

If done right, Green Deal can be integral element of recovery

In its [Input for the EU Recovery Roadmap / Action Plan](#), EUROCHAMBRES underlined that the European Green Deal can become an important element of the economic recovery strategy. However, it will only be effective in helping businesses innovate and invest in climate and environmental protection if it is resolutely committed to economic development and oriented towards growth and employment.

EUROCHAMBRES invited its Deputy President, Chair of the Sustainable Europe Committee and President of the Czech Chamber of Commerce, Vladimír Dlouhý to present his and the organisation's view on the economic recovery after COVID-19. According to President Dlouhý, if we manage to gear the Green Deal towards the best possible support for businesses, it can be an integral part of it. At the same time, different starting points in the member states have to be taken into consideration. Chambers can play a crucial role by assisting companies, especially SMEs, and authorities.

1. In your opinion, what should be the priorities to overcome the COVID-19 crisis?

The COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet and a third of global population is still on lockdown. When the Czech government took restrictive measures, our priority was to save jobs and help companies not to fire their employees. The second priority was to ensure a business cash-flow and ensuring the liquidity of companies will be also important in the next steps in order to prevent massive lay-offs. As a consequence of the pandemic, we will end up with a necessity to adjust the economic model in which Europe will have to be more self-sufficient, whereas its role on the international stage should not be weakened. On the contrary, we might face more protectionism and Europe will have to make sure that the rules of global trade are respected. To overcome the crisis, we will also need new impulses. These are digitalisation that already plays an important role during the lockdown, and green growth. Both are key strategic areas that should be supported by public funding and private investment.

2. What type of measures do you think will yield the best results?

In the long run, only a combination of financial, legislative, and advisory measures will help businesses to overcome this crisis. Investment in key areas, such as digital infrastructure must be accompanied by adequate legislation to make effective use of it, e.g. when it comes to cross-border services, but businesses, above all SMEs also have to be supported to be able to benefit from adequate advisory services. The Chambers of Commerce play an essential role in this regard because they are present in all regions and close to the business community's needs.

3. Regarding the Green Deal, which areas should we focus on?

We must look beyond the emergency responses and set up roadmaps for a long-term recovery. Given this crisis, some national governments will be more vigilant as to, e.g., the speed of decarbonisation. This should be understood, and the Green Deal must be geared towards providing companies with the best possible support, including reassessing cost-increasing measures. We need a secure access to critical raw materials for our industries, ensuring

affordable energy which includes the implementation of already existing legislation and an ambitious budget for research and innovation. Furthermore, the planned Just Transition Fund should be used to lever investment in job creation and finally, the National Energy and Climate Plans can be used to tailor adjustments to national and regional needs.

4. Could you go a bit more into detail on access to raw materials?

Certain raw materials are crucial for the clean transition of our energy-intensive industries but also of the energy producers themselves. The current situation mustn't be a pretext to more protectionist policies, putting additional constraints on international supply chains. In addition, we have to enable a more circular economy in order to make sure that we keep the value of these materials in European value chains. The Commission recently presented their second Action Plan where some of EUROCHAMBRES' recommendations have been taken up.

5. What should be the role of chambers of Commerce in this regard?

At EU level, EUROCHAMBRES has already sent its wish list for the recovery to the EU institutions. In February EUROCHAMBRES also published a report about the related [activities of Chambers](#) across Europe. These include activities around circular skills, industrial cooperation, waste reduction, reuse and recycling and certification. The initiatives aim to assist businesses at local level, for instance by enabling resource sharing platforms. Plus, many Chambers actively support companies in foreign trade and thereby help to secure global supply chains. The Chambers are reliable partners for authorities and businesses during a crisis.

6. Can environmental policies contribute to the prevention of future crises?

By providing long term signals, designing measures jointly with the industry, supporting them in the implementation and properly incentivising them to invest in research and innovation, policy makers can ensure their future competitiveness. The resulting innovation, including new business models, and in the long run increased ecosystem services, will greatly enhance the economy's resilience to future shocks, including environmental. This must be the goal of the Green Deal.

7. Where will Europe be in 5 years from now?

As already mentioned, in a first step we have to secure business survival and jobs. In the second step, we have to make sure that sufficient investment is directed towards future oriented activities, such as digital infrastructure and clean technologies but also key industrial value chains that we wish to retain and strengthen in Europe. By doing so, we can provide opportunities for SMEs and thereby ensure a socially responsible recovery on the one hand and equip our industries with the tools to remain competitive in the future on the other hand. If we manage all this, Europe is on a good way to come out stronger from this crisis.

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