

**BUSINESSEUROPE**



## WHO ARE WE ?

BusinessEurope is the leading advocate for growth and competitiveness at the European level, standing up for companies across the continent and campaigning on the issues that most influence their performance.

A recognised social partner, we speak for all-sized enterprises in 35 European countries whose national business federations are our direct members.

### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

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## FOREWORD

After the European elections in May 2019, the start of the new European Commission marks the beginning of a new political cycle for the EU in 2019-2024. Given the numerous external and internal challenges, this is a crucial moment for the European Union. It is more urgent than ever to define an ambitious agenda for the future and come up with the right solutions in areas where the EU can deliver concrete benefits, such as the Single Market, the common currency, the common trade policy, competition policy or innovation.

We will all have to join forces to deliver a European Union that will create prosperity for Europe and its people, while also managing the transition to a sustainable future to protect our planet. A strong economy is the prerequisite to be able to build a fair and sustainable Europe. Faced with an increasingly challenging economic outlook, strengthening Europe's economy is therefore more urgent than ever.

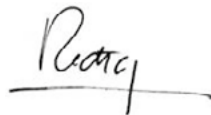
Companies, as main creators of jobs and growth, have a central role to play. Achieving environmental and social goals largely depends on their success. However, European companies will only be able to fully play their role in society and set an example for the rest of the world if the competitiveness and economic sustainability of our system can be proven.

BusinessEurope remains strongly committed to the European project and Europe as an important global player to deliver a better world for all. We therefore feel a responsibility to make sure we move forward united and undertake all necessary efforts to build a stronger and better Europe.

In this document, BusinessEurope and all its members propose an agenda for the European Union in 2019-2024. Prosperity, people and planet as the three pillars for a successful union should be a source of inspiration for future political decisions.

We stand ready to work with the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council, as well as with Member States, for a successful European Union creating opportunities for all.

**Pierre Gattaz**  
President



**Markus J. Beyrer**  
Director General



## AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR ALL

European entrepreneurship has a unique feature. It feels responsible for and cares about prosperity, people and the planet. Only competitive companies are able to generate and sustain job and wealth creation. Without profitable companies, no inclusive growth, no technological solutions to protect the environment, no European products and services to answer various societal needs.

The EU needs to set ambitious strategic priorities, in order to deliver the Union that we described in our *"Ambition for Europe 2030 – A Europe with opportunities for all"*, a European Union that is:

- > **strong and setting the agenda in the world;**
- > **a global leader in innovation, digitalisation and sustainability;**
- > **functioning efficiently;**
- > **economically cohesive and socially inclusive.**

In addition to the 50 actions that BusinessEurope suggested for the first 100 days of the von der Leyen Commission, we have identified in this new document 30 priority areas for action by the EU in 2019-2024 to take care of our prosperity, our people, our planet and create opportunities for all. European business strongly believes in the EU and in the economic opportunities it creates, thanks to the free and open society it promotes.

## EUROPE'S ACHIEVEMENTS CANNOT BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED

We are proud of the achievements of the EU. However, if we want to continue to ensure good living standards, live up to our European values and set an example for the rest of the world, we must maintain the competitiveness and economic sustainability of our project. The EU has to strive for economic sustainability, which is about the capacity of economies to generate economic growth over the long term, as a precondition for investments needed for social development and environmental protection. What we want to spend, we first need to earn. European companies are at the forefront of delivering sustainable solutions that can ensure the balance between prosperity, people and the planet.

The world is well on its way to a new geo-economic order. We are at a turning point for Europe's future and its place in the world. The EU is still a key global player in many areas, but the rest of the world is not waiting for us. Already today, Europe lags behind China and the United States on new technologies.

We cannot take Europe's achievements for granted. The agenda of the EU for the next five years must bring about modern, forward-looking EU policies adapted to the global shifts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## COMPANIES AT THE HEART OF THE AGENDA

Enterprises provide 80% of the jobs and create prosperity. Companies are and want to be part of the solution to build a Europe with opportunities for all. BusinessEurope and its member federations want to make sure that Europe remains one of the best places to live, work and do business in the world. We also want to strengthen the continent's relation with the rest of the world while promoting our European values.

The EU must act as an enabler for European industry to flourish and innovate. A strong industry is fundamental for a robust economy and enables us to deal with economic, social and environmental challenges facing us.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are a key driver of economic growth and job creation. Together with larger companies, they are key enablers of innovation. Having competitive European companies able to lead value chains regrouping companies of all sizes is essential. As all companies start small, the EU must also ensure that the actions it takes help to address the needs of European SMEs which account for two thirds of total EU employment. Building on the achievements of the Small Business Act, the new EU SME strategy should clearly put small businesses in the focus of policy-making.

## EU UNITY AND GOVERNANCE ARE KEY

To further strengthen European sovereignty, the EU must speak with one voice and all EU institutions must row in the same direction. Member States have much more leverage when they join forces in an increasingly challenging world order. Furthermore, having a strong economic base is essential if we are to be influential at global level. No single Member State can bring credible answers to companies' and citizens' concerns about the future by acting alone.

Just as the EU needs successful companies, European companies need an efficient and successful European Union. Strong and well-functioning EU institutions, supported by fully committed and well-governed Member States, are decisive factors for the attractiveness of Europe as a place to invest and for its influence in the world.

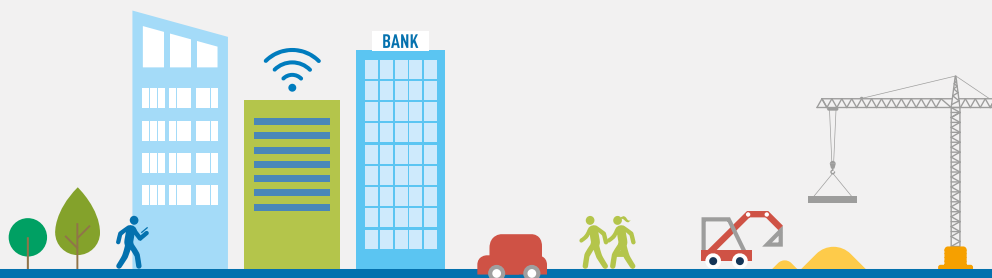
Having efficient EU institutions requires the European Commission, Council and Parliament to work together in a transparent manner, in dialogue with relevant stakeholders, with more effective procedures and a commitment to smart and lean regulation.

The EU should focus on where it can add real value and refrain from acting in matters better dealt with at national, regional or local level. Europe must be big on big things and small on small things.

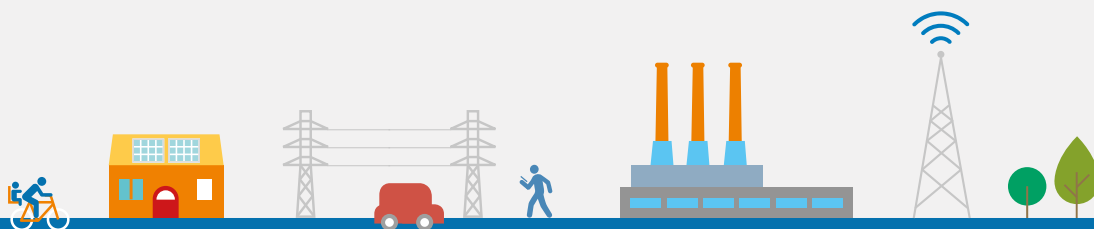
Seen from the point of view of European business, the recommendations in this document give concrete guidance on how to achieve these important goals.

# PROSPERITY

- 1 SINGLE MARKET:** The EU should complete the Single Market, which is the basis of European prosperity. This requires further strengthening and developing intra-EU trade and investment within a barrier-free Single Market.
- 2 INTERNATIONAL TRADE:** The EU should defend rules-based trade, fight protectionism and create a level playing field by supporting a reformed multilateral trading system while maintaining an ambitious bilateral international trade and investment agenda.
- 3 INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY:** The EU should put in place a more pro-active and strategic approach that will allow European manufacturing and services value chains to compete with global economic powers such as the United States or China and increase growth and employment across Europe.
- 4 COMPETITION POLICY:** The EU should pursue a strong EU competition policy that guarantees sound competition between companies of all sizes on our Single Market and benefits consumers, whilst ensuring that EU companies can better compete at global level.
- 5 DIGITAL ECONOMY:** The EU should accelerate the cybersecure digitalisation of the European economy, seizing the opportunities it creates for society, and ensuring that the EU does not miss the ongoing digital revolution. We view the €9.2 billion for the Digital Europe programme in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) as the low watermark.



- 6 RESEARCH AND INNOVATION:** The EU should support and facilitate research, development and innovation throughout the EU and the European Economic Area to regain our world leadership in technology and bring more innovative products and services to the market. The EU should allocate at least €120 billion to the Horizon Europe programme to take European research, development and innovation to the next level and should ensure adequate intellectual property (IP) protection.
- 7 MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK (MFF) AND EU BUDGET:** The EU should ensure that the post-2020 European budget concentrates on boosting sustained growth, investment and job creation, as well as supporting Member States in implementing necessary reforms. To ensure seamless functioning of the sectoral programmes, in particular research and innovation, the next MFF must be urgently adopted.
- 8 ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION (EMU):** The EU should further strengthen the EMU and trust in the euro to provide a stable environment to investors. Reforming and enhancing economic governance in the EU through a deepening of the EMU is crucial to ensuring long-run stability and growth and the international role of the euro.
- 9 TAXATION:** The EU should act at the European level in a way which respects international taxation principles and Member States' competences regarding taxation, and promote tax systems which support long-term investment and entrepreneurship.
- 10 BETTER REGULATION:** The EU should continue working on better regulation, giving more attention to the impact of cumulative EU legislation on our competitiveness and our attractiveness as a place to invest as well as continuously evaluating existing regulation. The EU should reduce the regulatory burden on companies and keep associated business costs to a minimum. Moreover, EU legislation should be innovation-friendly and future-proof.



# PEOPLE

- 1 ECONOMIC CONVERGENCE AND SOCIAL COHESION:** The EU should foster gradual economic and social convergence among all Member States, supporting those lagging behind, by encouraging them to continue reforming their labour markets and social systems and to channel structural funds into productive investment. Social policy should be combined with solid economic and cohesion policies as part of an EU strategy for increasing employment, productivity, growth and competitiveness for the benefit of all Europeans. Only an economic Europe can foster a social Europe.
- 2 SKILLS:** The EU should help addressing the labour market mismatches that increasingly act as a break on economic growth, even in countries with high unemployment. This means supporting Member States in their efforts to ensure that education and training systems deliver learning outcomes which are better tailored to labour market and companies' needs, particularly regarding science, technology, engineering and mathematical skills.
- 3 LABOUR MOBILITY:** The EU should take proactive action to eliminate remaining restrictions and combat new administrative burdens hindering the free movement of workers, to fully realise the growth and job potential of free movement of services in the Single Market and to promote intra-EU mobility.
- 4 SOCIAL PROTECTION:** The EU should encourage Member States to maintain high levels of social protection in a way which is financially sustainable now and for future generations. Member States should ensure that welfare benefits accompany people in labour market transitions in an active way.
- 5 EMPLOYMENT:** The EU should support the Member States in their efforts to ensure that the labour market regulatory framework is clear and simple and provide the right balance of flexibility and security for companies and workers. Both need to have easy access to different forms of employment and a variety of work contracts that respond to their changing needs.



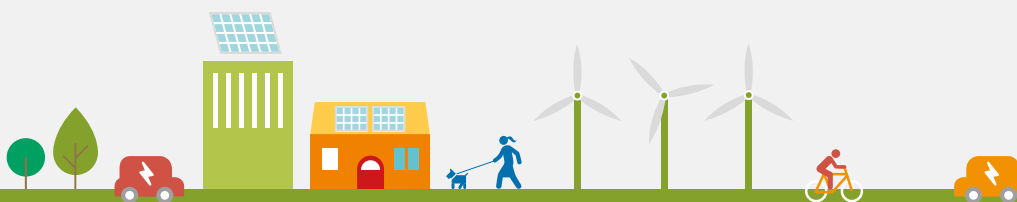
- 6 **SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EQUALITY:** The EU should support Member States in their fight against poverty and inequality within the EU by pursuing policies that optimise growth and employment.
- 7 **PENSIONS AND DEMOGRAPHIC AGEING:** The EU should support Member States' efforts to mitigate negative impacts of population ageing. Reforms must encourage people to stay in the workforce longer to combine work and retirement, make pension systems sustainable, strengthen the link between contributions and benefits and removing incentives for early retirement.
- 8 **DIVERSITY:** The EU should remain at the forefront of the promotion of diversity on labour markets, by ensuring proper implementation of the highly developed anti-discrimination and equal opportunities legal frameworks that have been established over the years and supporting efforts to address the non-legal obstacles that women, young, disabled, ethnic minorities or older workers face on labour markets.
- 9 **MIGRATION:** The EU should build a coordinated European solution to better manage migration and move away from ad hoc crisis management solutions for refugees and asylum seekers. Instead, an agreement on a new common European asylum system needs to be found to pave the way for returning to a normal functioning of free movement in the Schengen area. At the same time, the EU should pursue a positive agenda to attract talented people from third countries that are equipped with skills needed on European labour markets.
- 10 **SOCIAL DIALOGUE:** The EU should facilitate and when needed modernise the social dialogue, respecting the autonomy of the social partners, which is a key feature of the European social model and an essential tool to manage labour market changes and find balanced solutions to Europe's economic and social challenges and the changes in the world of work.



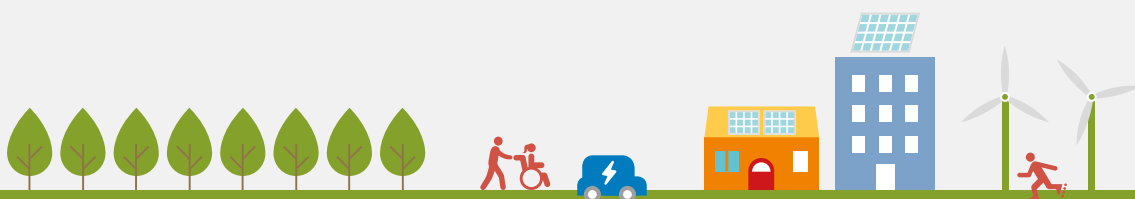


# PLANET

- 1 ENERGY AND CLIMATE POLICIES:** The EU should work towards the objective of climate neutrality (net-zero greenhouse gas emissions), while ensuring our competitiveness and security of energy supply. Reaching climate neutrality by around mid-century, as the IPCC Special Report and the European Commission's 2050 climate strategy consider is necessary to limit average global temperature increases to 1.5°C, will fully depend on meeting a set of crucial framework conditions and related actions on both European and global level.
- 2 DIFFERENT ENERGY AND CLIMATE STARTING POINTS:** The EU should recognise different conditions and starting points for EU Member States and boost European coordination for cost-effective policy implementation.
- 3 INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES TO REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG) EMISSIONS:** The EU should develop and deploy innovative technologies to support decarbonisation of value chains in Europe in a cost-effective way, unleashing investment through a comprehensive industrial strategy.
- 4 AFFORDABLE LOW-CARBON ENERGY:** The EU should ensure large-scale availability of affordable low-carbon energy, designing an integrated value chain approach for energy supply.
- 5 PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF THE ENERGY TRANSITION:** The EU should foster adaptation of consumer behaviour and public acceptance for the low-carbon energy transition, engaging actively with citizens to gain societal acceptance.



- 6 **CONVERGENCE OF GLOBAL CLIMATE AMBITIONS:** The EU should ensure that its major trading partners also commit themselves to ambitions comparable with Europe's as soon as possible and consider additional safeguards to keep industrial production in Europe.
- 7 **ZERO- AND LOW-EMISSION MOBILITY:** The EU should ensure that the emerging value chains and breakthrough technologies of zero- and low-emission mobility (ZLEM) are supported and can rapidly be deployed on a large scale in Europe, and ensure the stability of the energy and climate policy framework to attract the billions of euros of investments needed to bring about this transition.
- 8 **GREEN FINANCE:** The EU should mobilise public and private investments towards all activities that contribute to and enable the transition to a low-carbon economy, building on transparent and reliable frameworks for investors and a common understanding of environmentally sustainable investments.
- 9 **TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CHAPTERS IN EU FREE-TRADE AGREEMENTS (FTAs):** The EU should continue its efforts on how to better encourage and promote the implementation of sustainability provisions in FTAs. BusinessEurope stands behind the better enforcement of environmental and social norms for the development of third countries and for the competitiveness of European companies through a level playing field.
- 10 **CIRCULAR ECONOMY:** The EU should put more emphasis on removing inconsistencies, filling the gaps and aligning different parts in the existing policy framework to create a real market for secondary raw materials and circular products in order to maximise the value of materials, facilitate the transition to circular business models and achieve a circular economy.



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