

## Europe Day 2022: take inspiration from the past to solve today's challenges

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9 May, Europe Day, should be a moment to celebrate peace and unity as it marks the anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, established to forge stronger cooperation as a means of avoiding war. It is therefore poignant that Europe Day 2022 is overshadowed by the alarming war in Ukraine, causing terrible human suffering and destabilizing the post-pandemic economic recovery across the continent.

Chambers of commerce and industry have been important stakeholders in the economic trajectory of Europe since World War II. Eurochambres has, in parallel, contributed actively to the European integration process that has developed from sectoral cooperation between six countries to an intricate political and economic union built on the world's largest single market and encompassing 27 member states. These are achievements that Europeans can be proud of and that chambers value dearly.

We can take inspiration from Europe's origins as we seek solutions to today's challenges. European integration began with pooling coal and steel production; in 2022, as we struggle to absorb sharp energy price increases while striving for climate neutrality, let us similarly come together to elaborate a coordinated European energy strategy. From a business perspective, the strategic and collective stockpiling of energy reserves makes sense and would also enable the EU to play a proactive role in the global transition to renewable energies.

In fact, we don't need to look as far back as the 1950s for precedent; the EU proved its capacity for collective procurement much more recently, in the complex and hugely pressurised context of covid-19 vaccines and medical equipment. Let us build on this as we seek solutions to the acute energy challenge.

Europe Day is a moment to consider our strengths and our weaknesses, our opportunities and risks. This cannot be an introspective reflection. Over the decades, the EU has become one of the most outward-looking economies and a strong proponent of a rules-based multilateral trade system. These principles must continue to guide us as we chart a recovery from the damaging compound impact of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, as we tackle inherently global issues such as climate change, and as we seek to be ready for potential new crises.

On 9 May 2022, Europe is more important than ever. As we reach the middle of the 2019-2024 EU policy cycle, it is imperative that the European Commission and co-legislators remain highly aware of the challenging business conditions across Europe during the second half of the current EU legislative term. This has been Eurochambres' recent message to Presidents von der Leyen, Metsola and Michel, and the chamber network will continue to work with policy-makers at EU and national level to advocate measures that will revive the economy and enhance the competitiveness of European businesses.

The EU needs a healthy and thriving business community, just as businesses need a healthy and thriving EU.