

Committee guide: ITRE committee committed to long-term prosperity of EU citizens

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Opinion

The long-term prosperity of EU citizens is at the heart of the ITRE committee's agenda, explains Jerzy Buzek.



Jerzy Buzek | *Photo credit: European Parliament audiovisual*

Real economic growth - not stabilisation - but economic growth beyond one or two per cent of GDP, is key to the European Union's relevance. Sixty years ago, we moved our integration to a different level: from joining sovereignty on coal and steel to economic integration.

This was the first step towards our single market. Today, the key to our success, to building a real economy with real prosperity for all Europeans still lies in our ability to complete and advance our single market.

An internal energy market, a digital single market, a first-rate research and innovation policy and a comprehensive reindustrialisation of Europe are the four keys to the EU's real economy. These elements will be the focus of the industry, research and energy committee's work over this term.

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The security of supply mechanisms that we are currently putting in place will ensure that European citizens will never again face shortages of gas to heat their homes or cook on their stoves.

And with new transparency provisions on international agreements, our citizens and our industry will no longer pay excessive gas bills due to our external suppliers applying unfair rules, discriminating against certain customers or evading EU legislation.

Over the coming months, our efforts will focus on ensuring that the European electricity market helps prevent potential blackouts and that our citizens and enterprises can reduce their energy bills thanks in part to modernised generation and transmission, increased efficiency and wider use of smart meters.

Those that both consume and also produce renewable energy in their gardens and on the roofs of their homes will profit by supplying it to others through a modern grid. The 'clean energy for all Europeans' package, on which we have already begun work, will help us put consumers and prosumers truly at the heart of our energy policy .

Setting the right framework for the EU to fully take advantage of the digital revolution that is already transforming our economy and society, ushering in the 'industry 4.0' revolution has been the other major challenge for the ITRE committee.

We have curbed roaming charges - for calls, texts and data transfer - to a level that will soon allow all Europeans to experience the full freedom of using mobile digital technologies across the EU. We have also taken a major step towards ensuring that we will have an integrated 5G network across all EU member states.

We have helped set up infrastructure for the Internet of Things, fast computing and big data across virtually all of Europe's regions, so that no matter where they live or work, our small entrepreneurs, students and scientists, our start-ups, doctors and patients and our autonomous car drivers can reap the benefits of the digital revolution.

Putting in place the most advanced infrastructure for our digital single market has direct implications on Europe's ability to innovate and lead globally in research. This is the context of ITRE's current work on the implementation of Horizon 2020.

This world's largest R&D programme is our principal tool for supporting scientific excellence,

strengthening basic research, reinforcing the whole innovation cycle, stimulating healthy academic competition and attracting the brightest minds from all over the world to work in Europe.

The lessons we are currently learning in the ITRE committee on the programme's implementation, and also from the prospective consequences of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, will not only guide the EU's efforts in fine-tuning Horizon 2020, but will also help us design an even more ambitious – in terms of both deliverables and financial envelope – post-2020 research programme.

All of these efforts, together with ITRE's strong involvement in designing and implementing the European Fund for Strategic Investment, are the backbone of our re-industrialisation policy.

Recent initiatives, including modernising the energy industry and energy-intensive sectors, digitising European industry towards 'industry 4.0', bringing in a coherent space policy, directing our research and innovation programmes toward and jointly with European industry, streamlining SMEs-oriented tools across our policies will bring all these elements into a coherent framework for the EU's re-industrialisation.

With these efforts we always keep in mind that no single country is able to succeed alone. The actions of and between individual member states must be reinforced by effective EU-level solutions that deliver concrete results.

They need not always require new legislation, but they do require good legislation, a high level of ambition from the European Commission and the European Parliament and the fundamental agreement of our member states that community mechanisms serve our common good and will, in the long term, benefit all.

With deeper and increasingly diverse challenges facing Europe, with questions being put as to the direction and sense of European integration, the context of the work in the ITRE committee is not free of those broader reflections. This is no time for business as usual, but neither is it time for excuses about less ambition in concrete policy proposals.

In the ITRE committee and the Parliament as a whole, we might find it more challenging to negotiate far-sighted, ambitious, community-oriented policies, yet our mandate as representatives of 500 million Europeans is clear. Europeans will make their choices on the future of Europe.

Whatever the necessary elements, having them in place to help the real economy grow and compete globally, generating long-term prosperity of our citizens, is and will remain essential for the EU and for Europeans.

About the author

Jerzy Buzek (EPP, PL) is Chair of Parliament's industry, research and energy committee

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