

Mr António Costa
President of the European Council
European Council
Rue de la Loi 175
B-1048 Brussels
Belgium

Sent by email

10 March 2026

Subject: Eurochambres message to European Council meeting on 19-20 March

Dear President Costa,

At the EU leaders' 12 February Competitiveness Retreat, Heads of Government and representatives of the European institutions committed to delivering tangible results in 2026.

The forthcoming European Council meeting presents a crucial opportunity for the EU to translate those commitments into meaningful actions and concrete timelines. The urgency cannot be overstated: EU competitiveness is no longer merely at stake; it is actively diminishing, day by day, through our collective failure to fully integrate the single market.

European businesses are not waiting for the next report or the next summit; they are operating under conditions of real and growing emergency that demand decisive action, not further deliberation.

Let me take the simplification agenda to illustrate the disparity between EU procedures and the on-the-ground reality experienced by entrepreneurs across Europe. The 2024-2029 Commission rightly committed to correcting the mistakes of the previous term through its omnibus packages. Nearly one year on, however, 98% of the 700+ entrepreneurs who filled the Brussels hemicycle in November for the European Parliament of Enterprises™ reported no noticeable reduction in administrative burdens over the previous 12 months.

Eurochambres calls on the European Council to:

Single market, simplification, and investment

- **Systematically dismantle the “Terrible Ten” barriers to cross-border trade, investment, provision of services, the circulation of waste and secondary raw materials, and labour mobility.** This requires eliminating unjustified authorisation schemes, fully enforcing mutual recognition in services and expanding professional qualifications. The priority should be consistent, predictable, and transparent implementation and enforcement of existing EU rules.

- **Commit to the anticipated “One Europe, One Market” Roadmap, setting out concrete timelines and measurable milestones, ensuring that member states commit to its effective implementation.** A credible commitment to simplification, legal certainty, and regulatory convergence will strengthen competitiveness, unlock scale, support labour mobility, and help companies achieve sustainable long-term growth.
- **Finalise the ongoing Omnibus discussions and review, reduce, and restrain the burden stemming from national legislation.** Ambitions at the EU level must be matched by equally robust commitments from member states to reduce nationally imposed burdens, particularly for SMEs. Eurochambres urges member states to rigorously review national legislation, remove discriminatory provisions and to put a stop to gold-plating practices.
- **Drive pragmatic and coordinated modernisation of public administrations across member states,** facilitating the adoption of digital-by-default processes, interoperable cross-border systems, and streamlined administrative procedures. Reducing friction in public administration is a prerequisite for a functioning single market and a more competitive European economy.
- **Build an innovation-oriented and entrepreneurial ecosystem to mobilise European savings, attract and retain investments.** To move forward with the Savings and Investment Union and capitalise on the potential of capital markets and financial services, better harmonisation in the regulatory framework of insolvency regimes and coordination of supervision are needed across member states. Policies need to effectively channel domestic and cross-border capital into the real economy.

Industrial competitiveness and energy

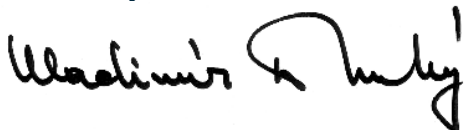
- **Ensure the Industrial Accelerator Act strengthens Europe’s industrial identity and energy sovereignty.** The proposal addresses key enablers of competitiveness, including faster permitting, support for industrial clusters, and the development of strategic markets. At the same time, the introduction of local and low-carbon content criteria in public procurement risks creating legal uncertainty for European businesses and for public administrations operating at the local and regional level. The introduction of burdensome documentation and evidence requirements remains a key concern for the chamber network; criteria must be workable and proportionate, particularly for smaller businesses.
- **Carefully consider the knock-on effects of “Made in EU” for strategic sectors.** The introduction of EU content criteria can contribute to de-risking and strengthening certain industrial sectors. At the same time, such criteria must not jeopardise open trade and economic cooperation with trusted partners, as they represent building blocks of current and future European competitiveness. These measures must therefore remain targeted, based on clear evidence and compatible with international trade commitments.

- **Swiftly advance EU initiatives to accelerate and streamline permitting procedures.** Lengthy and complex processes remain a major barrier to energy and industrial projects. Rapid progress on the Grids Package, the Environmental Omnibus, and the Industrial Accelerator Act is essential to unlock investment and speed up the energy transition. Building on these initiatives, streamlined permitting should apply across sectors and industrial projects, rather than being limited to specific “strategic” initiatives.
- **Immediately postpone the phase-out of free allowances under the EU ETS.** The continued reduction of free allowances risks further weakening the competitiveness of Europe’s industrial base at a time of high energy costs and an uneven global playing field. ETS revenues should be directed towards supporting industrial decarbonisation and the scaling of clean technologies, while respecting technological neutrality.
- **Accelerate energy market integration to lower energy prices across Europe.** Expanding grids and cross-border interconnectors, harmonising national regulations and deploying energy storage are essential to reduce price disparities, improve efficiency, and enhance resilience. Further efforts are needed to expand the uptake of long-term electricity contracts, including Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs), to improve price predictability for industrial users.

I will attend the Tripartite Social Summit on 18 March and would welcome the opportunity to exchange with you briefly on the above points, or indeed to meet you bilaterally on another occasion in the coming weeks.

Eurochambres stands ready to support the European Council in translating these commitments into concrete outcomes. We trust that the March summit will mark a turning point in the EU’s collective response to the competitiveness challenge.

Yours sincerely,



Vladimír Dlouhý
Eurochambres President