

A strong European industry for the future

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Opinion

A modern industrial policy creates the best conditions to allow industry to adapt, innovate and be the key driver of the change, writes Jyrki Katainen.



Jyrki Katainen | **Photo credit: European Parliament Audiovisual**

In a rapidly changing world, our industries need to continuously adapt to meet new trends and global demands.

The idea behind the EU Industry Days, hosted by the European Commission, is simple. We bring people together to share ideas on how our industries should look in future to maintain and reinforce their competitive advantage.

This year's event – the third edition so far – brings together the key players to address the challenges ahead and discuss how to create growth and jobs for the future.

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As policy-makers, the Commission's role is to facilitate discussion and strengthen industries' ability to adapt, innovate, set global trends and stay or become world leaders.

We believe that the role of a successful industrial policy is to create the best framework conditions to enhance industry's ability to adapt and innovate.

A strong European industry has been at the heart of the current Commission's political priorities since the beginning of this mandate. That's why we already put into place a renewed industrial strategy in 2017 that aims to empower the European industry to reap the opportunities of industrial transformation.

Our policies empower industry to create growth and jobs and boost Europe's competitiveness, foster investment and innovation in clean and digital technologies and defend Europe's regions and workers most affected by industrial change.

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We need to continue building the necessary resilience to come out strong from global competition in the longer term. This includes continuous investment in skills and education.

Our EU industrial policy strategy relies heavily on the Commission's key policy priorities, which continues to deliver strong results: the investment plan, the capital markets union, the energy union, digital single market and single market strategies and open, rules-based trade.

We believe that an open, outward-looking EU will be best placed to become the destination of choice for global talent, investment and business.

The EU is already home to a strong manufacturing and industry base. We have experienced continued productivity growth since 2014. Business creation and R&D investment are on the rise.

However, our industries face important global challenges. We need to find ways to better respond to rapid technological change, intense global competition and make sure that the way we produce things in Europe becomes cleaner and more sustainable.

To overcome these challenges, industry must embrace innovation, digitisation and a transition to a more circular economy.

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We also need to seize the potential in areas like the circular economy, bio-economy and new renewable energy systems.

Integrating a low-carbon economy is the only model that can ensure the long-term the success of our European economy and our industrial base. It is also one of the sectors with the strongest job growth potential.

The good news is that Europe is already a world leader in these areas. In the Commission, we are committed to making sure Europe accelerates the transition towards a circular economy that protects the environment and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

We are taking concrete action, not just professing our good intentions. For example, the Commission has recently set up the Circular Plastics Alliance, which has its first meeting at this year’s Industry Days.

The alliance brings together the potential producers and users of recycled plastics and aims to use at least 10 million tons of recycled plastics in new products by 2025.

In recognition of all our efforts in this area, the Commission was recently awarded the 2019 Circular Economy prize by the World Economic Forum and the Forum of Young Global Leaders.

This again brings me to the European Industry Days. A modern industrial policy is not about top-down decisions from Brussels.

It is about dialogue and collaboration to identify together the priorities, the needs and the opportunities. Industry has to be a key driver of the change but with full involvement of the citizens and civil society.

The Industry Days offer an opportunity for an animated discussion on all these issues with all the key players across the EU.

This year, more than twice as many people are expected, including industry representatives, trade organisations, national and regional public authorities and civil society members.

To extend the discussion, there are further events around Europe as part of the EU Industry Week. This will see 75 local events taking place in 18 countries.

To allow citizens a closer look at how industry works and why it can be an attractive place to work, 15 companies in eight countries will also be opening their doors to show their production facilities to the public.

The industry Days will also host the first-ever Young Leaders of Industry Forum. This will allow leading young entrepreneurs to debate the future of industry and provide their innovative ideas for tackling the major industry challenges.

In addition, we will also host matchmaking sessions, bringing entrepreneurs together with potential

investors from across Europe, offering new businesses feedback to strengthen their business models and facilitate potential access to finance.

Events like the Industry Days are important, allowing us all to sit around the same table. We can take the time to dream big, be inspired and inspire others.

Exchanging our experiences and innovative ideas will help us to identify new solutions and create the best framework conditions for a strong and competitive European industry.

About the author

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