



## DRAFT PROGRAMME

10.00-11.30

Welcome coffee & Registrations

Master of Ceremony: Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General, EUROCHAMBRES

11.30-11:40

### OPENING

Richard Weber, President, EUROCHAMBRES

11.40-12:40

### FIRST VOTING SESSION - INTERNATIONALISATION

organised in cooperation with the Global Chamber Platform - GCP

Presentation of the topic by Christoph Leitl, Chairman of GCP

In a year from now, 90% of global economic growth will be generated outside Europe. To remain competitive, it is essential that EU business seizes the opportunities from this external growth, and Europe can help in 3 ways. First, progress needs to be made to conclude ambitious trade agreements with key partners like the US, India, Mercosur or China. Second, with only 13% of SMEs engaged in international trade (outside the EU), further internationalisation efforts are needed. And finally, Europe needs a stronger voice in representing and defending our economic interests in third markets. A genuine European Economic Diplomacy needs to be developed. The challenge is *how* to develop that strategy effectively, in a genuine public private partnership.

Vote of the entrepreneurs on 5 questions

12.40-13:20

### INSTITUTIONAL INTERVENTIONS

- Representative of the Italian Presidency of the European Union (*tbc*)
- Martin Schulz, President, European Parliament

13.20-14.40

Networking lunch

14:40-15:30

### SECOND VOTING SESSION - SKILLS

Presentation of the topic by Mr. Joachim James Calleja, Director, CEDEFOP

The EU is confronted with a skills paradox: on the one hand, there are unprecedentedly high levels of unemployment - particularly among the young - in several member states. On the other, feedback from businesses indicates that identifying staff with the right competences remains problematic. As is often the case, this dilemma is felt particularly by SMEs, with the frequent need for very specific requirements compounded by a limited human resource management capacity. Although the picture varies significantly between member states and much of the political responsibility lies at national or regional level, there is a general view that the EU can and should contribute to addressing Europe's persisting skills mismatch.

Vote of the entrepreneurs on 4 questions



15:30-16:20

**THIRD VOTING SESSION - FINANCE**

Presentation of the topic by Mr. Dariusz Rosati, Member, European Parliament  
(*tbc*)

Access to finance, a perennial challenge for businesses across Europe, has become an even more acute problem since the financial crisis of 2008 and ensuing economic downturn. Banks have become more risk averse and small businesses with minimal collateral to offer, as well as young businesses with a limited track record, are particularly unlikely to secure a loan on viable terms. Meanwhile, equity financing remains a relatively under-exploited method for generating the money needed for business development, despite the emergence of new trends such as crowd funding. This gloomy picture is exacerbated by the persisting late payment culture among public administrations and between businesses in many member states, which further debilitates cash flow around the economy.

Vote of the entrepreneurs on 5 questions

16:20-17:10

**FOURTH VOTING SESSION - ENERGY**

Presentation of the topic by Dr. Fatih Birol, *Director*, International Energy Agency  
(*tbc*)

A key factor in the competitiveness of European businesses is the availability of reliable and affordable energy. This is particularly the case in more energy intensive manufacturing processes, but high energy prices have an adverse effect on businesses large and small across the whole economy. The EU plays a pivotal role both in Europe's response to climate change and in ensuring competitiveness in the increasingly challenging global economy. A target was also set in 2012 that EU industry should by 2020 account for 20% of total GDP (the figure in 2014 is approx. 15%). Energy efficiency is, in this context, of growing importance to European businesses, as is an appropriate policy framework that strikes the right balance between tackling climate change and achieving competitiveness targets.

Vote of the entrepreneurs on 5 questions

17:10

**CLOSING**