Antoni Cañete calls from Brussels: “It’s time for Europe to move from speeches to action for SMEs”

The president of Pimec and vice-president of SME United calls on European institutions to take real action to promote an environment that fosters business growth, improve SMEs’ access to public procurement and unlock the sanctioning system against late payments

Brussels, 14 October 2025. The president of **Pimec** and vice president of **SME United, Antoni Cañete**, has travelled to Brussels to carry out an intense institutional agenda from 13 to 15 October, with the aim of advocating before the European Commission, the Parliament, and the main European political groups a clear and concrete agenda for small and medium-sized enterprises: **a regulatory framework that drives business growth, more access to public procurement and zero tolerance for late payments.** “SMEs are the backbone of the European economy, but too often they are left out of real decisions. Europe needs fewer declarations and more action,” said Cañete. “We came to Brussels to ask for facts, not promises.”

Accompanied by **Rosa Solanes**, Pimec’s delegate in Brussels, the president of Pimec will meet with **Manfred Weber**, president of the European People’s Party (EPP), and **Dolors Montserrat**, secretary general of the party; **Iratxe García**, president of the Socialist & Democrats Group in the European Parliament; and **Teresa Ribera**, executive vice president of the European Commission. He will also hold working meetings with MEPs **Laura Ballarín** and **Diana Riba**.

Among the central topics of his agenda is the revision of the European **public procurement directives**, scheduled for 2026. The president of Pimec advocates that this reform should serve to improve **SMEs’ access to public tenders**, and welcomes that many of their proposals, presented jointly with **SME United**, have already been incorporated into the report approved by the European Parliament. Among these measures are **the division of contracts into lots** to promote the participation of small companies, **the emphasis on quality**, **sustainability and proximity** criteria beyond the lowest price, as well as the **possibility of direct payments to subcontractors and the revision of prices in the face of unforeseen increases**.

Despite these advances, Pimec warns about the **growing use of in-house assignments** (EMP) by public administrations, a practice that limits competition and excludes many SMEs from their natural local market. This trend means that administrations carry out projects within their own structures instead of outsourcing them, thereby reducing opportunities for local businesses and diminishing the driving impact of public procurement on the economy.

Another major priority put forward by Pimec to the European institutions is **the fight against late payments**. The organization calls on the European Commission **to keep the proposal for a Regulation against late payments** within the 2026 work

Departament de Comunicació
premsa@pimec.org
934964500

programme. Results from the European survey on this issue show that **73% of companies identify late payments as a serious problem, 52% report unilateral extensions of payment terms**, and **40% say that such delays limit their investment and growth capacity**. During the scheduled meetings, Cañete will insist on the need to maintain the proposal and will request **support for the creation of an effective sanctioning regime and competent authorities in all Member States to save thousands of SMEs and jobs.**

The visit will also serve to address the new definition of Small Mid-Caps proposed by the European Commission, which, if the proposal of the European Council is approved, could include companies with up to 1,000 employees. Pimec views this initiative positively, as it could facilitate the growth of companies that exceed the current SME thresholds and prevent them from losing certain advantages. However, the organization warns that this new category must **not reduce the resources or prominence currently dedicated to small and medium-sized enterprises**, which continue to be the foundation of the country's productive and economic fabric.

This visit takes place alongside Pimec's recent accession to the **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC),** with **Jacint Soler**, Director of Institutional Relations, as a new representative within Group 1. This historic milestone **strengthens the presence of Catalan and Spanish SMEs in the European consultative structures** and consolidates Pimec's role in defending business interests at the EU level.

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934964500