# EESC debates the updated European industrial strategy

**On 17 June, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and its Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI) held a spirited debate examining the views of organised civil society following the publication of the European Commission's Update to the New Industrial Strategy. The debate, which is the first in a series of joint activities by EESC sections on the topic, questioned whether the updated strategy contains sufficient elements to enhance EU industry's resilience and strategic autonomy. The topics were addressed by two panels: the first looked at strategic autonomy in strategic value chains and the second at the impact of the updated industrial strategy on the health industrial ecosystem**.

On May 5 , 2021 the Commission updated the [EU Industrial Strategy](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-industrial-strategy_en) to ensure that its industrial ambition takes full account of the new circumstances following the COVID-19 crisis and helps to drive the transformation to a more sustainable, digital, resilient and globally competitive economy.  
  
The CCMI president, **Pietro Francesco De Lotto,** who chaired the debate, said: ''The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated many processes that were already ongoing. The speed with which society and industry have had to adopt digitalisation processes in these past 16 months is unprecedented and the changes we experienced were ground‑breaking, first with supply chains, then with medical equipment and after with the vaccines. For too long we have been hesitant in answering the question of how assertive our industrial and trade policies should be, and I think the update to the industrial strategy is a good first step in openly addressing these questions and working towards resilience and strategic autonomy in EU industry while ensuring a multilateral level playing field and a just transition for all companies, workers and regions''.

The president of the Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption (INT), **Alain Coheur,** who co-chaired the debate, described the context for the second panel's work, saying: ''The crisis has brought other issues to the table that were not mentioned in in the first Communication on the industrial strategy in March 2020. We must see this crisis as an opportunity to give the European area industrial autonomy''.

The updated strategy confirms the priorities set out in the March 2020 Communication, published the day before the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, while responding to the lessons learned from the crisis to boost the recovery and enhance the EU's open strategic autonomy. It proposes new measures to strengthen the resilience of our single market, especially in times of crisis. It addresses the need to better understand European dependencies in key strategic areas and presents a toolbox to address them. It also offers new measures to accelerate the green and digital transitions. The updated Strategy also responds to calls to identify and monitor the main indicators for the competitiveness of the EU economy as a whole: single market integration, productivity growth, international competitiveness, public and private investment and R&D investment.

**Antony Whelan**, digital adviser to the European Commission President, **Ursula Von der Leyen,** mentioned recent events which the European Commission is considering with regard to the European industrial strategy. "The work we were doing on the strategic dependencies revealed common learning from the recent crisis. It seems timely to look again at what was critical before the crisis but was not getting the same political attention as it is getting now''. Presenting the Commission tools to measure EU dependency, Mr **Whelan** said: ''In our bottom-up exercise we identified a very limited number of areas where the EU as a whole is in a situation of worried dependency.''

**Background**

The update of the 2020 Industrial Strategy was announced by the Commission Presidentduring the [State of the European Union address in September](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/strategic-planning/state-union-addresses/state-union-2020_en) 2020. The Communication issued on 5 May responded to EU leaders' call to pursue an ambitious European industrial policy to make its industry more sustainable, more green, more competitive globally and more resilient. The EU leaders also invited the Commission to identify strategic dependencies, particularly in the most sensitive industrial ecosystems such as for health, and to propose measures to reduce these dependencies. The EESC will hold a series of debates on the industrial strategy: seven webinars starting on 17 June with the current one. A high-level closing debate is planned for March 2022.

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