

The Roundtable on the Digitization of the SMEs

The Round Table on Digitalization of SMEs was held on 13 July 2021. The event, organized by the Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers, was attended by twenty representatives of state administration and leading experts from business and academia. In the open debate, they discussed how to best support SME companies in order to increase their digital resilience.

During the meeting, the speakers diagnosed a number of important problems. Among the most important were low awareness of the opportunities offered by digital tools among the smallest companies, difficulties resulting from limited access to capital and human resources, as well as deficiencies in internet infrastructure. It was noted that many Polish rural areas still lack access to the Internet and thus their inhabitants cannot enjoy the benefits of technology.

A significant problem is the difficulty in obtaining financing that can cover the costs of implementing new technologies. Although there are opportunities available on the market to obtain advice in this area, smaller companies, due to their limited time resources, are often afraid to use such solutions. Digital Innovation Hubs, which in the near future will offer free assistance to companies, can help. Another noteworthy solution is the STEP program, where entrepreneurs can get support from a dedicated consultant. The speakers agreed that a good solution would be to introduce innovation vouchers for enterprises.

During the event, speakers pointed out that a significant factor hindering the development of digitization, as well as the development of entrepreneurship in general, is the complexity of the regulatory environment for business and the multiplication of burdens for entrepreneurs. The development of a digital state should not consist only in moving the same obligations to the cloud, but in introducing simplifications and facilitations. An example of a simple solution that would bring great added value is simplifying forms and reducing the amount of information required from entrepreneurs. At the same time, digitalization cannot be viewed in isolation from other aspects of business life. Investing in digitalization will not bring the intended benefits if, at the same time, tax solutions are introduced that hinder the development of the technological sector.

Other problems that were raised during the meeting concerned the use of digital technologies in companies or the lack of properly trained employees. Experts pointed out that while many businesses are using basic digital tools, few are using them to their full potential. Such limited digitization does not change processes within companies, thus bringing limited benefits. Naturally, for digitization to move forward, urgent action is needed to ensure an adequate number of skilled human resources. In this regard, it is important to invest in education and training programs. In the short term, the Poland Business Harbor program, which facilitates the relocation of foreign innovators to Poland, can also help.