



**Employers' Group of the EESC
Political Priorities 2016-2018**

**What business
believes in!**



European Economic and Social Committee

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What business believes in!

Europe is slowly emerging from an extended economic and financial downturn; yet the recovery is fragile and some Member States perform better than others. Employers believe that a stable macro-economic environment underpinned by growth-enhancing structural reforms and fiscal responsibility is a precondition for strong and sustainable growth.

The ongoing refugee crisis is a humanitarian tragedy and challenges Europe. The growing number of refugees and migrants has an unprecedented impact that urgently requires a more coherent approach than has been possible to date. Faced with an exceptional flow of refugees and economic migrants, Europe must put in place a responsible and consistent immigration and integration policy. The Schengen Area must be protected and improved and the control of EU's external borders assured. The European Commission has delivered a number of proposals to achieve this, but work remains to be done.

The more uncertain and less predictable political and economic context in which business operates calls for a globally competitive EU that can easily respond to these and other societal challenges.

The Employers' Group stands for defending the freedom to conduct business, and enhancing the entrepreneurial spirit, culture and education in Europe. To promote a more dynamic and competitive future for the EU to generate growth, jobs and new investments the Employers' Group champions the following ideas.



A stronger culture of entrepreneurship must be encouraged in Europe

The EU must become more entrepreneurial. To facilitate business creation and growth, the EU must improve the framework conditions for entrepreneurship and provide better conditions for the growth of start-ups and young innovative SMEs. The needs of SMEs and especially micro-sized, small companies and family businesses must be incorporated in all EU policies: Think-Small-First. We also need an effective horizontal policy for SMEs.



Full completion of the EU Internal Market

A fully functioning Single European Market, including a true Digital Single Market is a key driver for growth. The EU must remove remaining barriers that companies face in the Internal Market, including the field of services and focus on stringent implementation and correct application of the existing rules. Competitiveness of companies must also be the main goal in issues concerning energy, transport and financial sector. To improve the business environment, EU policies must comply with the requirements of better regulation. Better regulation is smarter and better quality regulation. Sometimes the best approach is to refrain from regulating altogether.

Sustainability is a broader concept and should also take into account economic factors. Environmental issues can constitute a cost factor, but can also be a potential growth driver. The EU must ensure that actions to promote sustainability and a resource-efficient low-carbon circular economy improve the competitiveness of companies and stimulate growth.



A more efficient, competitive, fully integrated and forward-looking industrial policy for a strong, solid and competitive industrial base in Europe

To ensure the competitiveness of European industries and to promote high added-value re-industrialisation, Europe needs innovation as well as synergies between services and manufacturing (“servitization” of industries). A better integration of European companies in global value chains, new production methods and the blurring boundaries between manufacturing and digitalisation as well as Industry 4.0 will entail new opportunities for growth. Industrial policy should equally address the services sector with particular attention to opportunities provided by digital revolution.

To favour investment, the EU climate and energy policy must respect business needs and set realistic targets for climate change. EU actions must recognise that climate change is a global challenge which is solved by shared global actions and commitments. The COP21 agreement is a historical achievement and a step towards guaranteeing a global level playing field. Now it must be ensured that all countries take responsibility for the climate actions.



Competitiveness for more employment thus maintaining the social dimension of the EU

Focussing on competitiveness and boosting growth will enable companies to create more jobs. Reforms in the labour market are necessary so that we can embrace change in skills, technology, new forms of work organisation, materials and production processes. Improvement of the work-based education system, vocational education and training, and upgrading of skills are needed to ensure that skills match the changing needs of the businesses. Social dialogue should contribute positively to competitiveness and growth.

At EU level, the focus must be on ensuring proper implementation and enforcement of the existing rules and using best practices and benchmarking to stimulate the reform process. The mobility of workers which benefits both employers and workers must be facilitated.



(Re)-Building the role of Europe in the world

Championing free trade and improving access to the markets of trading partners for the benefit of business and its customers is the key to growth and jobs in the EU. In the next 10 to 15 years, over 90% of the world growth is predicted to be generated outside Europe. Promotion and conclusion of TTIP as well as other vital trade and investment agreements (such as the CETA and FTA with Japan) will open access to these markets. SMEs particularly have a lot to gain from trade and specific attention should be paid to the internationalisation of SMEs.

Who are we?

The Employers' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) brings together entrepreneurs and representatives of entrepreneur associations working in industry, commerce, services and agriculture in the 28 Member States of the European Union. We are the only voice of business within the EU Institutional Framework.

The EESC is the EU advisory body, consisting of representatives of Civil Society: employers, trade unions, NGOs etc. The Committee issues its opinions on the European Commission's legislative proposals.

European Economic and Social Committee Employers' Group

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