

European Chamber network delivers recommendations for EU 2019-2024 term under the von der Leyen Commission

Chambers of Commerce & Industry aim to trigger opportunities for sustainable growth and to safeguard Europe's industrial competitiveness. The Chamber network set out a series of recommendations to be delivered to the von der Leyen Commission. The recommendations concern key decisive areas for business and were prepared based on the political guidelines presented by the President Ursula von der Leyen for 2019-24:

1. European Green Deal

Chambers are convinced that the Green New Deal can be a business opportunity if done right. Cost-efficiency, technology neutrality and planning security must be the guiding principles for the incoming Commission to ensure that sustainability becomes a viable business case. If the EU manages to do so, we will succeed in our international efforts to get other regions on board for the transition. Increasing targets alone will not do, if not accompanied by measures to protect European industries against carbon leakage and increased efforts to create a level playing-field by a global carbon price.

Only an effective implementation of the existing energy legislation will make sure that companies, especially small & medium sized enterprises (SMEs), can benefit from a more active participation in the power market. EUROCHAMBRES [Policy Recommendations for the Circular Economy](#) supporter the argument that EU needs to guarantee a fully functioning internal market for secondary raw materials in order to achieve a circular economy. Chambers are confident that these elements will contribute to making the Green New Deal a success for European SMEs.

2. An economy that works for people

Micro, small & medium sized enterprises are still hindered by top-down policy decisions that do not take into account their business model and practices. This precludes them from pursuing opportunities across the single market or in third markets and obliges them to devote resources away from their core business and added value role of producing goods or delivering services. A new European SME Strategy that is greater than the sum of its parts, ensuring that the 'think small first' principle is enshrined and that policy is systematically developed with the needs of the millions of jobs and growth creating micro, small and medium businesses at the core.

The current patchwork of national regulatory regimes continues to undermine the Single Market. Most worrying is the lack of progress in the services area. Reflecting the increasing digitalisation of the economy is key and the priority must be attached to ensuring that the internal market is fit for the digital era and considers the growing number of small businesses that trade and collaborate across borders. The use of digital processes throughout a companies' lifecycle should be at the centre of the Commission's efforts. In the future, full online transnationality should be ensured. In the area of e-commerce, with a view to the future Digital Services Act, it is crucial that the future law maintains key principles, such as the country of origin principle, which have proven their worth.

A shortage of skilled staff ranks higher than ever before among the challenges in the new [EUROCHAMBRES Economic Survey 2020](#), the 27th such annual analysis of business expectations for the year ahead. This is a brake on Europe's socio-economic progress. A coordinated and interoperative pan-European approach to addressing skills mismatches through better forecasting, enhanced mobility, joined up thinking on vocational training and a combined effort by all stakeholders – public and private - to instil a lifelong learning culture across the member states.

3. A Europe fit for the digital age

Europe must be open for innovation and embrace the business opportunities that digitalization offers. Legislating digitalization may not result in protectionism but must enable European companies. We need to make European Industry ready for the future. 5G throughout Europe is a precondition for Industry 4.0 and a digitalized, future-oriented economy. We must anticipate these changes, not only in the short term, but also in the long term, especially in education, apprenticeships and lifelong learning. More than 800,000 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) vacancies could be unfilled in 2020. This is not an issue of the ICT industry, that struggle on finding qualified people. Millions of young unemployed people cannot find a job and Europe must overcome this qualification mismatch. SMEs need support in their digital transformation efforts. Chambers of commerce are key business support organisation that offers services and support for businesses them harvest digitization Our Chamber system provides state of the art support for companies in their own digital transformation.

4. A stronger Europe in the world

The commitment to strengthen Europe's role as a global leader and standard setter through a strong, open and fair-trade agenda is welcomed. In times of rising trade restiveness across the globe this is more important than ever. As stated on [EUROCHAMBRES' Trade priorities](#), Europe needs a way for globalization in an increasing volatile international environment, and this requires coordination of actions between the High Representative of the Union, vice-president Josep Borell, the Trade Commissioner, Phil Hogan and the International Partnership Commissioner, Jutta Urpilainen. The continued success of EU trade policy depends on its effective implementation at home, which involves actions and closer coordination by national governments and the business community. As internationalization always starts at home, it is crucial that adequate links are always maintained between European chambers abroad and the EU business community in the EU so as to maintain a balance between the needs of EU companies already established in third countries, and those wanting to export from Europe (especially EU SMEs). This is particularly relevant in terms of advocacy and positioning. A more constant dialogue among the EU private sector both abroad and at home with relevant EU policy makers is thus to be encouraged.

Regarding the commitment to upholding and reforming the World Trade Organization (WTO). The global economy requires a modern and stable multilateral rules-based trading system, and the EU must continue to champion a comprehensive WTO reform that takes along our SMEs. Removing market access barriers must remain a cornerstone of the activities in the field of EU trade policy and Economic Diplomacy. Deliverables must be more clearly seen in terms of a greater coordination of EU activities at headquarter level in Brussels, particularly linking the fields of trade, development, climate/environment and foreign policy.

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