

DUBLIN DECLARATION OF BUSINESSEUROPE'S COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS

ACCELERATING THE DELIVERY OF ACTIONS TO IMPROVE EUROPEAN COMPETITIVENESS

Delivering impactful policies to put the European economy back on track is more urgent than ever. BusinessEurope counts on the EU institutions to make significant progress in delivering Europe's ambitions to strengthen competitiveness. Important efforts have been made but much more remains to be done. Europe's resilience continues to be tested by war on its borders, energy challenges and growing geopolitical fragmentation. The resulting economic headwinds are adding to the competitive pressures on European businesses of all sizes across all sectors. A strong European economy is also essential to sustain Europe's continued support to Ukraine. This is the main message from the Presidents of BusinessEurope's Council of Presidents gathered in Dublin at the invitation of Ibec five weeks before the start of the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. During the second half of 2026, BusinessEurope urges EU leaders to:

01 ACCELERATE THE REDUCTION OF REGULATORY BURDEN AND DEEPEN THE SINGLE MARKET

The reduction in regulatory burden is not yet felt by companies. BusinessEurope welcomes the political ambition to deliver further meaningful regulatory burden reduction at pace as part of the 'One Europe, One Market' agenda. Having set out the political ambition, the focus must shift to delivering concrete actions to deepen the Single Market, offer a reliable and simple framework where companies can grow and achieve the objective of at least minus 25% burden reduction.

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

- Address the remaining barriers to cross-border business operations in the Single Market through an effective and ambitious set of measures, starting with the "terrible ten" barriers ¹, and avoid the creation of new ones;

¹ 1. complex EU rules, 2. Single Market ownership by Member States, 3. business establishment and operations, 4. recognition of professional qualifications, 5. standard-setting, 6. rules on packaging, labelling and waste, 7. product rules and compliance, 8. national service regulation, 9. posting of workers and 10. territorial supply constraints.

- Deliver further meaningful regulatory simplification by completing the current Omnibus packages and presenting additional regulatory burden reduction measures, taking into account the almost 140 concrete proposals outlined in BusinessEurope's Omnibook;
- Implement an immediate moratorium on new regulatory burden including secondary legislation, withdraw pending burdensome proposals such as the Green Claims Directive and Late Payment Regulation, and conduct an in-depth review of all EU legislation;
- Swiftly adopt the EU proposal for an EU Inc., mainly focused on an inclusive, digital by design and easy to set up company law form, without adding further workers participation and other labour matters beyond what is foreseen in the Commission proposal;
- Carefully calibrate the introduction of a "European preference" in public procurement and public support schemes in the context of the Industrial Accelerator Act, ensuring it is targeted to strategic sectors identified based on a robust analysis, it considers key partners, especially those that are closely integrated with the EU and is implemented in an unbureaucratic way, as well as avoid creating two parallel systems for screening foreign direct investment in the EU.²

02 BRING DOWN ENERGY COSTS AND CREATE A BUSINESS CASE FOR DECARBONISATION

Across the EU, businesses are grappling with the sudden further rises in energy prices linked to the situation in the Middle East. Energy is significantly more costly in Europe relative to our global competitors and price volatility is a new pressure point for businesses and consumers.

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

- Use the upcoming legislative proposal on energy taxation and network charges to reduce industrial electricity costs, including taxes, levies and network tariffs, within a practical and overarching competitiveness-oriented framework for businesses;
- Advance further initiatives to integrate EU energy markets to narrow the energy cost competitiveness gap, through balancing interconnectors deployment with responsibilities for individual Member States to build electricity systems that contribute to wider system benefits;
- Ensure the Industrial Accelerator Act (IAA) supports industrial decarbonisation through speedier permitting and demand stimulation for low-carbon technologies and products, while providing a workable implementation framework and adequate support for industrial investment, innovation and production in Europe;
- Adapt the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) to better account for competitiveness while preserving environmental ambition and maintaining the system as a key market-based tool to reach climate neutrality in 2050, by adjusting the Linear Reduction Factor (LRF) to avoid the "ETS endgame" after 2040, reconsidering the planned phase out of free allowances for all sectors and introducing more changes to the Market Stability Reserve to safeguard sufficient liquidity in the market and avoid price spikes.

² BusinessEurope is preparing a fully-fledged position paper on the Industrial Accelerator Act.

03 DIVERSIFY AND SECURE MARKET ACCESS TO MITIGATE GEOPOLITICAL RISK

The EU has taken decisive steps to provisionally implement the Mercosur agreement and conclude significant trade agreements with India and Australia. These agreements - and those concluded with Indonesia and Mexico - provide welcome support for trade diversification through reduced tariffs, greater market access, and access to critical raw materials. They must become a reality as soon as possible. The ambition to secure more agreements must continue.

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

- Stabilise the relationship with the US, ensuring that both sides implement the EU-US Joint Framework Agreement and work to address existing trade and geopolitical irritants in a way that is mutually beneficial;
- Prioritise negotiations with the UK with an emphasis on securing a sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement and closer cooperation on energy and carbon pricing, as well as a Youth Experience Scheme;
- Effectively address market distortions generated by state induced overcapacity and implement risk mitigation measures while engaging with China in areas of key interest for economic operators, such as security of supply of critical raw materials and access to public procurement markets;
- Accelerate the implementation of the EU Critical Raw Materials Act and the RESourceEU action plan to secure raw material supply through financing, de-risking and capacity support in Europe and with partners.

04 BOOST INVESTMENTS AND INNOVATION TO REGAIN TECHNOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP

The ability of European firms to scale up and invest in massive innovation projects is hindered by market-size challenges. Swiftly completing the Savings and Investment Union is key to foster innovation. The merger into a single rulebook and provision of a central digital portal for 14 existing programs under the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) offers an opportunity to create a more efficient funding framework under the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) if the ECF prioritises projects selected in accordance with criteria of excellence and relevance for European competitiveness, with a possibility for exceptions in limited cases to ensure a minimum degree of geographical balance.

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

- Promote implementation of agreed measures that improve access to capital markets in the EU such as the Listing Package, investments in long-term risk capital by institutional investors;
- Address barriers to equity investment through prudential rules and targeted tax allowances for corporate equity, in particular for SMEs;

- Adopt new merger guidelines with a more flexible and forward-looking approach that fosters innovation, sustainability and long-term investment;
- Conclude negotiations on the MFF during the Irish Presidency, preserving the proposed budget increases for competitiveness enhancing expenditures, securing the reinforced funding for the ECF, the Connecting Europe Facility and Global Europe in line with the European Commission's proposals, higher funding for Horizon Europe, as well as adequate funding for cohesion policy, while better targeting these cohesion funds towards competitiveness, and avoiding increases in business taxation as the EU already has a high average tax burden compared to global competitors.

05 FACILITATE EMPLOYMENT CREATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Labour market challenges are holding companies back. Employment policy must better support the demographic, digital and green transitions. Determined action is needed to address skills shortages and simplify EU social legislation. This can be done without reducing workers protection if the EU moves towards a trust-based approach, with less detailed regulation, more room for social dialogue in social directives, rigorous application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and full respect for individual industrial relations models of Member States. Enabling mobility in Europe through the Fair Labour Mobility Package, reducing administrative burdens and fostering stronger use of digitalisation is also key. New legislative initiatives, including the Quality Jobs Act, should bring the necessary regulatory simplification to help enhance European competitiveness.

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

- Deliver regulatory simplification in social policy including a “Stop the Clock” on the transposition of the Pay Transparency Directive to allow adequate time to make necessary amendments and ensure a proportionate transposition and effective implementation;
- Swiftly agree on a simple, unified and voluntary e-declaration that reduces administrative burden whilst preventing fraud when temporarily posting workers to another member state and implement the exemption from prior notification for business trips and short-term postings foreseen in the latest revision of Regulation 883/2004;
- Promote flexible life-long learning frameworks, micro-credentials and work-based learning, making EU funding instruments more accessible for companies and practical for SMEs;
- Ensure rapid initiation of pilot projects inspiring women to pursue STEM careers in the context of the EU STEM Education strategic plan and activation of the EU Talent Pool to facilitate international recruitments in sectors experiencing labour shortages.

06 ENSURE EUROPE'S SECURITY, DEFENCE, AND RESILIENCE

The development of a European security, defence and resilience strategy is key for competitiveness and industrial growth in the EU. This common security, defence and preparedness strategy needs to respect the repartition of competences in the Treaties and acknowledge the crucial role of cooperation with like-minded partners.

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

- Ensure the strategy is a driver of industrial growth and innovation across Europe and creates the conditions for increased production capacity in the European defence industries as well as the development of dual-use European security supply chains;
- Encourage effective public-private cooperation to safeguard the functioning of critical infrastructure, industries and services in times of crisis.