

Welcome to you, welcome to the EU, welcome to the UfM and welcome to Barcelona.

These two days mark an important date in the Programme. We are now lucky enough to be together after two years of being split apart due to the COVID pandemic.

This pandemic has taken its toll in terms of economic growth and inclusion. But it also struck our ranks, some of the members of our community being no longer with us today. I would like to pay a special tribute to their memories, May they rest in peace.

Despite these adverse circumstances, we all deployed very special efforts to keep and grow the momentum. These efforts contribute forging a community of practice that will inspire and provide the tools needed by policy makers to improve the business environment of SMEs.

It's a chance to work in this field, it's an opportunity, but it's above all a responsibility: we can bring our share to building a better world for tens of millions across the region.

Therefore, I would like to thank you all for being there today, thank DG NEAR, the UfM and GOPA for their relentless support.

