

Joint Declaration

3rd Bilateral Meeting CEOE–Confindustria

Madrid, 1 October 2025

Driving competitiveness and unity: a joint call for a stronger Europe

At a decisive moment for Europe's economic, social and political future, the Spanish Confederation of Business Organisations (CEOE) and Confindustria reaffirm their common commitment to a more competitive and united Union. The European Union must act with urgency to deliver its commitment of growth and prosperity, while withstanding the current economic and geopolitical headwinds.

We agree that it is of the outermost importance that European decision-makers take immediate action to guarantee the competitiveness of European industry. For that, clear and urgent action is needed to: (i) ensure that climate objectives adjust to the reality of European industry, (ii) reduce energy prices and (iii) ensure that technological neutrality is the driver of European policies.

Furthermore, as key enablers EU competitiveness, CEOE and Confindustria's leadership have discussed and agreed on the below.

Renewing the Single Market as Europe's engine of growth

The Single Market remains the cornerstone of Europe's prosperity and resilience. Renewed political commitment must translate ambition into concrete action, ensuring that enterprises, and in particular SMEs, are empowered to thrive. This entails:

- Deploying the Single Market Strategy and swiftly implementing the Roadmap to 2028 announced by the President of the Commission. This must go hand in hand with the parallel elimination of persistent barriers and fighting the "Terrible Ten"¹ through binding targets and stronger mutual recognition of goods and services.
- An EU standardisation system which remains market-driven and industry-led: any attempt to centralise or politicise the process risks undermining innovation, international alignment, and business participation.
- Ensuring full interoperability of digital systems and simplifying EU programmes for cloud, AI, cybersecurity and infrastructure. In this regard, we look forward to the presentation of a comprehensive simplification package expected by the end of 2025.
- Revising public procurement to guarantee fair competition, avoid in-house procurement, and include price revision clauses to reflect inflation and input volatility. Procurement should be strategically used to support the green transition, while keeping rules efficient and business focused. We support the importance of adequately rewarding EU content in tender procedures and reflecting it in price adjustments. In this regard, we call for measures to secure the level playing field and non-discriminatory relationships for European companies acting globally and for non-EU bidders.
- Finally, unleashing Europe's investment capacity also requires an acceleration of the creation of a true Savings and Investments Union. This must include measures to facilitate cross-border investment, to develop EU savings products, and to ensure that banks can finance companies with prudential rules that balance stability and growth.

¹ Source: European Commission, [Factsheet – Single Market Strategy](#), 2025

Mobilising investment through a strong and predictable MFF

CEOE and Confindustria welcome the streamlined architecture of the proposed MFF 2028-2034, but strongly reaffirm that flexibility must not undermine certainty, which is essential to attract investment. Priorities must include:

- Preserving cohesion policy resources to reflect regional needs and competitiveness.
- Safeguarding multi-level governance and the partnership principle to identify real priorities. We welcome the proposed performance-based approach, and we stress that it should focus on clear milestones and impact.
- Reinforcing R&I at the core of EU spending, maximising complementarities between Horizon Europe, the new European Competitiveness Fund and other programmes. EU funding must be able to leverage private investment across the full innovation cycle.

Regarding the financing of the next MFF, we strongly oppose the new own resources architecture and the introduction of new forms of taxation on European businesses (CORE): competitiveness must not come at the expense of new tax burdens on European companies. We suggest exploring financing investments in projects of common interest that foster productivity and mobilise private investment through well-designed EU debt instruments.

Housing as a pillar of Europe's resilience

A strong MFF will also be key to deploy a successful EU Housing Plan. This requires:

- The simplification of planning and permitting for social and sustainable housing,
- A revision of European rules on state aid on services of economic general interest that increases agility and transparency in the public financing of the construction of housing,
- The mobilisation of public land through innovative public-private models and targeted EU and national tax incentives to support long-term rental supply, energy retrofitting and urban regeneration.
- The development of instruments to foster the involvement of banks, institutional investors and savers in the financing of the construction of affordable housing, through the provision of public guarantees and the involvement of the European Investment Bank.

Strengthening Europe's defence and technological sovereignty

In an age of geopolitical tension and hybrid threats, Europe must invest in resilience and sovereignty. Urgent investment in an integrated defence industry, capable of modernising its armed forces, are needed, also in the view of achieving economies of scale, supporting Ukraine's reconstruction, and protecting critical infrastructure. This means:

- Developing a fully integrated European security and defence industry, prepared for long-term security challenges.
- Protecting critical infrastructure and supply chains, including ensuring cybersecurity and readiness against attacks.
- Promoting a European fund to update the infrastructure to guarantee European military mobility in trans-European corridors and strategic points.

- Strengthening Europe's defence industrial base by dedicating specific resources and instruments to defence and space, incentivising the industrialisation of critical technologies, reducing external dependencies
- Investing in climate resilience and adaptation as an essential pillar of Europe's open strategic autonomy, strengthening preparedness against extreme weather events and related risks.

Acting globally with a bold trade agenda

Europe must project strength on the global stage. Only by reinforcing the Union internally can it thrive externally. Europe cannot be a spectator, it must lead. This means:

- Fostering European investments in green and low carbon technology value chains, enabling our competitiveness in producing critical components
- Accelerating trade diversification by ratifying agreements with Mercosur and Mexico, enacting that with Indonesia, concluding those with Australia, India and with the other major partners in pipeline.
- Strengthening partnerships with CELAC and Mediterranean neighbours, including through the forthcoming EU-CELAC Summit and Pact for the Mediterranean.
- Ensuring balance and predictability in transatlantic relations starting by prompting a meaningful solution to tariffs on Steel, Aluminium and derivatives, assessing carefully tariff concessions to be awarded, and extending to the maximum extent possible the list of European goods excepted.

Conclusion

CEOE and Confindustria call on the European Commission, the Council, the European Parliament and national governments to act in unity and urgency. We reaffirm our commitment to constructive dialogue with the private sector, essential for the success of Europe's agenda, and to working with BusinessEurope and our European partners to build a competitive, resilient and an ever more united Union.

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