



Making digital transition work for all SMEs

Webinar

of the European Committee of the Regions' ECON commission

23 June 2021, 10h00-12h30

The speed at which SMEs are able to digitalise along with the level of digital intensity they can achieve will have far-reaching effects on European economic recovery and the future competitiveness of the EU in global markets.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed a dramatic divide between businesses already able to leverage the full potential of digital transformation and those not yet fully digitalised, creating an unprecedented policy challenge at EU level.

The EU Digital Compass communication sets an ambition to raise to 75% the number of European businesses using advanced digital technologies and to ensure that over 90% of all businesses reach at least a basic level of digital intensity by 2030.

SMEs have a central role in this transition. With the support of over 200 Digital Innovation Hubs and industrial clusters, by 2030, SMEs should have the opportunity to access digital technologies or data easily and on fair terms, ensured by appropriate regulation, and benefit from adequate support to digitalise.

Nonetheless, according to the recent EIB study, as many as 57% of SMEs are not aware of any national or EU programmes for SME digitalisation, thus exposing a pressing need to better connect the multitude of available EU and national programmes to the needs on the ground.

European Entrepreneurial Regions understand that embracing digital transitions is a pre-condition of building an entrepreneurial culture of the future and in this respect, EER regions actively collaborate to exchange experience and knowledge across borders.

The webinar will explore ways to develop an enabling regional policy framework and share best practices for SME digitalisation, bringing together policy makers and experts from the EU institutions, EU-level associations and regions.

Draft agenda

10h00	<p>Welcome and introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Murphy, President of the ECON commission
10h05	<p>Opening speeches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (tbc) Eva Maydell, Member of the ITRE committee of the European Parliament • Outi Slotboom, Director for Strategy and Economic Analysis, DG GROW, European Commission • Eddy Van Hijum, ECON rapporteur for the SME Strategy
10h30	<p>Session 1 – State of digital transformation at regional level in the EU <i>This session will look at the implementation of digital transformation at regional level, featuring presentations and discussions on the results of latest research work – including a joint CoR/Eurochambres study and survey on 'The state of digital transformation at regional level and Covid-19 induced changes to economy and business models, and their consequences for regions' and the EIB study on 'Financing of Digital Transition of SMEs'.</i></p> <p>Panel speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simona Cavallini, Secretary-General, Forinit Foundation, author of the study on 'The state of digital transformation at regional level' • Christoph Riedmann, Policy Advisor for Digital Policy and the Chamber Digital Services Network, Eurochambres • Maria Lundquist, Advisor at the Innovation Finance Advisory, EIB • Dan Dalton, Senior Expert, Allied for Start ups
11h30	<p>Session 2 – Regional instruments and EER best practices for SME digital transition <i>The objective of this session is to reflect on how Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs), clusters and industrial alliances can deliver tailored support for SMEs on the ground. Invited EER speakers will present some best practices on the digital transition of SMEs in their territories and showcase how the collaboration between the EER regions can be an enabler of SME digital transition.</i></p> <p>Panel speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anne-Marie Sassen, Head of Unit, DG CONNECT, European Commission • Vincent Duchêne, IDEA Consult, partner in the COSME funded EER collaboration project • Coen de Graaf, Adviser & Project Manager, North Brabant, EER 2013 • Kerstin Koren, Head of Department of Business, Tourism and Technology, Lower Austria, EER 2017 • Artur Kozlowski, Managing Director, Institute of Innovative Technologies EMAG, Silesia Voivodeship, EER 2021-2022
12h20	<p>Closing remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Murphy