

Next EU Industrial Forum (2026-2029): a structured dialogue platform to develop EU policies that support industrial innovation, competitiveness and growth

Executive Summary

At a time when Europe's industry faces mounting challenges – from the regulatory burden, aggravated trade tensions and declining investment levels to increased competition from the US and China – it is more important than ever to ensure that EU industrial policies create a framework that provides structural support for competitiveness, innovation, and growth. With industry accounting for around 20% of the EU's GDP and providing nearly 35 million direct jobs across Europe, industrial policy must remain at the heart of the EU's policy agenda.

Created in 2020 as a new, inclusive and open mechanism for co-designing solutions with stakeholders, the EU's Industrial Forum has been instrumental in shaping the development and implementation of EU industrial policies over the past five years. The next Industrial Forum (2026-2029) should build on the work of the current Forum and act as the central dialogue platform for industry representatives and research and technology organisations to share ideas, comments and input and ensure that relevant EU policies are coherent and fit for purpose to promote European industrial competitiveness, innovation and growth. In line with this aim, we, cosignatories of this statement, would like to submit the proposals and recommendations below.

Principles and operating guidelines for the next EU Industrial Forum (2026–2029):

1. **Firmly recognise the Forum as *the* central structured dialogue platform for industrial policymaking:** the Forum should be firmly integrated into all relevant policymaking processes and recognised for what it was devised for: a unique platform for the sharing of ideas, stakeholder discussions and input.
2. **Create a robust Work Plan with regular meetings and ad hoc exchanges:** schedule regular meetings to maintain momentum and avoid gaps in the process. Regular meetings should be supplemented by ad hoc exchanges on crisis-related, fast-moving issues (e.g. EU-US tariffs).
3. **Use the Forum as an early sounding board to discuss and pre-test ideas well before proposals are finalised:** major EU policy initiatives and files impacting industry should be debated in the Forum at an early stage: i.e. well before proposals are finalised and adopted.
4. **Strong, high-level institutional engagement and systematic involvement of different DGs:** ensure regular high-level participation from Commissioners as well as systematic involvement of different DGs to promote greater policy coherence and avoid regulatory duplication and/or overlap.
5. **Strengthen inclusive practices and use of information-sharing tools to create a true 'working forum':** build on tools like the Industrial Forum newsletter to allow for better preparation and discussions and encourage stronger involvement of EU Member States.
6. **Build on Task Force 5 success:** ensure bottom-up involvement by creating new Task Forces to advise the European Commission on the definition of strategic industry areas and technologies.

1. Firmly recognise the Forum as the central structured dialogue platform for industrial policymaking:

For the Industrial Forum to deliver real value, it must be acknowledged as a systemic consultation platform that plays a meaningful role in shaping and implementing industrial policy. It should not be perceived as a “box-ticking” exercise for the Commission. Instead,

- The Forum should serve as a structured space for industry stakeholders to provide input throughout the policy cycle — from the conception of initiatives to their implementation.

2. Create a robust Work Plan with regular meetings and ad hoc exchanges:

The need for a **horizontal dialogue platform** such as the Industrial Forum is even more important today, given the proliferation of sector-specific dialogue platforms and technology-focused initiatives that tend to have a narrower focus and often fail to reflect a comprehensive value chain perspective.

- The Forum’s early debate on the **European Competitiveness Fund** was an excellent example of how timely engagement can support both policymakers and stakeholders.
- The recent practice of holding **ad hoc meetings** is welcome and should be maintained. We must avoid a repetition of 2024, when the Forum met only once in a full year.

3. Use the Forum as an early sounding board to discuss and pre-test ideas well before proposals are finalised:

Major EU policy initiatives and files impacting industry should be debated in the Forum at an early stage: i.e. well before proposals are finalised and adopted:

- Key files, such as the Competitiveness Compass, the Clean Industrial Deal, and policies linked to economic security, should be systematically brought to the Forum at an early stage for discussion.
- Draft proposals, once available, should be shared with members — ideally within relevant Task Forces — to allow for substantive feedback.

4. Strong, high-level institutional engagement and systematic involvement of different DGs:

Ensure regular high-level participation from Commissioners as well as systematic involvement of different DGs to promote greater policy coherence and avoid regulatory duplication and/or overlap.

- Greater involvement of **relevant Commissioners** would elevate discussions to the necessary political level. During the Forum’s early years, Commissioner Margrethe Vestager and Commissioner Thierry Breton both played visible roles; such high-level engagement should be standard practice in the next mandate.
- We strongly encourage closer involvement of, and cooperation with, other Commission departments (DGs) to ensure that the voice of industry is heard consistently across all relevant policy areas.

5. Strengthen inclusive practices and use of information-sharing tools to create a true ‘working forum’:

- The recently introduced **Industrial Forum newsletter** has been extremely valuable. It provides transparency on upcoming meetings and initiatives, and — crucially — gives stakeholders sufficient time to prepare for discussions. We strongly recommend that this practice be continued and further developed.
- The presence of **Member States** in the Forum adds significant value by bridging EU-level and national perspectives. Their stronger involvement should be actively encouraged in the next mandate.
- Strengthening the participation of Industrial Forum representatives in other high level stakeholder meetings organised by the Commission, such as the Implementation Dialogue with Startups and Scaleups, would ensure a more coherent and consistent representation of industry perspectives across EU policy discussions.

6. Build on Task Force 5 success: ensure bottom-up involvement by creating new Task Forces to advise the Commission on the definition of strategic industry areas and technologies.

The creation of Task Force 5 on Advanced Manufacturing has been a clear success story, raising the visibility of enabling technologies and proving the Forum's potential.

- Task Force 5 has strongly reflected the voice of industry, academia, research and technology institutions. Building on this experience, we would recommend the creation of a Task Force that would be involved in advising the Commission in future discussions such as the definition of strategic industry areas and where gaps remain in the innovation continuum. Moreover, several of the Task Force's recommendations — especially those related to access to capital and investment frameworks — remain highly relevant and could constructively inform the upcoming debate on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). These insights could guide how future EU programmes support innovation, skills development, and technology deployment in advanced manufacturing.
- However, the Task Force's impact did not spill over into broader high-level strategic debates (e.g. on cars, steel). For the future, there is a need to establish a strategic dialogue on advanced manufacturing at the same political level as other key sectors.

Logos of cosignatories

