

7th FRIENDS OF INDUSTRY MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Vienna on the 4th October 2019



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Preface



Elisabeth Udolf-Strobl, Minister of Digital and Economic Affairs

In recent years, we have witnessed a sharp shift in values at a global level which affects us not only as states, economies and industries but also as a society. Politics – and increasingly industry – is called upon to solve the big challenges of our time. This also means stability, innovation and sustainability for the future.

As Ministers for Industry our responsibilities have an important role to play. We must create the proper frameworks for our industry to prosper, and strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of our economies. However, the economic environment is changing rapidly, and the big changes we face today, such as digitalisation, climate change and globalisation, result in new challenges such as distorted competition, environmentalism and protectionism. These challenges cannot be tackled individually. We need to better coordinate all relevant policy areas and increase interaction between research and industry.

The key to all this is adaptation and innovation. I strongly believe that the European industry can play a crucial role in addressing and solving the global problems of our time. Innovation needs people who are always ready to question the status quo and willing to make courageous decisions – to act despite uncertainty and to accept the concept of failure. Innovation is no guarantee for success but denying innovation guarantees failure.

In this spirit, I was happy to see that all 25 member states attending the Friends of Industry Ministerial Meeting in Vienna on 4th October 2019 took the meeting as a chance to openly speak about the opportunities and challenges of our time. The broadly approved Vienna Declaration contains proposals for our industries that should act as a guidance for the incoming European Commission and enable us to soar above the rest and regain global industrial leadership.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elisabeth Udolf-Strobl". The script is fluid and cursive.

Elisabeth UDOLF-STROBL
Minister of Digital and Economic Affairs

Facts and Figures

The Friends of Industry are a like-minded group of EU Member States that meets once a year for an informal discussion on the most pressing issues with regard to industrial policy. The group is inclusive and open to all EU MS interested in industrial policy.

Austria had the honour to welcome participants from 25 European Member States in Vienna, as well as representatives from several interest groups. Under the motto *Strategic Industrial Value Chains in Transformation*, the 7th FOI ministerial meeting focused on issues of particular importance to industry today such as the transformation towards a digital economy, the opportunities and challenges of climate neutrality and unfair global competition.

Following a keynote speech by Prof. Sepp Hochreiter on applied machine learning and a fruitful exchange on the necessary requirements to establish Europe as one of the front-runners for applied A.I. technology, participants divided into three breakout groups, for an informal discussion on pressing issues facing industries in Europe today.

The Vienna Declaration was ultimately supported by 18 Member States. It can be seen as a call for a strong and ambitious future EU Industrial Strategy that follows a holistic cross-policy approach and manages to address the transformative questions that industry is confronted with today and in the future.

Hosting Nation – Austria

Venue – Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs

Participants – 25 EU Member States: AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, EST, FIN, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK; 4 interest groups: Federation of Austrian Industry, Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, SME United, Union des Industries Ferroviaires Européennes

Major Themes – Artificial Intelligence, Important Projects of Common European Interest, State Aid, Climate Neutrality, Carbon-/Investment Leakage, Level Playing Field

Policy Areas Covered – Industrial, Trade, Environmental, Climate, Single Market, Education, Digitalisation, Infrastructure, Competition, etc.

Countries joining the declaration – 18/25

Output from the Breakout Groups

Breakout Group 1: The External Dimension of EU Competitiveness

Overall the participants of the group agreed that with regard to the external dimension we must ensure:–

- the creation of a level playing field to ascertain that our companies can compete fairly, and at the same time avoid shielding them from global competition;
- an equilibrium between trade and competition that avoids replacing European producers in favour of foreign companies;
- the breakup of silos to better acknowledge the effects of the external dimension on other policy areas;
- that the European Union becomes a global normsetter, promoting its rules and standards through ambitious trade agreements.

In the future the focus must therefore be on:–

- ensuring modernisation of the WTO while also exploring alternatives that provide an effective multilateral trade dispute mechanism;
- ensuring better and more consistent implementation of existing FTAs, i.a. by exploring the option of creating the post of Chief Trade Enforcement Officer;
- ensuring the appropriate use of existing trade defence instruments, while continuing the discussion on an international public procurement instrument;
- finding new ways to enforce our competition laws and restructure our state aid laws, to better accommodate present circumstances.

Breakout Group 2: The Major Game Changers in the Digital Transformation Process

Participants identified the following topics as key factors for industrial transformation:

- Digitalisation of industry, notably regarding the uptake and dissemination of A.I. technology
- Development of innovative strategic value chains in Europe
- Challenges and opportunities for industry in achieving climate neutrality

Participant agreed that the next steps must be to complete the DSM and establish European leadership in the realm of Artificial Intelligence:

- Be the one to change the game – government to start the transition!
- Develop national A.I. strategies
- Increase support for public procurement / digital innovation hubs
- Think big with open data – Common European Data Space
- Contradiction: give SMEs time to adapt
- Light touch to regulation -> digital by default regulation (adapt single market)

Regarding a future industrial strategy, the following measures were identified as priority:

- Establish an appropriate framework for the transition towards climate neutrality
- Using our established industrial base as a starting point to implement a transformative process
- Adapt competition law and state aid rules
- Ensure necessary support for IPCEI (Important Projects of Common European Interest)
- Ensure the technological impetus in areas such as CO₂ emissions, green autonomous automobiles and hydrogen technology
- Allow for outside-the-box thinking: e.g. by setting goals in areas that are currently out of reach

Breakout Group 3: The Role of SMEs in Global Value Chains

Overall the participants of the breakout group agreed that key areas for a future competitive and sustainable EU SME policy are:–

- digitalisation;
- skills and competences;
- sustainability and resource efficiency;
- functioning of the single market;
- reduction of red tape and use of the “think small first” principle;
- review of the definition of SMEs while leaving resources reserved for SMEs untouched;
- importance of family businesses in Europe – different mind-set, more long-term oriented compared to start-ups.

To foster cross-border activities, SMEs need:–

- a deep and fair single market;
- easier access to markets inside & outside the EU;
- full implementation and enforcement of EU legislation, quicker enforcement procedures;
- greater use of existing single market tools: EEN, SOLVIT, IMI;
- an improvement of standardisation and mutual recognition;
- a strong and ambitious trade policy, supporting the creation of a global level playing field and fair access to markets.

Finally, to make SMEs the backbone of the European economy and fully utilise the potential of digitalisation,

- access to existing know-how in artificial intelligence, big data and blockchain must be made easier for SMEs;
- vocational training/education must be brought up to the digital age;
- employees need to be re- and upskilled, focusing on digitalisation and automation;
- digital experts need to be attracted to the European labour market – creation of a future/digital employment barometer.



Vienna Declaration

Introductory Remarks by Austria

The **Joint Declaration** aims at identifying areas and phenomena that in the future will shape the path of European Industry. With regard to these changes, it aims at proposing Key Action Items that can help address the issues at hand and should be incorporated into a new European Industrial Strategy.

Digitalisation is at the heart of the fourth industrial revolution and is therefore featured prominently in this declaration. We need to prioritise the right measures now to ensure our businesses can flourish in this new environment and remain competitive vis á vis the rest of the world. The focus in this regard must be twofold: On the one hand we need to ensure the right conditions, such as the necessary infrastructure and the right regulatory framework, to allow our companies the security and confidence to succeed. On the other hand we must try and foster innovation by securing sufficient funding for innovative entrepreneurs and by encouraging closer cooperation between research and industries. Prominent attention must hereby be put on the needs of SMEs.

Decarbonisation, in order to address the effects of climate change and the increasing depletion of resources, represents a special challenge for European producers. We must therefore support our industry in harvesting the opportunities of this transformative process. The foreseen European Green Deal must put a special emphasis on encouraging the increased exchange between separate policy fields to allow for the development of measures and targets that our industry is capable of delivering. Additionally, we need to ensure that our industry remains competitive at the global level addressing the issues of potential carbon and investment leakage.

Globalisation and increasingly interconnected markets have seen the emergence of new economic key players, that often rival their European counterparts. A strong and stable multilateral system with the WTO at its core is key to ensure a level playing field, resolve trade disputes and decrease isolationism. While the multilateral level is key to prevent unfair trade practices, we must also ensure that we use our trade defence instruments to safeguard our industries from unfair global competition. Additionally we must internally review our competition and state aid law frameworks to ensure they are able to cope with the challenges of global competition and digitisation.

The statement aims to represent the various opinions across the European Union regarding these future issues and can hopefully act as an important impetus for the upcoming European Commission while drafting the future EU Industrial Strategy.

The Joint Statement

„Vienna Declaration“

Joint statement on the future of EU Industrial Policy by Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden

European Industry is currently undergoing a profound transformation that is shaped by three distinct processes: Firstly, as our economies become increasingly digitised, we see a disruption of traditional value chains and the rapid emergence of new business models. The adaptation to this process will determine the economic leadership of tomorrow. Secondly, climate change and global warming forces us to reconsider our traditional production methods and consumption patterns. Finally, we are faced with a significant shift in the multilateral order. The emergence of new economic players especially in Asia and the Americas and the frequent questioning of established frameworks risks undermining Europe's position as a global economic player.

Industry is one of the biggest guarantors for employment and economic growth in Europe. It is therefore vital that we invest in ensuring its long-term competitiveness and develop the appropriate framework that will allow companies to benefit from these transformative changes. The following joint statement should therefore be understood as an impetus for the incoming European Commission that offers ideas and recommendations to safeguard and further improve Europe's industrial base in the light of global challenges.

In this context we are pleased that the mission letters of the new European Commission put priority on developing a comprehensive long term strategy for Europe's industrial future. We invite the Commission to work on this without any delay.

We believe the Competitiveness Council should have an active role in monitoring and evaluating sectoral legislation aimed at the implementation of this future European Industrial Strategy, thereby contributing to an integrated approach in relevant policy areas and mainstreaming industrial competitiveness. The monitoring should be based on an indicator-based mechanism.

I. Deploying Game Changing Digital Technologies in the Industrial Transformation Process

The digital transformation is at the heart of the fourth industrial revolution and over the next decade we will see a transformation of traditional value chains and established job

profiles. Moreover, digitalisation has and will continue to create new business models based on platforms and other emerging technologies. These new ventures disrupt traditional business models. However, harnessing the potential of the digital transformation will be essential for ensuring the future competitiveness of European Industry.

The Member State's vital role in this regard is to encourage substantial amounts of private capital and also step up their own investment in fast and reliable fixed and mobile high capacity infrastructure, to come to full coverage across Europe. Additionally, we must encourage the uptake of A.I. technology by continuing the work done on the Digital Innovation Hubs and working on developing common standards and norms that will prevent technical barriers and create legal certainty for businesses.

One of the major game changers is the emergence of the global data economy and the ability to access and utilise this data will determine the leadership in the digital economy. Therefore, it will be important for the incoming Commission to continue working on a European Digital Single Market, including a common European data space facilitating the voluntary sharing of industrial data across Europe. In this regard we should encourage companies based in or operating within the European Union to share their data. This could be achieved by providing an appropriate setting based on contractual terms supported by the development of common sectoral and cross-sectoral data standards. Furthermore, ethical use of data should be promoted to make this a competitive advantage for EU Industry. In order to succeed in this approach, it is also necessary to adopt a new set of targeted rules specifically focused on the specific challenges originating from the excessive market power of big digital platforms.

Furthermore, we need to complete and fully enforce the Single Market for goods and services respecting a fair level playing field. With regard to industry, deepening cross border integration of industry-related services is an important means to enhance productivity growth within the industrial sector and beyond.

Finally, we need to address the needs of innovative entrepreneurs working on business concepts that do not neatly fit within existing regulatory frameworks. Therefore, we need to fully apply the Small Business Act principles and further develop the EUs Better Regulation agenda to minimise the regulatory burden stemming from existing and new EU-legislation on European businesses and especially strengthen the competitiveness of our SMEs vis a vis global players, including by exploring the possible introduction of the "one in, one out" rule, as announced by the President-elect of the Commission.

Key Action Items - Game Changing Digital Technologies

- Ensuring the necessary infrastructure (both physical and digital) and improved interconnection and collaboration between research and industry across Europe through the deployment of EU networks of innovation infrastructure, such as Digital Innovation Hubs.
- Developing , testing and implementing common standards and norms for the responsible and ethical use of A.I. technology, following a transparent and robust human centric approach that guarantees the interoperability and certification of A.I. based systems, thereby removing technical barriers.
- Creating a Common European Dataspace to enable wider and safe access to public and private data; Enable the free flow of non-personal data while keeping the balance with regard to the right for security and privacy and set up appropriate measures for the well-functioning of platforms economy; Encourage business to develop common data standards to allow access to their data through voluntary data sharing agreements.
- Removing the remaining unjustified internal market barriers and preventing the creation of new ones, particularly in the services sector while focusing on the uniform application, implementation and enforcement of existing legislation and respecting a fair level playing field
- Increasing the efficiency of the EU regulatory framework, by exploring the possible introduction of a “One in, One Out” rule as well as the regular screening of EU-Law with a view to ensuring it remains fit for the digital age.
- Carrying out an analysis (“competitiveness check”) that evaluates the competitiveness effects prior to all relevant new European political initiatives and increase stakeholder involvement, notably SMEs, in the drafting of future policies and regulations.

II. Foster Strategic European Value Chains - from research to production

European businesses have been important actors in global value chains and often were world leaders in their respective field. However, as a direct result of the digital transformation and the emergence of new economic players, the European position in international value chains is changing and runs the risk of declining. This is even more evident for key future technologies. In order to counteract this development, recover Europe’s

position as an innovative business destination and reinforce Europe's technological autonomy, we need to step up our efforts to develop, maintain and advance our positions in sustainable value chains throughout the whole life cycle of products.

One way to promote this and to help overcome systemic market failures or societal challenges, is through the *Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI)* and its framework should be included in a future EU Industrial Strategy. Moreover, we must focus on a strategic and EU wide execution of the action plans for the remaining six value chains (connected, clean and autonomous vehicles, smart health, low-carbon industry, hydrogen technologies and systems, industrial internet of things, cyber security) as identified by the *Strategic Forum for IPCEIs*. Special emphasis must be put on establishing an inclusive, quick and transparent process, that encourages participation of SMEs.

However, we must keep in mind that new fields of technology are constantly emerging so that mechanisms and funding could be needed to address new topics not yet covered by the report of the Strategic Forum on IPCEIs. By creating synergies between and across other European and national instruments, such as the Smart Specialisation Strategy or the Innovation Fund, we can facilitate the access for businesses to available instruments and thereby increase the overall effectiveness of the initiative.

Additionally, we need to improve the collaboration of our industries across borders and create competitive clusters of technological advancement. An ambitious cluster policy can help us improve the links and collaboration between research, industry, SMEs, Start-ups and the public sector, in order to boost innovation across Europe and improve the transfer of research into practice. This is especially important for the deployment and dissemination of key technologies, such as A.I., where unilateral action will not be effective. In this regard possible fruitful links between the established Cluster Policy Programme and the IPCEIs Initiative should also be evaluated.

When talking about creating and maintaining European Value Chains we must always keep in mind the needs of our Small and Medium Sized Enterprises. Many SMEs across Europe are challenged by the digital transformation with lack funding often identified as a major inhibitor. We should therefore improve the access to support the digitalisation and innovation of small businesses. Additionally, we should promote enhanced cooperation between all types of companies as well as other stakeholders such as academia, research and start-ups, thereby creating the right incentives for European SMEs to scale up and harness their digital transformation potential.

Finally, in order to compete with the world's best we need to ensure that our workforce is sufficiently prepared for the digital transformation. European Industry is currently reporting an increased demand for skilled workers with multidisciplinary and digital competences. Re-and upskilling of the workforce as well as lifelong learning initiatives are

therefore of utmost importance in order to meet this demand. Additionally, we will need a strong presence of technical, practical and other related skills in educational programs, and increase the number of graduates in the STEMs subjects taking into consideration social inclusiveness and gender equality.

Key Action Items - Strategic European Value Chains

- Creating the right synergies between and across other EU and national instruments to foster research, development, transfer into application and innovation, and ensure efficient utilisation of available resources;
- Increasing the cross border connectivity of entrepreneurs, research organisations, businesses and industry through an ambitious cluster policy that spreads the benefits of digitalisation across Europe putting special emphasis on regional diversity, enhanced collaboration and the inclusion of SMEs;
- Supporting SMEs in their digital transformation by addressing the access to finance for projects related to digitalisation and providing advisory mechanisms to enable them to redefine their value chain position, absorb advanced technologies and master innovation management;
- Working on evaluating the definition of SMEs;
- Working on an European skills coalition ensuring faster reskilling, upskilling and lifelong learning and the better integration of entrepreneurship and digital skills into education and training;
- Creating smart focus, and synergies for regions, Member States and Europe through the IPCEI framework by including it in a future EU Industrial Strategy. Thereby we must ensure transparency among all relevant stakeholders and openness for additional topics, focusing on the EU wide execution and quicker decision taking with regard to the action plans for the remaining six identified value chains.

III. Transformation

Transformation of industry is driven by digitalisation and the need to address climate change by delivering on the Paris Agreement. Over the past decade, the effects of climate change have become more profound and it has become clear that we must re-evaluate production mechanisms and consumption patterns to cope with the impacts of global warming.

It is important that European industry continues to contribute to the transition towards a climate neutral economy. In this regard, two conditions are necessary: First, any future

industrial strategy must be closely coordinated and mutually supportive with the upcoming EU's long term strategy for a climate neutral Europe and the forthcoming European Green Deal. Secondly, we must make the green transition an opportunity for European Industry to develop and scale-up technologies and services that will form an integral part of our plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is important that the transition to a climate neutral society is just, socially balanced and takes the national circumstances of MS into account.

In order to mitigate the effects of climate change, we need to increase our efforts to ensure a sustainable management of resources and move towards a circular economy, including a shift to an industrial bio economy. Excluding the emissions hailing from land use and forestry, the extraction, processing and manufacturing of products account for 62 % of global greenhouse gas emissions, making it ineluctable that we reconsider our production cycles. We therefore need to support research in modular design of new re-usable building materials as well as alternatives to carbon intensive materials.

The sustainable transformation of industry will be driven by the use of new and innovative technologies. In this regard, neutrality and openness for any innovative technology must be a prerequisite. The Strategic Forum on IPCEIs identified "Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technology" and "Low-Carbon Industries" as two value chains, essential for the future of European Industry. We therefore suggest to develop an EU-wide strategic approach on hydrogen and other low carbon technologies, including a common approach on standards and cross-border infrastructure as well as to invest in scaling up the uptake of these technologies by European Industry. When identifying future strategic value chains within the IPCEI, a special emphasis should be given to climate and environmentally friendly technologies.

As we move towards building a safe and sustainable climate neutral global economy, we must pay particular attention to the concept of carbon leakage. If the emissions reduction efforts of European industries are offset by emission increases in other regions of the world, we will not only fail in combating climate change, but also prevent a level playing field. This issue is most pressing for sectors with increased international exposure, such as the energy intensive industry. We must increase pressure on countries that have indicated to step out of the Paris Agreement and come up with solutions to address this growing imbalance. Therefore, we support the announcement of President-elect von der Leyen to examine possible measures to prevent carbon leakage, inter alia a WTO compliant carbon border tax mechanism.

In order to lower GHG-emissions in the road and transport sector, all low and zero emissions solutions must be explored in a technology- neutral way as we move away from fossil fuel based transportation. In addition to electrification of the road and transport

sector, we must also consider other alternatives such as hydrogen, power to x technologies and alternative fuels. With regard to power to x-technologies, an emphasis should be put on establishing strategic partnerships with the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa), providing economic opportunities for both Europe and Africa.

Key Action Items -Transformation

- European Industry should contribute to the transition towards a climate neutral EU economy by 2050, complimentary to the Paris Agreement and both the EU's long term strategy for a climate neutral Europe and the forthcoming European Green Deal;
- Identifying ways to support EU Industry in becoming a global bio- and circular economy leader and deploring the full potential of modern biotechnologies setting a new framework for its industrial use;
- Developing strategic approaches to hydrogen and other low carbon technologies like Carbon Capture Storage and Utilisation, in order to harvest their economic benefits and decarbonisation potential;
- Phasing out financial incentives which encourage overuse of natural resources, such as inefficient environmentally harmful subsidies including for solid fossil fuel exploration, extraction and consumption;
- Working towards an international level playing field by protecting European companies and jobs from unfair competition and potential carbon and investment leakage, inter alia by examining the possibilities of a carbon border tax mechanism in compliance with WTO-rules;
- Working towards decarbonising the road and transport sector, for instance through electrification, power to x technologies and alternatives fuels.

IV. The External Dimension of Industrial Competitiveness

With regard to the external dimension of the European Industrial Policy, we are witnessing an overhaul of the established Post WWII multilateral order. The past decade has seen the emergence of new economic players in Asia and the Americas and with it increasing global competition on an increasingly uneven playing field.

A policy of open markets and strong cooperation has made the EU one of the most prosperous and competitive regions in the world. Ensuring free and fair trade is especially important for EU Industries operating in global value chains and developing a strong and ambitious European Trade Policy, that promotes a rules based trading system with the WTO at its core, is therefore key to ensuring global competitiveness. At the same time we

must ensure level playing field with appropriate and efficient European instruments (trade defence, investments, public procurement etc.). The enforcement of trade rules is also essential for European companies to benefit effectively from Trade agreements and we therefore welcome the nomination of a Chief Trade Enforcement Officer announced by the Commission. Moreover, a set of Trade Agreements with strategic partners should help to open up new markets and promote European standards and values abroad. In this regard, increasing focus must be put on including areas such as digital trade, competition rules and sustainability in our future bilateral trade agreements.

Concerning European State Aid rules, we must look into how we can incorporate State Aid Policy into our Trade Agreements, by for instance including minimum requirements for surveillance and monitoring and working towards full transparency for State Aid granted to investors from outside the EU. The WTO rules should be reformed with the objective of strengthening the industrial subsidies disciplines and at the European level, the interaction between the field of state aid and trade should be intensified to counteract unlawful international subsidies and to ensure a global level playing field, including for products with a lower carbon footprint. The intended revision of state aid rules should allow more flexibility - while safeguarding fair competition within the EU internal market - with regard to the encountered challenge of climate change. To allow our State Aid framework to contribute to the development towards climate neutrality and the implementation of the Paris Agreement, we should look into a possible new State Aid tool enabling Member States to support new value chains and structures, cross border infrastructure as well as new employment possibilities.

We must ensure that the EU's strong competition policy keeps up with new technological and global market challenges, such as developments in the digital economy, the need to foster sustainability, and the increased threat of unfair competition. With regard to the last point, the European Commission should investigate whether adaptations to the state aid and competition framework could help to ensure a level playing field, by preventing unfair advantages to companies from third countries and predatory acquisitions. Additionally, the Commission should review the current legislative framework to better deal with the challenges arising from digitalisation by strengthening and seeking out possibilities to speed up both merger control and antitrust law enforcement.

At the same time, the EU needs to do more to enforce existing mechanisms and rules in order to safeguard innovation and protect investors and investments both in third countries and within the EU. When negotiating new proposals, special attention must be put on a level playing field in order to avoid unfair competition by non-European state sponsored companies.

Key Action Items - External Dimension of Industrial Competitiveness

- Ensuring a strong and stable multilateral trading system by modernising the WTO rulebook to better accommodate new economic realities;
- Ensure that areas such as digital trade, competition rules, intellectual property rights and sustainability are strengthened in our future bilateral trade agreements;
- Ensure the efficient and appropriate use of Trade Defence Instruments to safeguard fair competition and continue discussions on the legislative proposal in the field of international public procurement;
- Review the competition law framework and speed up enforcement in order to ensure a level playing field with companies from third countries and better cope with the challenges of digitalisation;
- Ensuring a single market based on fair competition conducive to the EU remaining a global leader in innovation;
- Review existing State Aid Rules in order to support change towards a climate neutral EU and the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

