

TRIPARTITE SOCIAL SUMMIT – 16 MARCH 2016

BUSINESSEUROPE AND ETUC CALL ON EU INSTITUTIONS TO BRING COMPETITIVE AND SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY BACK TO THE CORE OF THE EU POLICY AGENDA

We strongly acknowledge that robust industrial production and manufacturing industry are indispensable basis to weather the multiple challenges we are currently facing. As the backbone of the European economy, industry significantly contributes to economic growth, employment and innovation. Due to its beneficial impacts on other sectors and its strong spill-over effects on important value-chains, EU industry is crucial to overall economic performance and competitiveness. In the EU, industry accounts for 52 million direct and indirect jobs, approx. 80% of private research and development and more than half of exports. A vibrant and thriving industry in Europe will benefit the economy in general. This will in turn be essential to create new job opportunities and reduce unemployment.

Back in 2012, the European Commission set the goal of raising the share of industry in GDP from 16% to as much as 20% in 2020. However, over the years, the situation has been deteriorating. The manufacturing sector was particularly affected by the crisis, with employment declining by 16% and production by over 9% between 2008 and 2014. Europe has not yet found an exit to a worrying process of de-industrialization that puts economic recovery and jobs at risk.

While we acknowledge the new Commission's effort to look at the issue and draw a framework of possible solutions, we believe this is far from enough to return industrial investments to pre-crisis levels. A competitive and sustainable industry must again be at the core of the EU policy agenda.

European industry needs the right framework conditions and a stable environment to be innovative and competitive, and ultimately to be in a strong position to tackle societal challenges. New impetus is needed to foster investment, to ensure well-functioning labour markets as well as a skilled workforce, to promote worldwide markets access while using effective trade defence instruments, to increase support for digitalisation, to match energy and climate policies with competitiveness and to embrace the innovation principle.

Therefore, we call on the European institutions' leadership to demonstrate a stronger commitment to develop and strengthen our industrial basis. Stepping up the efforts is essential to bring Europe's industry back on to a path of sustainable growth and to boost employment.

European institutions must act now, through an updated and concrete action plan on industrial policy.

We stand ready to contribute.

Sincerely yours,



Luca Visentini
General Secretary
ETUC



Markus J. Beyrer
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BUSINESSEUROPE