

Boosting regions as centres of innovation for a competitive industrial sector in Europe

Local and regional politicians adopted recommendations for European industry adapting to a new age at the plenary session of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) on 23 March in Brussels. The [opinion](#) drawn up by Heinz Lehmann (DE/EPP) highlights the potential of cities and regions to serve as hubs for innovation and so support Europe's global industrial competitiveness.

In a rapidly changing world, the aim of an EU industrial policy strategy at European level is to respond to current and future challenges and opportunities in order to enhance the competitiveness of European industry. Cities and regions have an important part to play in supporting industry's capacity for change and innovation to make it fit for the digital age.

" The EU provides ways of maintaining and expanding a globally competitive industry. Innovation, investment in key enabling technologies, digitalisation, leadership in a low-carbon and circular economy, and a focus on important projects of common European interest are important pillars in making Europe's industry future-proof . Local and regional authorities need to be on board, as they have important powers and competences in critical areas such as research and innovation, education and skills, export support, infrastructure, SMEs and regulation ", notes **Heinz Lehmann** (DE/EPP), member of Saxony regional parliament.

Given the centrality of regions and regional ecosystems to industrial modernisation and innovation, the rapporteur calls for the EU's strategy to have a strong regional dimension. He also recommends more investment in the infrastructure necessary for advancing digitalisation, and urges better support for start-ups, scale-ups and cluster initiatives.

" Regional clusters like the Silicon Saxony Cluster are good examples of regional ecosystems: they offer jobs and vocational training at local level, they are unique in and for Europe, and they are anchored in global value chains . Together with other regional and interregional networks such as the MERGE lightweight construction cluster, the European Network of Chemical Regions ECRN or the Vanguard Initiative they can boost a region's image as a centre for innovation and prevent emigration, shortages of skilled labour, and a small-scale economy ", **Mr Lehmann** adds.

The rapporteur also points out that a well-functioning single market that provides free and fair access to the European market will help to better integrate local and regional companies in global value chains. All regions – including rural areas – should be able to participate in value creation and should have the opportunity to create and retain skilled local jobs. He stresses that competitive business services are increasingly important for the productivity and cost competitiveness of industry and essential to its

success.

More information:

CoR opinion: [A European strategy for industry: the role and perspective of regional and local authorities](#)

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