

# European small and medium sized exporters: Challenges and opportunities

 **24<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

European Economic and Social  
Committee – room VMA1 Rue  
Van Maerlant, Brussels

Trade Promotion Europe represents national and regional Trade Promotion Organisations, including Agri-Food Promotion Agencies, across the European Union. Trade Promotion Organisations support their companies in their internationalisation, in the EU Single Market and globally. These companies are predominantly small- and medium-sized enterprises. Trade Promotion Organisations have deep knowledge of the specific needs and challenges of exporting SMEs in their internationalisation journey.

To better serve European exporters and further European trade goals, Trade Promotion Europe actively pursues a Team Europe approach that will build and strengthen partnerships between Member States, national and regional TPOs, and EU Institutions for the benefit of European exporting companies.

## Purpose of the conference

This year, the EU Single Market celebrates 30 years, which presents a good opportunity to take stock of the successes and signposts in terms of intra-trade for European SMEs. In the first panel of the conference, we will look at EU policies that support exporting SMEs as well as the strategies developed by Trade Promotion Organisations to support their companies to grow in the EU Single Market. As TPOs have concrete experience of SMEs' journey, it will be the opportunity to discuss the remaining barriers for SMEs to fully benefit from the EU Single Market, and how to further collaborate between the EU and national level.

An open international economy is a pillar of the European Union's approach to trade, and has contributed to European export growth. Yet there is a growing concern that the EU has developed dependencies and needs to address them, especially in the face of geopolitical turmoil and increased competition for technologies and raw materials. The second panel will discuss the concept of 'Strategic Open Autonomy' and the EU model to maintain openness to support small- and medium-sized European exporters.

Building a Team Europe approach to promoting European exports in third countries is the focus of the third panel. The Team Europe approach means getting all stakeholders at the EU and national levels to join forces by pooling resources and expertise, to deliver greater impact. The panel will discuss the role of the different stakeholders and how best achieve a Team Europe approach to promote European exports.



## About Trade Promotion Europe

The vision of Trade Promotion Europe is for every internationally ambitious company in the EU to reach its full export potential, irrespective of its size within and outside the single market.

The mission of Trade Promotion Europe is to empower European trade promotion organisations to optimise support and the business ecosystem for their exporting companies. Trade Promotion Europe engages as one voice with EU policy makers to effect change where required and by facilitating productive collaboration among its members to achieve this.

Today Trade Promotion Europe represents 27 members, from 19 countries, a network of 86 national contact points, 157 offices in the European Union and over 450 offices in third countries.

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09:30-10:15 **Registration of participants**

10:15-10:45 **Opening remarks**

- Anton Buttigieg, Vice-President of Trade Promotion Europe, Master of Ceremony
- Anne Lanigan, President of Trade Promotion Europe

10:45-12:30 **Panel Discussion: Exporting SMEs and the Single Market: lessons and signposts for the future**

- Moderator: Philippe Vanrie, Director of EcoSystemiX and EU Affairs Manager of Wagralim and of University of Vaasa
- Jakub Boratynski, Director, Networks & Governance, Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, European Commission
- Milena Angelova, Member of Employer Group of the EESC, European Economic and Social Committee
- Anne Lanigan, Regional Director for Eurozone, Central and Eastern Europe for Enterprise Ireland
- Elena Santiago Cid, Director General, CEN-CENELEC
- Rok Capl, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Spirit Slovenia
- *Questions and answers with the audience*

12:30-14:00 **Standing Lunch**

14:00-15:30 **Panel Discussion: Reconciling the EU's open trade agenda with strategic autonomy**

- Moderator: Leo Cendrowicz, Editor, The Brussels Times Magazine
- Charlotte Sammelin, Deputy Director General, Head of the Department for International Trade and EU Single Market, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish Presidency
- Matthias Bauer, Director at European Centre for International Political Economy
- Annette Wijering, Director of the International Trade Department at Netherlands Enterprise Agency
- Denis Redonnet, Deputy Director-General, Chief Trade Enforcement Officer, Directorate General For Trade, European Commission
- Joan Romero, Executive Director of ACCIO- Catalonia Trade & Investment

15:30-16:00 **Coffee Break**

16:00-17:30 **Panel Discussion: Building a Team Europe approach promoting European exporting SMEs**

- Moderator: Leo Cendrowicz, Editor, The Brussels Times Magazine
- Leopoldo Rubinacci, Deputy Director-General, Directorate General for Trade, European Commission
- Tindaro Paganini, Director, Brussels Office, Italian Trade Agency
- Ben Butters, Chief Executive Officer, Eurochambres
- Antti Karhunen, Director, Sustainable Finance, Investment and Jobs, Economy that works for the people, Directorate General for International Partnership, European Commission
- Marta Valero, Director of Institutional and Business Cooperation, Spain Trade And Investment Promotion Organisation ICEX
- *Questions and answers with the audience*

17:30-19:00 **Trade Promotion Europe Reception**

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## Milena Angelova

**Member of Employer Group of  
the EESC, European Economic  
and Social Committee**

Dr Milena Angelova has been serving as Secretary-General of the Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association since 2002 and as SGI Europe Vice-President since 2011. She's been a Member of the European Economic and Social Committee since 2007, EESC Vice-President in charge of Budget 2018-2020 and Employers' Group Vice-President 2010-2018. Member of the Bulgarian Economic and Social Committee since 2006 and is well known as an active participant in the policy-making processes in Bulgaria. In June 2022, Dr Angelova was appointed Bulgarian SME Envoy. Second mandate member of the Board of trustees of the Academy of Economics D.A.Tsenov.

She has twenty-five years of successful track record in representing the interests of the business community at EU and national level regarding important topics such as SME promotion, boosting innovations and facilitating knowledge transfer, improving the business climate, combating the grey economy, the future of work, etc.



## Matthias Bauer

**Director at European Centre for  
International Political Economy**

Matthias Bauer is a German economist and Director at the European Centre for International Political Economy (ECIPE). He works on EU and global trade policy with a focus on digital and technology policymaking.

Matthias Bauer is the author of several studies, economic impact assessments and policy briefs in the fields of international trade, digital markets, the regulation of data, innovation, and intellectual property rights. He is regularly consulted by private and public sector organisations on a broad range of policy issues ranging from impact analysis to strategic advice. Bauer grew up in Eastern Germany. He is an alumni of the US international visitor leadership program (IVLP). He studied business administration at the University of Hull, UK, and economics at the Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany. He received his Ph.D. degree after joining the Bundesbank graduate programme on the "Foundations of Global Financial Markets and Financial Stability".

Before joining ECIPE, Matthias Bauer was the Coordinator of International Political Economy at the international cooperation division of Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Berlin. He previously held positions at DekaBank, UBS, Mercedes-Benz China, and worked as a start-up and business development consultant. Matthias is a member of Tutwa Europe's economic policy expert network. He is also the co-founder of the German-based Institute for Digital Education (IfODiB).



## Jakub Boratynski

**Director, Networks & Governance,  
Directorate-General for Internal  
Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship  
and SMEs, European Commission**

As Director for Networks and Governance in the Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (GROW) at the European Commission, Jakub Boratynski deals with Single Market policies related to services, the recognition of professional qualifications, skills and market surveillance. Furthermore, the directorate is responsible for supporting industrial networks and alliances including the Industrial Forum, the European Enterprise Network and cluster organisations as well as the coordination of DG GROW communication and outreach activities and relations with the European Parliament and Council. Between 2014 and 2021, Jakub worked in the European Commission's Directorate General Communication Networks, Content and Technology (CNECT) with a primary focus on cybersecurity. Among others, he was involved in legislative negotiations (NIS1 and NIS2 Directives, Cybersecurity Act), the preparation of the Commission's Recommendation for a common EU approach to the security of 5G networks, the EU cyber-security strategy's actions on resilience and cooperation with the EU Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA).

Previously (2009-2013), Jakub was the Head of Unit 'Organised Crime and Relations with EMCDDA' at the European Commission's Directorate-General Home Affairs, which had the lead responsibility for the fight against cybercrime, corruption, sexual abuse of children and confiscation of criminal assets. In relation to cybercrime, he was involved in the negotiation and drafting of two directives (on cyber-attacks and sexual exploitation of children) and the establishment of the European Cybercrime Centre (EC3).

Previously, he worked on EU relations with Russia (Directorate General External Relations). Before joining the European Commission, Jakub was a Director at the Stefan Batory Foundation in Warsaw and before that, a Policy Officer with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Jakub is a graduate of the London School of Economics and the University of Warsaw (international relations, law).

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**Ben Butters**

**Chief Executive Officer,  
Eurochambres**

Ben Butters has been with Eurochambres, the European association of Chambers of Commerce & Industry, since 2008 and was appointed CEO in 2020. Prior to this, he acquired experience in both the European Commission and the European Parliament, as well as working for a network of innovation centres. Directly before joining Eurochambres, he created and for several years ran his own business providing EU advocacy support to small business associations.



**Anton Buttigieg**

**Chief Executive Officer,  
TradeMalta**

Anton is Chief Executive Officer at TradeMalta, Malta's trade promotion organisation. He has held this position since TradeMalta's inception in 2015 as a public-private partnership between the Government of Malta and the Malta Chamber of Commerce. Under his leadership, the organisation has actively promoted business and internationalisation opportunities to extend Malta's reach to new markets in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. An economics graduate, Anton held various senior managerial posts in the private sector before joining TradeMalta. Anton Buttigieg is Vice-President of Trade Promotion Europe since December 2022.



**Rok Capl**

**Acting Chief Executive Officer,  
Spirit Slovenia**

Rok Capl is Acting Head of SPIRIT Slovenia Business Development Agency since February 2022. Before joining SPIRIT Slovenia, Rok held several managerial positions, including management board of Thermana Laško Ltc. and Head of Zelkom Pvt. Ltd. public utilities and engineering. Rok has more than 15 years of managerial experience in different organisations in Slovenia. Rok holds a Master of organizational sciences.



**Leo Cendrowicz**

**Editor, The Brussels Times  
Magazine**

Leo Cendrowicz is media veteran with two decades' worth of experience as a journalist reporting from around the globe for dozens of titles on a myriad of issues. He is currently editor of The Brussels Times Magazine and Brussels correspondent for the i newspaper.

His previous experience includes being Brussels correspondent of TIME magazine and The Independent, as well as work with The Guardian, Financial Times, The Hollywood Reporter, Huffington Post, The Daily Beast, New Statesman, Politico, United Press International (UPI) as well as co-editing The Economist Guide to the EU.

Most of his work involved explaining the arcane workings of the EU machine, drawing on an intimate understanding of the system and a web of connections. Beyond the EU and politics, he has covered business, defence and security, the arts, sport, science, lifestyle issues and much more, reporting from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, covering Mars missions and chasing Somali pirates.

**Antti Karhunen**

**Director, Sustainable Finance,  
Investment and Jobs,  
Economy that works for the  
people, Directorate General  
for International Partnership,  
European Commission**



Antti Karhunen is Director for "Sustainable Finance, Investment and Jobs; Economy that works for the People" at the Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) of the European Commission. Antti has over 25 years of service within the Commission. Prior to his current role, he was Principal Adviser in DG INTPA senior management, focusing on trade and the Green Deal.

Before that, he steered EU policy on the role of the private sector and trade in development as Head of Unit, helping design investment-related work of the DG. Antti served as Adviser and Deputy Head of Cabinet of Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs, and as Member of Cabinet during two terms of Erkki Liikanen, Commissioner for Enterprise and Information Society, and Commissioner for Budget, Personnel and Administration. Before engaging in development and international partnerships, Antti was Deputy Head of Unit in the Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry, and worked many years on EU-US relations.

Lawyer by education, Antti Karhunen worked in Finnish diplomatic service and as a company lawyer in energy industry prior to joining the European Commission.

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**Anne Lanigan**

**Regional Director Europe,  
Enterprise Ireland**

Anne Lanigan is Regional Director, Europe, for Enterprise Ireland, the Irish trade and innovation agency. Based in Amsterdam, she is responsible for Enterprise Ireland's activities across their 11 offices in Europe, which are focused on increasing export growth into these markets. Since joining Enterprise Ireland in 2003, she has held a number of management positions, including Director, Japan, and Head of Brexit Unit. A mechanical engineer by training, Anne spent 18 years in the private sector before joining Enterprise Ireland.



**Tindaro Paganini**

**Director, Brussels Office, Italian  
Trade Agency**

Expert in international trade, development cooperation, private sector development and export promotion, Tindaro Paganini currently holds the position of Director of Brussels office at the Italian Trade Agency (ITA), the government agency responsible for supporting the sustainable development of Italian companies abroad and promoting the attraction of foreign investment to Italy. The Brussels office is part of a network of seventy-nine offices all over the world that, under the authority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy, supports Italian SME's and provides a global reach, with focus, as far as the Brussels office is concerned, on maintaining and developing relations with key business partners from Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands and the European institutions.

Previously Tindaro was Marketing Director and Manager of Training Services of ITA. He worked from 2016 to 2019 at the World Bank, as a senior expert in private sector development, investments and competitiveness, dealing with development projects in Eastern Europe and North Africa. From 2010 to 2016 worked in the office of the Executive Director of the World Bank, taking part in the activities of the Board of Directors and acting, on behalf of ITA, as a reference point for Italian companies and institutions interested in working in projects financed by the Bank. Previously, he held senior positions at ITA agency, the Ministry of Economic Development, OECD and the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO. He is the author of several publications including the book "World Bank: an opportunity for young people and businesses" (Egea, 2017).



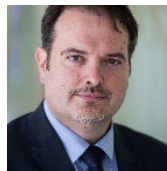
**Denis Redonnet**

**Deputy Director-General, Chief  
Trade Enforcement Officer,  
Directorate General For Trade,  
European Commission**

Denis Redonnet is an economist by training, and started his career as a corporate banker for a French bank in the city of London.

Since 1995 he has been a career European Commission official, having held positions in the monetary, international economic affairs and internal market directorate generals of the EU Executive. He served as advisor to EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy and a Deputy chief of staff to EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson.

Afterwards he headed the WTO division and then the Strategy division in the Directorate General for Trade in the European Commission. Between 2015 and 2020 he acted as Director for "WTO, Legal Affairs and Trade in Goods" in the Directorate General for Trade in the European Commission. In July 2020 he was appointed Deputy Director General and Chief Trade Enforcement Officer in the Directorate General for Trade in the European Commission.



**Joan Romero**

**Executive Director of ACCIÓ-  
Catalonia Trade & Investment**

Mr. Romero was born in Barcelona in 1972. He holds a Degree in Economics from the University of Barcelona, a Master's in Operations Management and a Diploma DAF in Operations and Innovation, both from ESADE. He was a professor of Spanish and World Economy at the University of Barcelona.

He worked in banking and strategic consultancy before joining ACCIÓ - CT&I, where he was Executive Secretary and Executive Director. In 2017, he was appointed Chief Executive Officer and in September 2021, he once again became Executive Director of ACCIÓ - CT&I. Under his leadership, ACCIÓ - CT&I was named the Investment Promotion Agency (IPA) of the year in the Financial Times Group's fDi Strategy Awards. Mr. Romero has participated in the preparation of several public policy plans: the Catalan Agreement on Industry, several Research and Innovation Plans of Catalonia, the Catalan Agreement on Research and Innovation, as well as a number of ACCIÓ - CT&I Strategic Plans.

He has also been responsible for editing Annual Reports on R&D in Catalonia, as well as the Annual Innovation Barometer, and has participated in different analyses of the competitive situation of Catalonia in the international context, including OECD Reviews of Regional Innovation: Catalonia and Catalonia in World Competitiveness, IMD.

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## Leopoldo Rubinacci

**Deputy Director-General,  
Directorate General for Trade,  
European Commission**

Leopoldo Rubinacci is Deputy Director-General of Directorate-General for Trade. Leopoldo Rubinacci, an Italian national, has more than 25 years of experience in international trade negotiations and implementation. Previously, Leopoldo Rubinacci was Director for 'resources, interinstitutional relations, communication and civil society' in DG TRADE, after taking on the role of Director for 'Trade Defence' where he enforced the main autonomous EU legislation to ensure a level playing field in international trade. Prior to that, he headed three units in the same department in charge, respectively, of 'Investment', 'Resources and strategic planning' and 'Bilateral relations with Russia, Ukraine, Commonwealth of Independent States countries and trade aspects of enlargement'. Before joining the Commission in the Directorate-General for Environment in 1995, he was an auditor and management consultant in the private sector.



## Charlotte Sammelin

**Deputy Director General, Head of  
the Department for International  
Trade and EU Single Market,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish  
Presidency**

Deputy Director General Charlotte Sammelin is heading the Department for International Trade and EU Internal Market since September 2021. Before that she served as the Ambassador of Sweden to Greece. During her career at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs she has focused on particularly European Union policies ranging from EU foreign policy, neighbourhood, accession negotiations, economic issues, trade, EU internal market and the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. She worked for 12 years in Brussels in various positions, such as Advisor in the Support Group for Ukraine in the European Commission (DG Near), Foreign Policy Advisor to the President of the European Council Herman van Rompuy and in the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU. She has also served at the Swedish Embassy in Madrid. Before joining the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs she worked as an economist at the OECD in Paris on territorial development and agriculture. Ms Sammelin holds a Master's Degree in Political Science, European Law and Economics from the Ludwig Maximilian Universität in Munich, Germany.



## Elena Santiago Cid

**CEN and CENELEC's Director  
General, CEN-CENELEC**

Mrs Santiago Cid is CEN and CENELEC Director General since 1 January 2010. CEN and CENELEC are two of the three recognized European Standardization Organizations supporting European Policies and Legislation. Moreover, Mrs Santiago Cid is also Vice-President at the Women4Cyber Foundation.

CEN and CENELEC, recognized Standardization Organizations under EU Law, are leading providers of European Standards that are driven by business and made through a transparent, balanced and consensus-based process in which all relevant stakeholders, including societal interest groups and SMEs are involved. CEN and CENELEC abide by the WTO TBT principles and beyond. They adapt proactively to new technology and social developments and support European competitiveness, the protection of the environment and sustainable growth for the well-being of citizens and the strengthening of the Single Market.

CEN and CENELEC actively support international standardization and cooperate closely with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) in order to foster and promote European competitiveness in the global market. Mrs Santiago Cid graduated in Electronic Engineering from the Polytechnic University of Madrid and has 30 years' experience in standardization.



## Marta Valero San Paulo

**Director of Institutional and  
Business Cooperation, Spanish  
Trade and Investment Promotion  
Organisation, ICEX**

Marta is an economist and trade expert, currently working as Director of Institutional and Business Cooperation at Spain's trade and investment promotion organisation ICEX. She has extensive experience in the field of internationalisation and export finance. Before joining ICEX, Marta held various posts at the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism and at the Ministry of Economy. With an academic background specialised in economics and international trade, Marta has also completed studies in corporate governance and financial sustainability.

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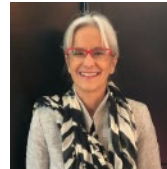
**Philippe Vanrie**

**EU Affairs Manager of Wagralim  
and of University of Vaasa**

During almost 20 years (1999-2017), Philippe Vanrie was CEO of EBN, the leading pan-European Network bringing together 200+ Business & Innovation Centers (BICs), Innovation-based Incubators, Accelerators, Clusters, Innovation Agencies and Entrepreneurship Centers across Europe and beyond. A community gathering hundreds of business & innovation support organizations, thousands of smart innovators and high-potential entrepreneurs. Afterwards, and during 4 years (2017-2020), he took over the mandate of Heading EUREKA, a Brussels-based inter-governmental organization supporting and funding innovators, knowledge actors, SMEs and industry leaders, across 40 countries. He championed the transformation of EBN and EUREKA into high-caliber innovation networks, interacting between policy makers, promising innovative entrepreneurs and ecosystems enablers.

Philippe has a long collaboration experience with the European Commission and other European institutions (EIB, EIT, ESA), and a series of national & regional governmental agencies, with which he initiated and conducted EC-funded collaborative projects in various fields.

He founded EcoSystemiX in 2020, a consultancy specialized in innovation ecosystems, and worked for Thesame Innovation, a regional innovation agency (and regional robotics cluster) located in the Auvergne Rhône-Alpes Region (F), for the D4DHub (Digital4Development) initiative (DG INTPA), for the Walloon Agri-Food Cluster (Belgium) as Head of European Affairs, for the EIC, the EIT, OECD, EY, Ecorys and Deloitte), in various fields such as bioeconomy, blue economy, circular economy, deep-tech start-ups & scale-ups, Food-Tech and Ag-Tech. He was just nominated Chair of an EU-Experts Group on R&I Knowledge Valorisation for the EC (DG RTD) within the framework of a Mutual Learning Exercise (Policy & Practices) across the EU. He is Professor and Advisory Board member at Coventry University (UK), and EU advisor to the Rector of the University of Vaasa (Finland). Engineer by education (M.Sc.), he graduated from the Gembloux Agronomic Engineering University (Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech/Liège University), & from the University of Louvain in Innovation Management.



**Annette Wijering**

**Director of the International Trade  
Department at Netherlands  
Enterprise Agency**

Annette Wijering is Managing Director for International Trade at the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (NEA). Her aim is to improve international business opportunities for entrepreneurs and to strengthen their positions abroad. Economic resilience is an important theme in her present job. The NEA worked on awareness for SME's and employees, created a supporting unit for them and local governments, and is the front office for information on EU sanction packages with regard to the war in Ukraine. During her career Annette has held management positions in different international fields at Dutch Ministries of Infrastructure and Water Management, Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, and Agriculture, Nature and Fisheries. She served on different International EU knowledge and Innovation boards and was Vice Chair of the Joint Programming on Food Security and Climate Change (FACCE) for several years.

Annette believes that a multi-disciplinary approach is often the best way to solve current societal challenges. This is why she chose to study Public Administration at the University of Twente and why she is still stimulating partnerships and connecting people and business in and outside of the Netherlands.