

French Presidency Conference – “Making the Single Market a Territory for European SMEs”

The health and economic crisis arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine have underscored how important it is for the European Union to have a robust and resilient single market. As a source of Europe’s economic growth and recovery, particularly for SMEs, ensuring the single market’s development and smooth operation is a clear priority of the French Presidency and EU institutions. In an effort to put the single market on the map and provide insight into the resources available to SMEs to fully benefit from it, the French Presidency is hosting a conference on “Making the single market a territory for European SMEs”.

Aims and scope of issues

The single market, representing 448 million consumers and accounting for 18% of the global economy, offers real growth opportunities for businesses. However, some SMEs remain in the dark about the opportunities afforded by this economic area, even though SMEs are the backbone of the EU economy, representing 99% of all businesses, over half of Europe’s value-added and two-thirds of employment.

SMEs’ cross-border business activities are still occasionally hindered by hurdles that are regulatory (e.g. differing laws between Member States) and non-regulatory (different practices, language barriers) in nature.

The conference will address these issues through roundtables with high-profile European figures from the world of politics, government, business and academia.

It will also be a chance to examine the resources that can be marshalled and the next steps to take to help European SMEs reap the full benefits of the single market, as well as the priority measures needed for its development, such as harmonising national laws, adopting a bold standard-setting strategy, spreading the EU’s social and environmental values across the globe and further harmonising the service sector.

Against the backdrop of the global pandemic and the war in Ukraine, action must be taken to bolster the resilience of the single market for all European businesses and citizens, and to co-ordinate solutions implemented on the internal market with industrial and economic policy measures.

The conference will be held at the Pierre Mendès France (PMF) Conference Centre of the Ministry for the Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty (Bercy) in Paris, and will be streamed live on the ministry’s website and on social media. This conference is open to the public.