EFB thanks the European Commission for their hard work throughout the current crisis, in particular for their introduction of the SURE programme and their support for the European Investment Bank’s move to make €1 billion available in EU budget guarantee to provide liquidity to SMEs. EFB recognises the need for an exit strategy plan from the crisis to be established as soon as possible. Below are some of the key points the EFB believe should feature in such a plan:

* **EFB calls on the European Commission to introduce a coordinated exit strategy to ensure we avoid a second wave of COVID-19.**
* **The EU should immediately work to facilitate a safe return of freedom of movement for goods, services and workers.**
* **The European Commission should establish a common EU standard for testing.**
* **Employees returning safely to work is vital in the rebuilding of our European economy.**
* **Large scale investment in the Single Market creates opportunities and offers prosperity for all. It ensures that Europe supports Europe.**
* **Our European exit strategy and recovery plan should incorporate the major objectives of the Green Deal.**

Our society is continuing to face an unprecedented challenge as a result of the recent outbreak of COVID-19. EFB continues to send its sympathies to those families who have already lost loved ones and to those who are battling the illness. The outstanding work of our health services, businesses and workers has been of paramount importance to get us through this crisis so far and our sincere gratitude is with them. They have shown sheer courage and determination in working to limit the spread of the disease and treat those who have been suffering, whilst bravely working to maintain the essential goods and services that our society depends on.

Family Businesses have worked hard to help governments and society throughout the crisis, with many adjusting their means of production to create essential products and provide essential services. Family Businesses care for their communities and they have demonstrated their commitment.

As some countries approach the stage of the virus where the rate of infections and deaths are on the decline and short term solutions have been passed, it is now vitally important to start to think about how we will exit from this crisis and how we will plan for economic recovery. In this paper, EFB will present its vison on how best to exit from the current crisis and how family businesses, as the backbones on the economy and key actors in the COVID-19 crisis, can help to rebuild the economy across Europe and play a key role in the economic recovery plan.

***Coordination is Key***

In the light of the COVID-19 crisis, a coordinated plan struggled to be established due to the different speed of the spread of the disease in member states. Member states took it upon themselves to act fast and the closure of borders was an insight into what happens in Europe in the face of crises without proper guidance from the EU. It is therefore vital that in response to lifting measures across Europe, we do so in a coordinated manner.

**EFB therefore calls on the European Commission to stick to the roadmap and bring Member States on board** so that Europe is able to come out from the crisis together, united, with respect for all of our member states, in order to avoid a second wave that would cripple us further. This coordinated exit strategy **needs to be clear so that there is a standard procedure and timeline that all member states can follow in order to limit the risk of a second wave** of the disease spreading across Europe.

***Safety First Approach***

Rebuilding our European economy requires coordinated and strategic planning. The recovery from the crisis will not be symmetrical and will take certain states, regions and businesses longer than others. It is crucial that we work together to help those more vulnerable and harder hit areas and create a supportive environment.

The reconstruction of society requires starting again little by little. Many companies have remained open for business throughout the crisis however many sectors have faced challenges through a lack of workers, parts or services. To alleviate these issues from companies, **the EU should immediately work to facilitate a safe return of freedom of movement for goods, services and workers.** The sooner we re-establish this freedom of movement, the sooner our economy will start working again.

It is clear that if we want to re-establish the freedom of movement, the safest possible conditions and ability to test workers must be provided. **The European Commission should establish a common EU standard for testing** **in order to vet all travellers and workers prior to their border crossing**. This testing should include a virus test followed by the option of a voluntary immunology test. Those who test negative for the virus should be given a form of identification to officially reflect this negative test and then should be able to travel freely in Schengen.

**Employees returning safely to work is vital in the rebuilding of our European economy**. All relevant safety equipment including personal protective equipment should be made readily available for all employees and **the EU should support the purchasing of this equipment from smaller European companies**.

**Standards of social distancing should be introduced in the workplace** and should remain in place until told otherwise by the guidance of the World Health Organisation (WHO). These provisions are vital to ensure that the disease does not spread through the workplace and that companies can get back running effectively and safely. These measures will cause physical safety but also provide psychological reassurance for workers that they are safe and the risk of contracting the disease is limited. **Member states should facilitate discussions between the unions and sectors so that sector specific safety measures can be put in place.**

***Modernisation and Reform***

The next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) is key to rebuilding our economy. It must be an extremely useful tool for cohesion in rebuilding our economies and societies across Europe. **Large scale investment in the Single Market creates opportunities and offers prosperity for all.** In the crisis we relied too heavily on supply chains from outside the EU which failed us, instead we relied on the hard work of businesses across Europe to bail us out. We must repay them after their hard work by investing and supporting them in these hard times. This would also create the best possible conditions to jumpstart our economies. **Europe must support Europe.**

The outbreak of COVID-19 has provided us with the chance to assess our means of production and how we work across Europe. More specifically, it has enabled companies to fully understand their supply chains and structures. **This virus provides us with a real opportunity to reform and sustainably modernise our European society, including how our companies work**. The EU must seize the opportunity to become global leaders and pioneers of the idea of responsible capitalism. **Our European exit strategy and recovery plan must incorporate the major objectives of the Green Deal: now is the time to promote sustainable change.** This gives us the chance to keep sustainability on our minds, something that has been prominent in the long term thinking and values of family businesses, whilst being innovative and creative.

**Our innovation is key to driving the regrowth of our economies** and the European Commission should make as much budget available as possible to ensure that we can maintain and promote our innovative capacity. Innovation drives entrepreneurship and provides people with the freedom to use their creativity to improve our society, giving us a greener, more sustainable future. Europe can become the home of sustainable innovation and with their long-term strategies and values, family businesses can drive this sustainable reform.

If we do not do this, we risk focusing too much on our immediate issues creating problems in the mid to long term. We cannot afford to go back to our old ways that have harmed our planet and society for too long. Processes affecting businesses and limiting innovation, including transfer of business, administrative burdens or the fiscal treatment of equity, need to be modernised.

By working together and remaining united, Europe can rebuild itself and become a stronger, more powerful force in the world. This pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to change and we must grasp it. The importance of the family business community is obvious. Together, with a collaborative approach, we will do our part to help rebuild the economy.

European Family Businesses (EFB) is a federation of 15 national family business organisations. European Family Businesses strives to make political decision makers aware of the contribution of family businesses to society and to promote policies that are conducive to long term responsible entrepreneurship. Our members represent a turnover in excess of one trillion Euro, and over 9% of European GDP.