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European Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry

“Mainstreaming of industrial competitiveness”

We are already working on this important document. The roadmap should concentrate on 4 pillars:

1. Access to markets

Despite the excellent progress made so far, there is still potential to complete the internal market with measures to remove the remaining barriers that hamper the competitiveness and growth of businesses. We intend to continue improving the standardization of products, intensifying the integration of business services and progressing with greater determination to create a digital internal market. In parallel, we also have to promote an effective internationalization strategy and further improve access to third country markets for European companies. In this context, the bilateral trade agreements that the EU is negotiating with significant economic partners are very important. Our efforts will focus on ensuring that the marketplace created by these agreements translates into improved market access for European firms, taking into account their defensive interests. In this regard, I am aware of the opportunities and complexities of the trade agreement with the United States. I will be vigilant in ensuring that European industry interests and concerns are taken into account. We also need to strengthen the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), whose information centres in 50 countries provide a valuable support to European businesses. We also need to continue with the Missions for Growth initiated by my predecessor, which are already translating into the opening of markets and facilitating industrial agreements. I hope that this instrument will continue to receive your support as a useful tool for the internationalization of our companies.

2. Access to inputs

It is essential to facilitate European companies' access to finance. Along with the positive efforts of the European Central Bank, we have to fully implement the tools at our disposal as soon as possible. I am referring to the COSME programme, which will be operational in the next few days, following the operating agreement with the European Investment Fund. I am also referring to the programme Horizon 2020 and the Structural Funds. We are also aware that European industry needs to face affordable costs for its energy sources, and to reduce the competitive advantage, in terms of cost, that important international competitors have been enjoying so far. The Commission intends to operate on several fronts: enhancing energy efficiency, reducing the dependence from abroad, strengthening energy efficiency, and completing the internal market on energy. Finally, on the availability of skilled professionals, the Commission is committed to promoting a dual system of education and training which has given excellent results in some Member States.

3. Smart industry and innovation

Support for innovation is the growth engine of our industry. The Horizon 2020 programme, with its budget of 80 billion euro, is the foundation of this support activity. In particular, it aims at the promotion and dissemination of Key Enabling Technologies (KETs), including the development of advanced manufacturing and green technologies that, in the coming years, will be among the key drivers of innovation and industrial competitiveness. There will also be €100 billion from the Structural Funds for the 2014-2020 period, with the aim of enabling the regions to develop industrial innovation, in particular through clusters and demonstrative projects.

4. A business friendly regulatory framework

To ensure the competitiveness of our businesses we need to reduce the administrative burden and make the economic environment more conducive to business. In this context, I support the actions announced in the REFIT programme. I am also considering a more systematic and effective use of impact assessments, competitiveness proofing, cumulative cost assessments, and impact tests on SMEs to be used both for European and national legislation.

Mainstreaming of industrial competitiveness

In addition to the four pillars that I have just presented, a significant element of the Roadmap will be the integration of competitiveness into all our policies (mainstreaming). To achieve this goal we will need to improve the mechanisms for the coordination of decision making on industrial policy at EU, national and regional level because mainstreaming does not only concern the EU but also the individual Member States.

For further info on the Industrial Renaissance:

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-42_en.htm

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-37_en.htm