







The importance of recognizing SMEs not only for their weaknesses but also their strengths was particularly underscored. Panelists conveyed that supporting SMEs goes beyond goodwill and directly correlates with the improvement of the national economy, as they form its backbone.

Government representatives highlighted the significant support they provided SMEs and entrepreneurs during the pandemic, the recent energy crisis and disruptions stemming from Russian war of aggression on Ukraine. Government support was meant to address access to financing, human capital development, innovation and technology development, and market access. Access to finance emerged as a particularly significant concern requiring increased governmental attention.

During the discussion, the panellists also emphasized the need to maintain a level playing field between SMEs and larger companies and integrate a SME lens in policy making.

There was strong convergence of views on the need to address regulatory costs and administrative burden. While government efforts to help SMEs are commendable, red tape often hinders progress. During the recent crises, SMEs had to take several different steps to receive financial support and were required to submit a significant amount of information. To address this challenge, participants noted that the quality as well as the quantity of regulation must be regularly assessed, including through ex ante regulatory impact assessments and ex post evaluation.

### **Mobilizing SMEs and entrepreneurs in the green and digital transformations**

In the second panel, discussions centered around mobilizing SMEs and entrepreneurs for the green and digital twin transition, focusing on the main levers for addressing main challenges and tapping into opportunities, including information sharing and awareness, access to finance and tailored services. Across the OECD countries, SMEs account for 99% of all businesses and a significant share of emissions. They are also engine of change, through innovation and adaptation. Hence, they must be part of important international agendas such as net zero. They must be brought to the center stage of policy dialogue and action.

Access to information is critical to enable SMEs and entrepreneurs to play their role in the twin transition, as too often they are unaware of the changing requirements and support mechanisms available.

SMEs and entrepreneurs mostly focus on their day-to-day operations for income generation, and feel overwhelmed by the administrative intricacies of the twin transition. To facilitate their transition, across countries, business and industry associations, as well as the public sector (sometimes in partnership), have developed comprehensive toolkits, lead workshops, disseminated pertinent information, and facilitated partnerships with larger corporations. This collective effort can provide the necessary tools to simplify the twin transition process for SMEs and entrepreneurs. Access to public procurement, including in the framework of global events like Olympic Games, can also help accelerate innovation and transformation.

Panelists agreed that access to timely advice and support accelerates growth and fortifies businesses. However, they also noted the challenge for many entrepreneurs to navigate information and schemes, due to the multitude of support programs from various organizations and the requirements to access them. In some instances, such programs are not being utilized to their full potential due to the underlying red tape. It would be important to ensure that when support programs are in place, companies have access to them. One-stop shops can help consolidate the information on available support programs and facilitate matching with the relevant SMEs and entrepreneurs.

### **The well-being of SMEs and entrepreneurs**

The third panel discussion focused on the wellbeing of SMEs and entrepreneurs. Panelists agreed that more resilient economies and societies mean more resilient businesses. And this in turn means more resilient entrepreneurs. While it was recognized that diagnosis is not easy, and oftentimes it is difficult to distinguish work-related issues from others, the panel emphasized the urgency of promoting mental health in the workplace, thereby contributing positively to the overall well-being of SMEs and entrepreneurs.





- 14:00 - 14:10**    **Welcome and opening remarks**
- Yoshiki Takeuchi, OECD Deputy Secretary General  
Hanni Rosenbaum, *Business at OECD* (BIAC) Executive Director
- 14:00 - 14:10**    **Setting the scene**
- Patrik Kovacs, Chair of *Business at OECD* (BIAC) SMEs and Entrepreneurship Committee
- 14:00 - 14:10**    **Panel 1 – Navigating the rapidly changing business climate and building the resilience of SMEs and entrepreneurs**
- Moderator: Céline Kauffmann, Head of OECD Entrepreneurship SME and Tourism Division
- H.E. Mr. Ewon Benedick, Minister of Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development, Malaysia
  - Fabrice Le Saché, Chair of Business Europe Entrepreneurship and SME Committee
  - Mark Burdon, Secretary General, World Pharmacy Council and SME owner
  - Kelly Culver, Founder and Director, The Culver Group and iIMPACT uIMPACT Innovation Foundation
  - Dan Kelly, President & CEO, Canadian Federation of Independent Business
  - Louis Taylor, CEO, British Business Bank
- 13:30 - 14:00**    **Coffee break**
- 14:00 - 14:10**    **Panel 2 – Mobilizing SMEs and entrepreneurs in the green and digital transformations**
- Moderator: Martina Le Gall Maláková, Managing Director, Elektrik, and Vice-Chair of *Business at OECD* SMEs and Entrepreneurship Committee
- Ieva Valeškaitė, Vice-Minister of the Economy and Innovation, Republic of Lithuania
  - Nicolas Uribe, Executive President of Bogota Chamber of Commerce, Chair ICC-World Chambers Federation
  - Markus Jerger, CEO BVMW-German Mittelstand, Vice-President INSME
  - Emma Jones, Founder, Enterprise Nation
  - Jeremy Rollison, Senior Director, Head of EU Policy, European Government Affairs, Microsoft
- 14:00 - 14:10**    **Panel 3 – The well-being of SMEs and entrepreneurs**
- Moderator: Lamia Kamal-Chaoui, Director of OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities
- Jerome Bellion-Jourdan, Deputy Secretary General of IOE
  - Gabriel Petrus, Global Head, ICC Centres of Entrepreneurship
  - Véronique Willems, Secretary General, SMEUnited
  - Cecilia Wessinger, Director for Global Community, Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN)
  - Alessandro Carnicella, CEO & Founder, Brand Partners Group
  - Maia Royal, The Pure Food Co Limited
- 13:30 - 14:00**    **Concluding session**
- Hon Ginny Andersen, Minister of Small Business, New Zealand



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