU Institutional Roles”
11:20 - 12:00	Debate	Daniel Wennick – Policy Director, Orgalim Harald Past – Head of International Trade & Taxation, EuroCommerce Laurent Maurin – Head of Economic Studies Division, European Investment Bank Michael Jäger - President, European Taxpayers Association Ralph Kamphöner - Head of Brussels Office, textil+mode



Dr. Tudor Petru Fabian – Policy Advisor to Iuliu Winkler MEP; Coordinator of the Working Group on Trade with SME Europe of the EPP

Moderation: Dr Horst Heitz – Chair of the Steering Committee of SME Connect

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About the Roundtable

In the context of a high-level roundtable discussion, we aim to delve into the pressing issue of EU competitiveness in a global context and underscore the importance of sustaining a thriving and innovative economic landscape. While the EU has historically benefited from robust economic cooperation and integration, it faces significant hurdles in maintaining its competitive edge on the global stage. Following the global financial crisis of 2008, the EU experienced a notable decline in GDP growth, which only rebounded to pre-crisis levels in 2021. This contrasts with the steady growth observed in economies such as the United States and China during the same period, highlighting the need for strategic reforms to revitalise EU competitiveness. Key findings emphasise the importance of addressing regulatory barriers to innovation, particularly in comparison to more favourable regulatory environments in regions such as the United States. Excessive regulatory requirements in the EU hinder entrepreneurial endeavours and stifle innovation, posing a significant challenge to the Union's ability to compete globally. Furthermore, demographic shifts present a formidable obstacle to EU economic prosperity, with an ageing population and declining workforce posing long-term sustainability concerns. Without concerted efforts to address these demographic challenges and promote workforce participation, the EU risks economic growth and productivity stagnation. The roundtable discussion will provide a platform for stakeholders to explore these critical issues in depth and exchange insights on potential strategies to enhance EU competitiveness.