

9th European Family Businesses Summit

“We need a competitive Europe that has businesses and responsible entrepreneurship at its core. For this, the European institutions need to know how they can support entrepreneurs and businesses. In turn, businesses need to contribute to the debates on different topics and to the feedback requests by the Commission to ensure that there is more communication. Policymakers must find the right balance between fostering growth, climate adaptation and business productivity.” – Mr Udo. J Vetter, European Family Businesses President

Overcoming barriers to sustainable growth

The 9th EFB Summit was held in an online format on 5th of October 2023. EFB's President Mr Udo J. Vetter introduced the topic and gave the opening speech which launched EFB's political manifesto ahead of the 2024 EU elections. This election will be critical for the future of Europe's family businesses and its industrial base. Our goal is to promote the growth and continuity of family businesses in Europe – through this manifesto we play our part and urge policy makers to put businesses front and center of their priorities for the next five years.

Following Mr Vetter's introduction, Mr Jesús Casado, Secretary General of EFB, gave an overview of what EFB is working on. He also explained the manifesto in more depth and EFB's key priorities for the next EU mandate which include:

- A significant and effective reduction of administrative burdens,
- Better access to skilled labour,
- The need to upskill and reskill people,
- Better access to finance for companies to grow and scale-up.
- Encouraging more free trade while defending our strategic interests
- Facilitate business transfers to encourage continuity and growth.

Mr Casado, then provided an explanation of EFB's most recent lobbying successes relating to getting the following key issues mentioned in the SME Relief Package. These include:

- Mid-caps – finding a harmonised definition and creating additional measures for mid-caps.
- Successful business transfers – recognition that the 1994 Commission Recommendation on transfer of Small and Medium sized Enterprises is still valid.
- Enabling access to skilled staff – recognition of qualifications and skills of third country nationals.



Mr Casado interviewed Mr Jan Kornelis van Oord who was previously a Deputy manager director of the Van Oord family holding and investment company MerweOordBV.

Mr van Oord gave an overview of his family business history. Mr van Oord stated that it is important to recognise that the business environment is always changing and adapting to this is a key factor for allowing the family business to continue for the long-run.



Mr van Oord spoke about the barriers to growth his family business experienced in their 155 year history. He also analysed the development of the company along with how they tackled climate change and turn challenges into future opportunities. He added that EFB is important for family businesses as often the regulations seen in member states come from the EU and therefore it is important to have a foothold in Brussels as the work done in Brussels is needed for businesses.

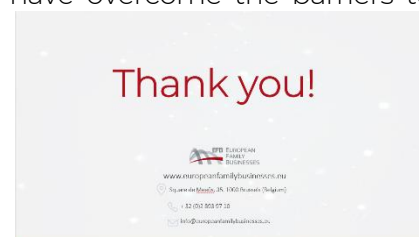
Following a short break, there was a panel discussion moderated by **Mr José Fernández Álava**, Director General of DirCom on the topic of *Overcoming the barriers to sustainable growth*. Here two business owners **Mr Julian von Moeller**, board member and shareholder of Moeller Group and **Mr Thomas van Waeyenberge**, owner of Wacondah Ventures BV and Shareholder of De Eik NV **spoke to Mr Bonifacio Garcia Porras**, the Head of Unit for SMEs at the European Commission to discuss the reality faced by Small and Medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and Mid-Caps in terms of red-tape and competitiveness issues related to the twin digital and green transition.



Mr Bonifacio Garcia Porras, gave an overview of the SME Relief Package which the Commission put forward on the 12th September 2023 to help SMEs. The topic of **25% reduction in administrative burden** was also mentioned. This is the reduction of administrative burden in particular relating to reporting obligations. It is not just about reducing reporting obligations but rather facilitating and rationalising them.

Overall, the summit enabled an active and informative dialogue between business owners and a policy maker. The summit also gave an opportunity for business owners to share their family business stories and how their family businesses have overcome the barriers to growth and sustainable growth more specifically over generations.

EFB President Mr Udo J. Vetter closed the summit with a thank you message to all of the attendees, speakers and EFB's sponsor *For Talents* and the Circle of supporters.



EFB will see you in 2024, for the 10th European Family Businesses summit, this time in person, in Rome.

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