

2nd Bilateral Meeting Confindustria-CEOE

Joint Declaration

18 October 2024

Rome

Following the second bilateral meeting held in Rome on October 18th, 2024, the presidents of Confindustria and the Spanish Confederation of Business Organisations (CEOE) reaffirm their shared vision at this crucial moment for the economic and social future of the European Union. Building on BusinessEurope's Budapest Declaration of 28 June 2024, in these early days of the new European institutional cycle, both organisations underline the urgent need to take bold steps to secure Europe's competitiveness and prosperity for all.

The new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness announced by president-elect Von der Leyen must be rapidly adopted, encompassing a Clean Industrial Deal fit for the investments that are required. To that end, stronger measures to mitigate energy costs, fostering energy market integration and interconnections and speeding up permitting procedures are key. It is crucial to close the competitiveness gap between Europe and the rest of the world related to CO2 costs, to secure fair competition rules between the European industry and its competitors, including on international markets.

Such an ambitious new industrial strategy can only succeed by deepening the Single Market through a real Better Regulation plan that reduces the complexity of making business in Europe, removing persistent barriers and stepping up enforcement of existing rules. Public procurement, in this context, should become a powerful tool for promoting innovation, sustainability, and European competitiveness, avoiding races to the bottom and excessive in-house procurement.

The above requires a European budgetary framework that fosters public and private investments. The European Union needs an ambitious Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) that enhances investments, encompassing adequate resources for a cohesion policy that needs less bureaucracy and more flexibility to reach its long-term goals, and for Research and Innovation. The new Housing Plan announced by the Commission's president-elect shall be integrated in these objectives, by supporting the sectors involved in their transition efforts, while filling the gap in housing needs of families, youth and workers in Europe.

As highlighted by Mario Draghi in his report "The future of European competitiveness", the European Union needs an additional 800 billion per year in funding needs to meet its competitiveness challenges. Common European resources are needed, such as a new common European debt safe asset to enable large joint investment projects between member States. Moreover, as anticipated by president-elect von der Leyen, we support the call for a Competitiveness Fund that supports the private sector efforts in the transitions, while ensuring the level playing field within the Single Market. Additionally, it is also important to ensure spending efficiency and effectiveness so that available EU resources meet their objectives at the lowest possible cost, while making sure that measures to increase new own resources do not lead to increases in business taxation.

Investments' objectives will only be accomplished by unleashing the full potential of the Banking Union and the deepening of the Capital Markets Union, *building the Savings and Investments Union* proposed by Enrico Letta in his report "Much more than a market". Further, we need to ensure the efficient execution of NextGenerationEU funds in the very last stage of its life and consider the adaptation of the deadline of August 2026.

Finally, the new strategy to boost competitiveness should encompass an ambitious trade policy, which should strike the right balance between openness and ensuring a level playing field for European companies. We strongly support the finalisation of the Free Trade Agreement with Mercosur and of other bilateral negotiations.

Italian and Spanish businesses are committed to being part of the solution to the current challenges. Public-private cooperation will be key in driving the strategic path forward, and we are ready to play our role as social partners in this process. An intensified dialogue with the private sector is imperative both the design and implementation of these policies, fostering a collaborative framework that will ensure the success of European integration. Confindustria and CEOE are committed to actively contribute to this dialogue and will continue to work together and with BusinessEurope on the issues discussed in this Joint Declaration. Together, we will ensure a stronger, competitive, and more united European Union.



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President of Confindustria



Antonio Garamendi
President of CEOE