


BUSINESSEUROPE



DECLARATION ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



The Treaty of Rome laid the foundations for one of the most prosperous and safe regions in the world. Business has always believed in the European project and has supported it because of the benefits it brings to society as a whole.

Peace, stability, creation of an internal market where persons, services, goods and capital can move freely, political and economic integration, common currency, international standing are some of the benefits of Europe which speak for themselves.

But Europe is confronted today with a series of challenges that require concrete actions. In a context of increasing globalisation and fast technological changes, it is necessary that Europe focuses its actions on restoring its competitiveness vis-à-vis other regions of the world which are undergoing tremendous developments.

This is why business demands actions to reinvigorate the European Union. A European Union that is capable of swift and decisive action, when this is required. A European Union that is more capable of coordinating national initiatives. A European Union that can disseminate best practices in one Member State to other Member States. A European Union that takes action to achieve the objectives of tomorrow.

In order to move forward and make the appropriate and needed reforms of its governance and policies, Europe needs strong support from all the actors which are key to its success. The political declaration to be adopted on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome must be the occasion to reaffirm strong support for Europe and the projects on which it must deliver.

Business calls for a boost to Europe which must concentrate its future actions on the following priorities.



IMPLEMENT THE REFORMS FOR GROWTH AND JOBS

More growth and jobs continue to be the central challenge for the EU. There is a need for a stronger political will and commitment if the European Union wants to meet the Lisbon objectives. The European Union must put in place effective EU surveillance of national reform programmes. Among many other actions, Europe must strengthen the links between research, innovation and education in order to strengthen its competitiveness.

Less and, when needed, better regulation is necessary. EU intervention must be justified, explained and proportional to the objective. Subsidiarity must be fully respected. Impact assessment, better regulation and less red tape are vital for doing business in Europe. Member States on their side must refrain from gold-plating EU legislation.



REINVIGORATE INTEGRATION OF THE INTERNAL MARKET

The Internal Market is one of the great successes of European integration and the foundation stone for growth and jobs in the European Union. But the Internal Market is not yet complete and it needs to be reinvigorated by further liberalising markets, by completing Trans-European Networks and by eliminating obstacles to cross-border provision of services. The immense potential of the Internal Market of 27 must be used by integrating the new Member States as quickly as possible.

But the most pressing hindrance to cross-border business activities is the nonchalance of Member States in implementing Internal Market directives they have agreed on at EU level, as well as insufficient enforcement.

In areas such as energy, transport, intellectual property, the European Union has put in place initial building blocks to develop policies for addressing current challenges, but the scale and strategic vision of these initiatives must be strongly enhanced.



COMPLETE THE REFORM OF THE EU GOVERNANCE

Efficient functioning of the EU Institutions is key for the success of the enlarged EU. Taking appropriate actions to improve the efficiency and transparency of the EU institutions while preserving the “Community method” must be a priority of the EU. The EU decision-making process must be adapted to its current membership.

The Commission must remain strong, independent and guardian of the Treaties. It must keep the right of initiative to propose actions to the Council and Parliament in the interest of the whole Community. The stability of the EU Presidency must be ensured. The credibility of Europe in foreign affairs requires a stronger voice.

FIGHT NATIONAL PROTECTIONISM

Thanks to an open market economy with free competition within the EU, national markets have opened up to each other. However, notwithstanding the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital, protectionist reflexes can still be observed. Yet Member States must not adopt an attitude of economic nationalism and protectionism which would equate to “less Europe”. Europe must strongly combat this tendency. The European Union must also remain committed to international trade liberalisation by strengthening the WTO trading system and by facilitating trade and investment relations with major trading partners.



TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES OF ENLARGEMENT

Enlargement has breathed new dynamism into the internal market. This is a major opportunity to sustain European competitiveness in the face of fast globalisation. From a business perspective, enlargement has been a genuinely positive contribution to growth and jobs in Europe. Recent independent studies demonstrate that the enlargement from EU-15 to EU-25 has contributed to economic growth and jobs in both the “old” and “new” Member States. Europe must communicate better the positive economic and social impact of enlargement.



REFORM SOCIAL SYSTEMS TO MAKE THEM SUSTAINABLE

Employment is the best way to ensure cohesion. The European social policy agenda’s first priority is the creation of new jobs and integration of more people in labour markets rather than trying to protect activities which are no longer competitive or enhance the rights of those already in work. Europe must concentrate on encouraging necessary labour market reforms, adapting pension systems to demographic ageing, empowering individuals to adapt their skills throughout their working lives, encouraging companies to develop competences and ensuring that education and training systems respond to labour market needs.

Social partners are well placed to find flexible solutions, reconciling economic and social needs of labour market players and the autonomy of the social dialogue must be respected by all institutions.



European Business supports a strong European Union capable of action and able to deliver reforms. But it is essential to set clearer objectives, to focus more strongly on priorities and to show a stronger political will and support for these reforms. By doing this and progressing on the above actions, we can make a success of a reinvigorated Europe.

Declaration by BUSINESSEUROPE Council of Presidents
Helsinki, 1 December 2006

BUSINESSEUROPE



MEMBERS ARE 39 LEADING NATIONAL BUSINESS
FEDERATIONS IN 33 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES



Austria



Belgium



Cyprus



Czech Republic



Denmark



Denmark



Estonia



Finland



France



Germany



Germany



Greece



Hungary



Iceland



Iceland



Ireland



Italy



Lithuania



Luxembourg



Malta



Norway



Poland



Portugal



Portugal



Slovenia



Spain



Sweden



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Switzerland



The Netherlands



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Turkey



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Bulgaria



Croatia



Latvia



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Romania



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