

Cabinet newsletter

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Dear Reader,

Vicepresident Tajani participated at the Conference "*Freedom and Prosperity: Italy's Future*", held by Confindustria, the Italian Confederation of Industrialists, in Parma, Italy, on the 9th of April. I believe that the type of issues tackled at the conference, as well as the calibre of the participants - key political and economic players at national and European level - and of the debates, have made this event relevant for people across the European Union.



Antonio Preto
Head of Cabinet

The conference represented a chance to discuss about the future of global economy, as well as one of the most important challenges facing the European Union and its member states: that of combining freedom and prosperity. The significant result of the meeting is certainly due to the fact that Confindustria is the main association representing Italian companies in one of the major European manufacturing countries. The event was among the initiatives organised to celebrate Confindustria's centenary.

The main issues discussed were, among others, the evolution and development of industrial policy with a double dimension: national and European, and future scenarios for the European economic recovery. These are difficult topics to tackle but the participation of 5000 entrepreneurs, as well as several representatives of international and Italian institutions made it somewhat easier. Vice-President Tajani interpreted this event as an occasion to introduce the new European industrial policy, to debate about the relationship between industrial and competition policy within the EU and, last but not least, to work over the urgent problems which enterprises across Europe are facing.

As the Commissioner responsible for Industry and Entrepreneurship, Vice-President Tajani pointed out the historical and social, as well as strictly economical, impacts of industrial policy and its horizontal nature.

The Vice-President outlined the priorities of his mandate, talking both about his strategic objectives, as well as the more concrete deliverables, by reporting on actions which have to be taken in order to ensure credit access for enterprises, and in particular for SMEs, and by linking the problem of credit access to the current lack

of liquidity.

In his words *"the Commission should work on the creation of new financial instruments and on the possibility of improving and diversifying those already in place"*. It was made clear that the EIB should strive to achieve its target of lending 30 billion euros to SMEs. Outlining his commitments, the Vice-President announced a forthcoming conference on access to credit, financial instruments, and new regulation to be held in Brussels on May the 6th. The conference will be attended by representatives from institutions, banks, private equity funds and entrepreneurial associations.

The issue of access to credit led to debate over the project of late payments directive, currently under scrutiny in the European Parliament. Talking directly to entrepreneurs Vice-President Tajani underlined that: *"liquidity for enterprises is not only the purely amount of the bank loans they apply for. First of all liquidity is represented by the remuneration for their own work, in other words by the due and punctual payment of their invoices. (...) We have to support SME's by ensuring that they are paid on time, for all transactions, especially transactions with public administration"*. The urgency of this matter becomes all too clear once we consider that public procurement currently accounts for around 16% of the EU's GDP.

The Vice-President discussed about the on going political work on the construction industry, access to raw materials, tourism and green cars. He later met Sergio Marchionne, the CEO of FIAT. The two exchanged views on the situation of the automotive industry and on the possibility to stimulate and preserve employment and wealth in Member States, so as to create a suitable environment to attract investments in Europe.