

Committed to Europe

Agenda for Action
2019-2024



Introduction

The last five years have tested European unity and the post-war world order. From the Brexit vote to the rise of populism, the European Union (EU) had to demonstrate its ability to take the lead and deliver for European citizens. As the effects of digitalisation and globalisation continue to transform our economies, societies around the world are pressured to become more resilient. Tackling global challenges such as rising inequalities, climate change and migration require collective leadership and bold policy action.

The EU is the engine of peace and prosperity across the continent and we need to continue strengthening it. Every day citizens and businesses experience the tremendous benefits of European integration. The Single Market unleashed new opportunities for companies of all sizes and turned Europe into one of the world's most attractive regions for investment. The EU also plays a leading role on the global stage, standing up for democracy, human rights, multilateralism, open trade and the rule of law.

As American companies committed to Europe, the competitiveness of the region in the global economy is of utmost importance to us. Aggregate US investment in Europe totalled €2 trillion in 2017 and directly supports more than 4.7 million jobs. Across Europe we play a key role in supporting and ensuring the prosperity of local communities, which together contribute to making a stronger EU that continues to be a powerful innovation hub and preferred investment destination.

This *Agenda for Action* outlines the four priority areas we believe should drive the political agenda over the next five years: empowering people, boosting the Single Market, leading global cooperation and investing in the future. With sustained focus, Europe can remain one of the most attractive regions in the world to do business, but also one of the best places to live, study, work and raise a family.

This is not the time for ‘business as usual’. There is a legitimate expectation for business to contribute to the communities in which they operate and behave responsibly. We have done this for the last century in Europe and will continue to do so. Through our actions, we have committed to addressing societal issues such as education, sustainability and gender equality. No one can do this alone and we need to foster a culture of partnership between all parts of society. If government, business and civil society organisations work side by side, we can bring Europe forward together.

Priority areas

Empowering people

- Education
- Skills
- Inclusion

Leading global cooperation

- Transatlantic partnership
- Trade and investment
- Sustainable development

Boosting the Single Market

- Smart regulation
- Better harmonisation and implementation
- Capital, digital, energy and transport

Investing in the future

- Human capital
- Research and innovation
- Infrastructure and best-in-class public procurement



Empowering people

The lives of citizens across the world have been greatly impacted by the combined effects of technological change and globalisation. Many have benefited from better livelihoods, rising living standards and improved connectivity, but others have also been left behind. We need to make globalisation more inclusive and ensure its benefits are widespread.

Alongside civil society and government, business has a key role to play in helping all parts of society cope with the effects of change.

Improving citizens' well-being and building more resilient societies requires a joint commitment to the reform of education systems, the development of new skills and the support of more inclusive and sustainable growth models.

In times of profound change, it is also critical to protect the values that make up the very fabric of our societies. Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are at the core of the European project. They define who we are and are worth standing up for.



Education

People's empowerment and openness start with diverse learning experiences through each step in the education system, onto apprenticeships and then the workplace. Employers need a workforce with inter-disciplinary profiles and transferable skills such as the ability to work in a team, creative, critical and collaborative thinking, problem-solving, adaptability, curiosity and learning. Developing these skills should be a key priority for education systems. These should open up to new methods and familiarise students with different types of literacy. The teaching of core subjects in the arts and humanities remains critical as it supports mutual understanding, respect and cohesion.

- **Support exchange programmes for primary school students between European countries;**
- **Address vocational and technical education training by promoting apprenticeships and ensuring workplace training schemes through cooperation between schools and employers;**
- **Encourage public-private partnerships in curricula development to ensure the inclusion of in-demand skills and specific business requirements;**
- **Increase investment in high-quality teacher training, facilities and infrastructure.**

Skills



The wave of technological transformation strongly impacts the workplace. The nature of many jobs as well as work lives are being redefined. As the process of learning and acquiring new skills is no longer linear, the same goes for careers. From education to vocational training schemes, learning needs to be understood as an ongoing process in a rapidly evolving environment. An individual never stops learning. Social and cognitive skills will play a critical role in the workplace of the future.

- **Encourage employees to engage in lifelong learning and re-education through business-sponsored reskilling and upskilling;**
- **Incentivise employers to set up training schemes through collective and individual innovative modules with tax incentives, learning accounts or training funds;**
- **Provide standardised certifications of such innovative programmes to enhance their recognition;**
- **Facilitate collaboration within industry and between Member States to help public authorities and small companies provide reskilling and lifelong learning initiatives.**

Inclusion



The EU is ‘united in diversity’: it draws its strength from the mix of cultures its Member States bring together. Empowering people also means giving an equal opportunity to each citizen to have a fulfilling and healthy life. Gender, age, origin, social background, sexual orientation or health condition should never become barriers to success and well-being. Diversity supports economic growth. It strengthens companies’ ability to innovate, respond to new consumers’ demands and adapt to changing environments. Initiatives in Member States should focus on inclusion to build more resilient societies.

- **Promote democracy and human rights in Europe and around the world;**
- **Support programmes for the economic integration of European citizens impacted by globalisation and of migrant populations;**
- **Promote curricula focussed on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), particularly for female students, to ensure greater gender balance in the labour market;**
- **Support industry-led initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace.**



Boosting the Single Market

The Single Market is one of the EU's greatest achievements. It has transformed the way people live, study, travel and do business in Europe. Turning Europe into one of the most attractive hubs for international investment, the Single Market allows small, medium and large companies to thrive. European citizens can move to other Member States to start a new life and pursue new opportunities. It also brings a greater choice of goods and services at lower prices to consumers.

The Single Market needs to adapt to a changing economy, evolving business models and transformational digital technologies. More can be done to harmonise policies and frameworks for cooperation across Member States to ensure the free movement of people, goods, services and capital. If done right, this also represents an enormous opportunity for Europe to be at the forefront of innovative global regulatory and industrial standards.

While the Single Market is increasingly under pressure, it is crucial to stand up for its achievements and recognise its key role in making Europe an attractive place for investment. Fragmentation would be detrimental to Europe's competitiveness, its influence in a connected and globalised economy and, ultimately, the well-being of its citizens.

Smart regulation



Rules and standards can encourage innovation and the emergence of new goods and services. However, unnecessary administrative burden and regulation also affects growth and makes it more difficult for companies to expand. These often have a disproportionate impact on smaller businesses. Therefore, new legislative initiatives should continue to rely on rigorous science and fact-based impact assessments as well as open and transparent dialogue with public and private actors. Technology neutrality is also a key principle to take into consideration.

- **Build on the Better Regulation agenda and further promote smart regulation initiatives within the EU institutions and across Member States;**
- **Encourage increased transparency in impact assessments and in the organisation of the European Commission’s expert groups and consultation processes;**
- **Incorporate science and fact-based impact assessments for all proposed directives and regulations as well as transparent processes for delegated and implementing acts;**
- **Focus on implementation, not on new legislation, in cases where transposition is lacking or ineffective to avoid overlap and confusion with existing standards and rules.**

Better harmonisation and implementation



Inconsistent implementation and transposition of legislation prevent the Single Market from functioning properly. It is more effective to allocate resources to enforcing and monitoring existing legislation, than to develop new initiatives. Across a range of policy areas, gaps remain in the Single Market due to conflicting national laws or standards. Member States should continue to commit to ambitious harmonisation efforts if the Single Market is to bring benefits to citizens and business.

- **Ensure that rules and standards are applied across the EU in a consistent manner, to protect consumers and to incentivise investment;**
- **Support the simplification of EU law and the reduction of administrative burden;**
- **Favour the use of regulations over directives to avoid lengthy transposition processes and diverging implementation, which risk counter-productive ‘gold-plating’.**

Capital, digital, energy and transport



The Single Market needs to be fit for the challenges and opportunities ahead, from digitalisation and climate change, to market openness and connected mobility. EU institutions should incentivise investment in technological innovation. Efforts to strengthen the Single Market in capital, digital, energy and transport are critical to create the innovation-friendly environment that all companies – small and large and from all sectors – need to succeed.

- **Address remaining barriers to the creation of a truly European energy market to bring more competitive prices for citizens and businesses;**
- **Complete the Single European Transport Area, further develop trans-European networks, high-quality infrastructure and interoperable standards and enable all technologies to compete equally;**
- **Move forward in building a comprehensive and open Capital Markets Union, focused on market-led solutions which recognise the global nature of capital markets;**
- **Remove barriers for the public and private sectors to invest in digitalisation, create a more dynamic and risk-willing regulatory framework enabling digital innovation and entrepreneurship and foster trust and safety for consumers.**



Leading global cooperation

The world's most pressing issues can only be addressed through global cooperation. Whether it is climate change, health, automation or global trade, Europe can play a leading role in supporting increased collaboration at international level. Working together, the EU and the US helped create multilateral institutions and frameworks, ensuring stability and prosperity across the world.

In a time when rules-based trade is being openly challenged, leaders must continue to stand their ground in defence of international cooperation. Raising awareness of how trade works and the value it brings is critical. As globalisation unevenly impacts citizens and companies, it is also important to ensure that the global trading system evolves and becomes more inclusive and sustainable.



Transatlantic partnership

The transatlantic trade and investment relationship is the largest and most economically integrated of its kind in the world. Responsible for around one-third of world GDP and supporting 15 million jobs, it has helped to ensure the prosperity and security of successive generations of Europeans and Americans. Further opening the transatlantic marketplace would bring substantial economic benefits for businesses and consumers. Closer cooperation would also allow the EU and the US to set global standards and to retain their technology leadership. The transatlantic economy is a key driver of growth, innovation and opportunity.

- **Deepen regulatory cooperation across the Atlantic and remove barriers to trade and investment, including tariffs;**
- **Promote open investment and procurement markets and increase access for EU and US companies to each other's markets;**
- **Position small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) at the heart of EU-US initiatives as they stand to gain most from greater transatlantic cooperation;**
- **Continue to develop transatlantic sector-specific cooperation initiatives with a strong focus on research and development (R&D), such as the Transatlantic Defence Industrial Cooperation (TADIC) and the EU-US Energy Council.**

Trade and investment



Trade brings significant benefits to consumers and businesses in Europe, the US and around the world. Today, the EU is the world's largest trading bloc and the largest exporter of manufactured goods and services. This is a success story that has been built on a commitment by the EU to open, rules-based and sustainable trade and investment with partners around the world.

- **Reinforce respect for rules-based trade and multilateral agreements and communicate effectively about the benefits of trade to citizens;**
- **Modernise the World Trade Organization (WTO) with more transparency and efficiency in its decision-making and processes;**
- **Strengthen Member State cooperation in developing and enforcing trade agreements;**
- **Build agreement in international fora to develop common solutions and set global standards, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recommendations on corporate taxation reform.**



Sustainable development

EU policies should aim to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as, but not exclusively, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality and climate action. The EU's global sustainable ambitions should also include working with international partners on global solutions to climate change, as the EU was instrumental in creating the momentum for an energy-efficient and low-carbon economy. Finally, the EU's focus on building a circular economy complements its approach on climate change. These priorities are a great opportunity for companies and citizens to become front runners in new technology solutions and practices that embrace innovation and sustainability.

- **Facilitate the development and deployment of sustainable technologies to help reach the SDGs;**
- **Support the implementation of the Paris Agreement to reach climate objectives and as an opportunity to enhance innovation;**
- **Ensure the consistent implementation of regulatory frameworks for the circular economy at EU and Member State level and eliminate barriers to the development of the necessary infrastructure to do so;**
- **Focus on the compatibility of the chemical, waste and product-specific legislations for transitioning to a circular economy and harnessing global action to reduce waste.**



Investing in the future

The EU budget should prioritise investment in areas where European action delivers the largest added value to the European economy and society and where it most efficiently complements national spending programmes. Although relatively small compared to national budgets, the EU budget can be a powerful multiplier. It can help pool cross-border resources, trigger private investment and fill financing gaps for innovative projects.

In order to compete globally, the EU should increase funding in key areas such as human capital, research and innovation and modern infrastructure. With the right focus, the EU budget can continue to support job creation and sustainable growth.

Human capital



The well-being of societies should be at the heart of the EU's funding efforts. Whether it is through investing in youth, promoting the mobility of European students and workers or supporting healthier lifestyles, EU programmes make a true difference in the lives of European citizens. Supporting social mobility efforts and fostering the exchange of best practices is particularly critical as they develop important soft skills – from languages to cultural understanding. They contribute to the productivity of the workforce but also foster the resilience of citizens.

- **Support programmes aimed at fostering human skills and exchanges, such as the Erasmus+, Youth Employment Initiative and Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs;**
- **Develop new public-private partnerships with Member States aiming at transferring business and digital skills to all parts of society;**
- **Ensure an ambitious level of funding for the future EU Health Programme (2021-2027) to encourage healthier and more active lifestyles and to improve both well-being and nutrition habits.**

Research and innovation



Strong R&D programmes create a culture of innovation, encourage entrepreneurship and support the development of pioneering technologies. Horizon 2020 is a prime example of successful efforts to ensure that the EU remains an attractive innovation hub. The creation of high-quality jobs in research and innovation will modernise industry and develop new services in Europe. The new framework programme (FP9) is an opportunity to advance these objectives. The overall regulatory environment needs to be conducive to the uptake of new technologies by facilitating market access. Further investment should be channelled towards strategic fields such as artificial intelligence, energy or life sciences. Research and innovation can help tackle some of the world's largest challenges, like ageing population, air pollution and climate change.

- **Prioritise R&D and innovation programmes in the EU budget;**
- **Ensure all EU programmes are open to transatlantic companies of all sizes;**
- **Guarantee that funding is available throughout a project's lifetime, from the R&D phase to the deployment of new technologies on the market;**
- **Maintain and strengthen the existing framework for intellectual property rights protection, as an essential tool to safeguard investments into creativity and innovation across sectors.**

Infrastructure and best-in-class public procurement



Investing in the EU's backbone infrastructure can boost its competitiveness significantly. Building strong networks across Europe for transport, energy, digital infrastructure and telecommunications is key to strengthening the free movement of people, goods, services and capital. Member States need the EU's support to fulfil ambitious obligations agreed at EU and international level. Public procurement with strong sustainable requirements offers an opportunity to address these issues by stimulating innovation and supporting the development of new technologies. The implementation of EU public procurement rules with qualitative, value-based criteria can facilitate access to the best available technologies and encourage the creation of skilled jobs in Europe.

- **Draw on European structural funds to support national pilot projects which can help reach EU and international policy objectives, such as the UN SDGs;**
- **Increase funding under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) to modernise digital, energy and transport infrastructure;**
- **Favour high-standard, best-in-class public procurement selection criteria to support the uptake of sustainable solutions and technologies.**



AmCham EU speaks for American companies committed to Europe on trade, investment and competitiveness issues. It aims to ensure a growth-orientated business and investment climate in Europe. AmCham EU facilitates the resolution of transatlantic issues that impact business and plays a role in creating better understanding of EU and US positions on business matters. Aggregate US investment in Europe totalled more than €2 trillion in 2017, directly supports more than 4.7 million jobs in Europe, and generates billions of euros annually in income, trade and research and development.

American Chamber of Commerce to the EU (AmCham EU)

Avenue des Arts/Kunstlaan 53, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

+32 2 513 68 92

info@amchameu.eu

amchameu.eu

@AmChamEU

