Small businesses and entrepreneurs around the world demonstrated extraordinary adaptability during the COVID-19 pandemic and will be critical to forge the path to recovery. In the OECD, SMEs account for 60% of total employment and 50-60% of national value added. As such, they are engines of innovation diffusion, productivity growth, and job creation. However, SMEs continue to face barriers in accessing strategic resources, such as finance, skills or technology. They also struggle to deal with inefficiencies in regulatory and framework conditions. Tackling these issues will be key to unleash and fully harness SMEs’ potential for building back better.

In recognition of their contribution to our economies and the wellbeing of societies, the OECD is organising a series of virtual events with partner organisations to explore critical issues for SMEs and entrepreneurship, building on the platform of the Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) Day 2021.

Events start on Monday, 28 June, with the UN MSMEs day event, and run until Friday, 2 July. They will cover themes critical to the economic recovery, such as resilience and dynamism of SMEs and entrepreneurship in the time of COVID-19, women’s entrepreneurship, digitalisation, access to finance and skills.

The week will offer the opportunity to launch the SME and Entrepreneurship Outlook, a unique OECD flagship issued every 2 years that monitors trends in SME and Entrepreneurship performance and policies and reflects on future expected changes.

A number of other publications will also feature prominently across the series of events, including the launch of a new case study of Korea on enhancing resilience through digitalisation, as well as the dissemination of a collection of 27 policy insight notes from around the world about how a gender lens is applied to entrepreneurship policy.

The OECD is partnering with the International Council for Small Business (ICSB), the Global Women’s Entrepreneurship Policy (GWEP) Network and the Bank of the Council of Europe (CEB) to make this week a success.
MONDAY 28 JUNE – MSME

10:00- 11.30 CEST
Register here

2021 OECD SME AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP OUTLOOK: “MEET THE AUTHORS”

Moderated by
Nadim Ahmad, Deputy Director, OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship for SMEs, Regions and Cities

DESCRIPTION
SMEs, self-employed and entrepreneurs have been hard hit during the COVID-19 crisis. But despite the magnitude of the shock, available data point to vigorous business dynamism, sustained start-up creation, no major increase in bankruptcies. The crisis has also served as a catalyst for some forms of innovation and entrepreneurship in most countries. The 2021 OECD SME and Entrepreneurship Outlook provides new evidence on the critical role governments and their support packages have played in cushioning the blow. It also stresses that not all people, places and firms have been able to get support as needed, but those who did have performed better. In addition, the report explores through a forward-looking lens, how the crisis may have exacerbated vulnerabilities or revealed sources of resilience among SMEs and entrepreneurs, looking also at the structural policy responses to the crisis and efforts by governments to foster SME&E resilience for a more sustainable recovery.

OPENING
Martin Godel, Chair of the OECD Committee on SMEs and Entrepreneurship (CSMEE)

KEY MESSAGES
“On short-term impact and governments’ emergency responses”
Pierre-Alain Pionnier, Head of Section Productivity, Prices, PPPs, Labour and Business Statistics, OECD Statistics and Data Directorate

“On longer-term impact, structural shifts and recovery policies”
Sandrine Kergroach, Head of SMEs and Entrepreneurship Performance, Policies and Mainstreaming unit, OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship for SMEs, Regions and Cities

DISCUSSION
Interventions from country delegates and stakeholders

CLOSING REMARKS
Nadim Ahmad, Deputy Director, OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship for SMEs, Regions and Cities

14:00- 16.30 CEST
PARTICIPATION IN UN MSMEs DAY EVENT
LAUNCH OF THE 2021 SME AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP OUTLOOK BY OECD SECRETARY GENERAL MATHIAS CORMANN
In partnership with the International Council for Small Businesses (ICBS)

Register here for the Zoom session or watch the event live on UN Web TV

The UN MSMEs Day 2021 will take place in a fully virtual format and focus on placing MSMEs at the centre of an inclusive and sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery. Under the theme “Achieving the SDGs requires resilient and flourishing MSMEs everywhere”, the MSMEs Day aims to strengthen awareness on the contributions MSMEs make to economies, communities and societies, and foster a dialogue on the policies needed to empower MSMEs to drive the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

OECD Secretary General Mathias Cormann and H.E. Stuart Nash, Minister for Economic and Regional Development, Forestry, Small Business and Tourism, New Zealand, and Chair of the OECD Digital for SMEs, initiative participate in the high-level plenary session.
**LAUNCH OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP POLICIES THROUGH A GENDER LENS**

A joint initiative with the Global Women's Entrepreneurship Policy Network (GWEP)

**Moderated by**
Jonathan Potter, Head of Entrepreneurship Policy and Analysis Unit, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD

**DESCRIPTION**
Women are less likely to be entrepreneurs than men and tend to operate smaller and less dynamic businesses. It is not clear the extent to which gender differences in entrepreneurship are the consequence of entrepreneurs’ preferences or institutional biases, such as poorly designed entrepreneurship policies and programmes. The report Entrepreneurship Policies through a Gender Lens, prepared by the OECD and the Global Women’s Entrepreneurship Policy (GWEP) Research Network, highlights long-standing issues related to the scope and effectiveness of women’s entrepreneurship policies – issues which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic – and points the way to more effective policies. Based on an assessment of entrepreneurship trends and barriers, and 27 policy insight notes authored by leading academic experts, this report highlights the need for gender-sensitive entrepreneurship culture, investment in entrepreneurship skills, improved access to financial capital and professional networks, and more supportive regulatory environments for women entrepreneurs.

**WELCOME REMARKS**
- Lamia Kamal-Chaoui, Director, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD

**KEY MESSAGES**
- Colette Henry, Professor and Chair of the Global Women’s Entrepreneurship Policy (WEP) Project and Dundalk Institute of Technology, Ireland

**MODERATED PANEL**
Q&A and discussion with audience
- Margo Thomas – CEO & Founder of WEIForward
- Virginia Littlejohn – CEO & Founder of Quantum Leaps
- Roshini Narenderan (University of Tasmania, Australia and GWEP contributor, India)
- Julia Uhlik, accent Inkubator GmbH, Austria and EU Sara Project

**CLOSING REMARKS**
- Professor Susan Coleman, University of Hartford, United States
WEDNESDAY 30 JUNE – DIGITAL

09:00 – 10:30
CEST
Register here

LAUNCH OF ENHANCING SMES’ RESILIENCE THROUGH DIGITALISATION:
THE CASE OF KOREA
Co-hosted with Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Korea to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Moderated by
Lucia Cusmano, Deputy Head of Entrepreneurship, SME and Tourism Division, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD

DESCRIPTION
Digitalisation can help small businesses become resilient. For businesses, being resilient means having the flexibility to adapt to disruptions and continue their operations, and digital technologies can serve as a tool for businesses in building their resilient capacity. In general, the limited capacity of SMEs, such as financial and human resources, leave them with little room for manoeuvre in challenging circumstances. However, advancement of digital technologies and development of digital service models offer small businesses enhanced accessibility to business tools, which can allow SMEs to quickly adapt their activities during crisis without the need for a large upfront investment.

The report investigates the role of government programmes in strengthening SMEs’ resilience to external shocks, by focusing on SME digitalisation policies implemented in Korea during the COVID-19 outbreak. The report examines how digital tools and services have made SMEs more resilient during the pandemic, as well as the challenges that SMEs face in “going digital”. The analysis is complemented by additional evidence and insights coming from international policy experience.

WELCOME REMARKS
- Ambassador Hyoung Kwon Ko, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the OECD
- Ulrik Knudsen, Deputy Secretary-General, OECD

KEYNOTE
- Sung-cheon Kang, Vice Minister, Ministry of SMEs and Startups of Korea

PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT
- Iljoon Lee, Deputy Director, Ministry of SMEs and Startups of Korea
- Insung Kwon, Junior Policy Analyst, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD

DISCUSSION OF THE REPORT
- Jae Won Kang, Senior Researcher, Korea Small Business Institute
- Vincenzo Spiezia, Senior Economist, Directorate for Science, Technology and Innovation, OECD
- Christian Märkel, Senior Economist at WIK-Consult, Deputy Head of the Mittelstand-Digital Research Team, Germany
- Heidi Renata Cigan, Policy Officer, DG CNECT, European Commission

CLOSING REMARKS
- Lucia Cusmano, Deputy Head of Entrepreneurship, SME and Tourism Division, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD
Life-long learning systems are critical to improve availability and access of digital skills to SMEs, in all regions and cities. The OECD report on "The Digital Transformation of SMEs" highlights that the digital skills gap is one of the greatest barriers to SME digital adoption. Due to size and resource constraints, many small firms are more dependent on their ecosystem and networks to access the relevant skills to transform their business models to be digital, and accordingly more productive, sustainable and resilient. This means, that SMEs have to be aware about their needs in terms of digital skills and proactive in reaching out to their ecosystem and networks to up-skill, re-skill, or externalise digital functions.

Actions are needed to help SMEs access to digital skills within their ecosystems, and help them close the digital skills gap. Higher education institutions, for example, can improve availability and access to digital skills. Higher education institutions, governments, large firms and technology practitioners can work together to develop practical and innovative digital learning for SMEs. Proximity among these actors can facilitate collaboration. Impactful digital learning is achieved when stakeholders from private and public sectors come together with education institutions to implement an effective lifelong learning system.

This webinar will discuss the many innovative approaches that can improve availability and accessible of digital skills for SMEs, in all regions and cities. The discussion will highlight the role HEIs, large firms and technology providers are increasingly playing to offer learning opportunities, which SMEs should take advantage of to close the digital skill gap.

**OPENING REMARKS**

- Celine Kauffmann, Head of Entrepreneurship, SME and Tourism Division, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD

**PANEL 1**

The SME digital skills gap & the barriers to overcome

Moderated by Marco Bianchini, Economist, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD

- Claudia Suaznabar, Private Sector Development Lead Specialist, Inter-American Development Bank
- Yossi Hayut, Head of Education, Wix
- David Brian Devallance, Vice-Rector for Internationalisation, University of Primorska
- Beth Ann Lim, Director of Policy Programs and Government Outreach for Asia Pacific, Facebook
- Paolo Manfredi, Consultant for SME digitalisation, Responsible for SMEs’ digital transition, Confartigianato

**PANEL 2**

How to scale up ‘disruptive’ & innovative higher education models to up-and reskill SMEs?

Moderated by Anne Rimmer, Policy Analyst, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD

- Quang-Minh Lepescheux, Director, European Government Affairs, Microsoft
- Jeff Sandhu, Head of FutureX Talent Sunway iLabs, 42 Kuala Lumpur
- Anastasia Chalkidou, Co-founder, Quantum Accounting
- Anna Klissouras, EU Public Policy Manager, Amazon
- OECD government representative (TBC)
MOBILISING SME FINANCE FOR A RESILIENT, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE RECOVERY

Joint event with the Bank of the Council of Europe

Moderated by Céline Kauffmann, Head of Entrepreneurship, SME and Tourism Division, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD

DESCRIPTION

SMEs were hard hit by the COVID-19 crisis, often relying on government support to survive the initial shock, prolonged restrictions and a drop in demand for their products and services. This has left many small businesses with a high debt burden. The degree to which this will lead to high levels of insolvencies in the coming months is still uncertain and a cause for concern.

As businesses and governments look to the recovery, SMEs will be front and centre in providing employment as well as innovative solutions to the world’s most pressing challenges, such as the climate crisis, while ensuring that no one is left behind. Sustained access to a diverse range of financing instruments will be crucial to continued contributions by SMEs and entrepreneurs to sustainable and inclusive growth.

This webinar, organised by the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities and the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), will bring together experts, policymakers, financial institutions and SME representatives to discuss some of the key issues around SME financing today:

OPENING REMARKS

- Monica Scatasta, Director of the Technical Assessment and Monitoring Directorate, CEB

PANEL 1

Mobilising SME finance for recovery

Moderated by Isabelle Brun, Head of Strategic Development and Special Topics at CEB

- Miriam Koreen, Senior Counsellor on SMEs, Entrepreneurship, SME and Tourism Division, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD
- Andrés Rodríguez-Pose, Professor
- Rodney Boyd, Senior Manager – Policy, British Business Bank, UK
- Gerhard Huemer, Chief Economist, SMEunited

PANEL 2

Understanding and addressing the risks of SME over-indebtedness and insolvency

Moderated by Stephan Raes, Policy Analyst, Entrepreneurship, SME and Tourism Division, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD

- Federico J. Diez, Economist, Structural Reforms Unit, IMF Research Department
- Felix Haas Vincon, Head of Unit, European Association of Guarantee Institutions - AECM
- Rudy Aernoudt, Senior Economist at the European Commission and Professor in Corporate Finance at the Universities of Ghent and Nancy
- Martin Godemann, Head of Group Funding, ProCredit Holding

CLOSING REMARKS

- Céline Kauffmann, Head of Entrepreneurship, SME and Tourism Division, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD
FRIDAY 2 JULY – SKILLS

13:00 – 15:00 CEST

INTRODUCING EECOLE – ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION, COLLABoration, ENGAGEMENT

Moderated by
Raffaele Trapasso, Head, Entrepreneurship Education and Skills Unit, Entrepreneurship, SME and Tourism Division, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD

DESCRIPTION
EECOLE is an international network connecting higher education institutions (HEIs) with their partners, including public authorities, firms, banks, civil society, etc. By joining EECOLE these actors, all together, can create shared narratives and common goals, in a neutral environment, facilitated by the OECD Secretariat.

HEIs have the potential to help their communities and networks be more entrepreneurial, more innovative and sustainable, and more inclusive. They can provide individuals with entrepreneurial mind-sets and skills to improve their resilience and productivity vis-à-vis the future of work and society. HEIs can support regional development and post-pandemic recovery plans by providing information and intelligence about investment opportunities, in all regions and cities. HEIs can generate economic and societal value in many different areas. However, to achieve these results there is a need for policy synergies, specific institutions and professional figures to be created. Above all, there is a need for mutual understanding and support between HEIs and their partners. There is a need for EECOLE.

During this event, international experts will discuss how EECOLE can help strengthening the linkage between HEIs and their partners, in all regions.

OPENING REMARKS
- Lamia Kamal-Chaoui, Director, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD

MODERATED PANEL
- Sheila Martin, Vice President of Economic Development and Community Engagement, Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU), United States.
- Tim Ackermann, Head of Global Talent Acquisition & Engagement at TUI Group, Germany
- Markus Buchhorn, Asia-Pacific Advanced Network, Australia
- Simon Edström, Swedish National Union of Students, Sweden
- Matías Rodríguez Inciarte, Chairman of Santander Universities and vice-president of Universia, Spain
- Fabrizio Sala, Regional Minister for Research, University and Internationalisation, Lombardy Region, Italy
More information:
www.oecd.org/cfe/smes/

Join the conversation:
@OECD_local #OECDregions

Follow us on LinkedIn:
linkedin.com/company/OECD-LOCAL

Subscribe to our newsletter:
OE.CD/CFENEWS

Contacts:
CELINE.KAUFFMANN@OECD.ORG
HEATHER.MORTIMERCHAROY@OECD.ORG