

15 April 2024

# Relaunching European Competitiveness

A Joint European Industry Manifesto



European industry is making a united call to prevent the risk of de-industrialisation on our continent by relaunching Europe's competitiveness.

The EU enters a new policy cycle at a challenging time, with technology and geopolitics acting as global disruptors, adding pressure to an already difficult economic situation. Now is the time to start building a strategic plan that unlocks the Single Market's full potential and establishes a regulatory environment for the EU industry to remain globally competitive.

Recognising the significance of multi-stakeholder dialogue, we place at the forefront the need for stronger cooperation between industry and public authorities. Policymakers must tap into the wealth of industrial expertise, fostering an environment where knowledge and best practices are shared. Collaboration is the key to propelling Europe towards a future that is not only more competitive and sustainable but also inclusive for all its citizens.

## **1. Repositioning Europe as a global leader in trade**

- Europe alone cannot handle the global crisis we face. We need a global approach, focusing not only on Europe's contribution but also on how best to replicate our solutions elsewhere in the world. Global problems require global solutions, which in turn will help European businesses succeed in world markets.
- The EU must remain open to the world, staying attractive to investment and safeguarding our competitive edge in global exports. Effective trade defence instruments are essential, but the EU should not lose sight of the need to keep Europe open for business by preserving its investment attractiveness and its global export performance and ensuring access to strategic materials and technologies to support the green and digital transition.
- The success of Europe's trade policy is directly connected to a smart regulatory environment that consolidates our Single Market, allowing for deeper economic integration among EU Member States and creating a platform for EU companies to remain competitive beyond EU borders.

## **2. A horizontal approach to EU Single Market and Competitiveness**

- We must preserve the integrity of the Single Market and support its completion and enforcement. This is essential to relaunch Europe's competitiveness and to the success of the green and digital transition. Only by cutting red tape, dismantling trade barriers and fostering an enterprise-friendly culture can we unleash Europe's full economic potential.
- Stronger monitoring, implementation and enforcement of Single Market principles is the key to abolishing the market barriers that come from divergent national measures. Rules must be properly enforced, and their infringement must be sanctioned.
- Upholding Single Market principles across all policies and legislation requires political ownership by all European Commission services, all European Parliament Committees and all parts of the EU Council and national Ministries, ensuring that all relevant services are adequately consulted along the legislative process.

## **3. A joined-up strategy to boost value chain resilience, protecting jobs and consumers**

- Our commitment to sustainability, competitiveness and innovation is unwavering. These policies are indispensable to the green and digital transition. To dispel the notion of a zero-sum game, where economic growth, digitalisation and environmental protection come at the expense of the other, we need a joined-up strategy that promotes circularity and technological transformation while nurturing economic growth and fostering job creation.
- Legislation driving the transition must be underpinned by comprehensive, data-based impact assessments, particularly where multiple policies intersect and impact not just single industries or categories of product, but entire industrial value chains. Evidence-based policymaking and continuous engagement with industry and civil society would create a stable environment for industry and help mitigate unintended consequences for business, society and consumers.
- An EU green and digital industrial policy must also be socially inclusive. To deliver long-term competitiveness and resilience, EU legislators must be mindful of how regulation impacts ordinary people. Europe needs a people-centred and inclusive transition that leaves no one behind.

#### **4. Bridging the innovation gap**

- The innovation gap between the EU and global competitors must be addressed in order to keep our competitive edge and meet our digital and green objectives.
- The Horizon Europe programme, with its focus on open science and innovation, is a key tool to boost competitiveness and foster integration between business, research, higher education and entrepreneurship. The private sector is keen to collaborate on projects that produce a strong and sustainable regulatory framework and innovative solutions for the benefit of all.
- Cooperation between industry and public authorities needs to be much tighter. Policy makers should make greater use of industrial expertise. We urge the EU to press for closer collaboration and provide platforms for expertise to be shared.

#### **5. Nurturing talents and skills**

- The skills shortage risks becoming our Achilles' heel. Nearly every economic sector in Europe suffers from a shortage of skilled workforce, caused by many factors from an ageing population to the decline of vocational schools or insufficient reskilling and upskilling training programmes. This is jeopardizing Europe's ability to go green and go digital, while also widening the competitiveness and innovation gap between the EU and its global competitors.
- In response to the swiftly changing landscape, alongside an ambitious policy to develop skills and nurture talent, the EU must engage in a strategic partnership with the private sector. Together we must craft and implement policies that bolster vocational training and strengthen education through all school grades, while enhancing life-long learning to keep our working population constantly reskilled and upskilled.

# Signatories





ECMA



European DIY Retail Association



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