



#CECIMOBruusselsForum24

CECIMO BRUSSELS FORUM 2024

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



CECIMO BRUSSELS FORUM 2024 SPEAKERS



Irene Bader
DMG Mori



Christian Bölling
EIT Manufacturing



René Delbé
Microsoft



Nathalie Errard
Airbus



Filip Geerts
CECIMO



Kerstin Jorna
European Commission



Maria Linkova-Nijs
European Automobile
Manufacturers' Association



Enrico Letta
Jacques Delors Institute



Stephane Perret
FANUC Europe



Signe Ratso
European Commission



Thomas Schneider
TRUMPF



Amaryllis Verhoeven
European Commission



Yvan Verougstraete
European Parliament



Damir Glas
CECIMO
(Master of Ceremony)



Andrew Lynch
Irish MAnufacturing Research
(Moderator)



OPENING REMARKS

By Filip Geerts, Director General, CECIMO

The 2024 CECIMO Brussels Forum was officially opened by CECIMO Director General, Mr. Filip Geerts, who set the tone for the event by reflecting on the significant political developments Europe has experienced over the past year. He also highlighted the future of EU industrial policy, emphasising the importance of the new strategic agenda that will shape the next five years.

In his opening remarks, he pointed out that the EU's competitiveness relies on a unified voice from both policymakers and industry leaders. He underscored the importance of combining the strengths of both perspectives: the expertise, innovative ideas, and practical solutions brought by industry leaders, and the frameworks and support provided by policymakers that drive growth and stability. Together, these strengths unify Europe and foster collective progress.





FIRST KEYNOTE SPEECH

By Enrico Letta, President of the Jacques Delors Institute, former Prime Minister of Italy

In his keynote speech, Mr. Enrico Letta, President of the Jacques Delors Institute, former Prime Minister of Italy and author of the highly anticipated report on the EU Single market reflected on the pressing need for Europe to reassert its leadership in finance and industry, sectors that were largely overlooked in favour of branding and creativity at the start of the century. He acknowledged this strategic misjudgement as a shared failure among European leaders, which has left the continent at a competitive disadvantage in areas crucial for economic prosperity. Letta's recent report serves as a stark warning, calling for immediate, united action to relaunch industrial and financial integration at a European level. He described this as a pivotal moment, arguing that Europe's future competitiveness hinges on a shared sense of purpose, or "ourness". This unity, he contended, is essential for revitalising the Single Market and ensuring Europe's position as a global leader. The momentum provided by initiatives such as the most recent Budapest Declaration on the New European Competitiveness Deal, which aligns with his report's recommendations, demonstrates promising progress, yet he cautioned that time is of the essence.

In his speech, Mr. Letta emphasised stakeholder engagement and staying in touch with European citizens and industry. He also welcomed the European Commission's recent focus on competitiveness and industrial strategy. Looking ahead, Mr. Letta called for renewed leadership in sectors such as finance, telecommunications, energy, and defence, which have been neglected but remain fundamental to ensuring Europe's economic resilience and strategic autonomy in the coming years.



SECOND KEYNOTE SPEECH

By Signe Ratso, Deputy Director General of the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), European Commission

In her keynote speech, Ms. Signe Ratso, Deputy Director General of the DG RTD, focused on the vital role of manufacturing in Europe's economy. Despite all the challenges it faces, manufacturing is at the heart of Europe's competitiveness, prosperity and sustainability, intertwined with other key industries, such as transport and energy.

Additionally, Ms. Ratso addressed the broader challenges facing the European manufacturing sector, including geopolitical tensions, supply chain vulnerabilities, and slow adoption of digital tools such as artificial intelligence. She highlighted the lagging progress among SMEs, which often struggle to implement advanced manufacturing technologies despite their innovative potential. Strengthening support for SMEs and integrating them into broader industrial networks were identified as key opportunities for enhancing Europe's competitiveness. Ms. Ratso emphasised the need to equip the workforce with digital skills, which she described as critical for the future of European industry. She also discussed the "fifth freedom" of research, innovation, and data, advocating for its integration into the industrial framework to derisk investments and accelerate progress.

Concluding her address, Ms. Ratso stressed that together, Europe has the potential to not only catch up but to set the global standards for a new era of manufacturing.

COMPETITIVENESS



Panel 1: How Do We Keep the EU Manufacturing Sector Competitive?

The panel discussion on keeping the EU manufacturing sector competitive was moderated by Mr. Andrew Lynch, Chief Network Innovation Officer at Irish Manufacturing Research, who began by questioning whether stakeholders truly grasped the urgency of reindustrialising Europe.

Ms. Nathalie Errard, Head of European Affairs and NATO at Airbus outlined the company's priorities for competitiveness, identifying three key areas: energy prices, labour costs, and skills. She emphasised the need to simplify regulation, arguing that overly complex rules increase costs for businesses and hinder progress. Ms. Errard highlighted the importance of innovation, noting that investing during transitional phases is critical to generating returns. A third priority was achieving scale, which she described as essential for competing globally. Using Airbus as an example, she explained how European cooperation in defence and aviation led to success, while lamenting the fragmented demand and underinvestment that plague Europe's space and defence industries today. She warned that the United States invests six times more than Europe in these sectors, underscoring the need for coordinated efforts to achieve scale both at home and abroad.

Ms. Maria Linkova-Nijs, Executive Head of Policy & Strategy from ACEA (European Automobile Manufacturers' Association) echoed the urgency of addressing regulatory challenges, particularly for the automotive sector.

Mr. Thomas Schneider, Managing Director for Development at TRUMPF offered insights into the challenges of investment and global competition. He noted Europe's past of exporting manufacturing goods abroad, particularly to China, as an issue that now requires reinvestment into European facilities. Mr Schneider stressed the need for cross-industry collaboration to overcome fragmentation and to leverage digitalisation. Highlighting positive momentum in initiatives like Catena-X, he expressed optimism about Europe's ability to lead in transformative technologies if it adopts a unified mindset.

Ms. Amaryllis Verhoeven, Acting Director Ecosystems II and Head of Unit for Digital Transformation of Industry in DG Grow at the European Commission, discussed the regulatory landscape. In her address, she acknowledged that EU regulation aims to prevent fragmentation, but inconsistent implementation by member states often creates complications for industries. Ms. Verhoeven also emphasised the importance of pooling public funds under programmes like InvestEU to support strategic sectors and achieve better value for money. However, she noted that overcoming these challenges ultimately depends on political will, a recurring theme throughout the discussion.

In closing, the panel agreed on the need for bold action to position Europe as a leader in manufacturing. Ms. Errard and Ms. Linkova-Nijs highlighted the fierce competition from countries like the United States and China, while Ms. Verhoeven and Mr. Schneider emphasised the importance of collaboration, co-creation, and strategic investment. Mr. Lynch summarised the session by reinforcing the idea that innovation is the key to success, urging all stakeholders to work together to overcome regulatory, financial, and cultural challenges. The panel concluded with a sense of cautious optimism, recognising both the significant hurdles ahead and the opportunities for Europe to regain its competitive edge.



FUTURE OF INDUSTRY



Panel 2: What Will a Factory Look Like in the Future?

The second panel discussion, also moderated by Mr. Andrew Lynch, focused on the future of factories, examining the impact of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and data sharing. Ms. Irene Bader, Executive Board member and Chief Marketing Officer at DMG MORI, identified automation, digitalisation, and AI as key pillars of modern manufacturing. She stressed the barriers that SMEs face, such as a lack of resources and skilled workforce. Ms. Bader highlighted the importance of bridging the data gap between large and small companies by promoting knowledge-sharing rather than sharing raw data itself, which could lower entry barriers for SMEs. Addressing sustainability, she highlighted the importance of minimising waste, recycling materials, and extending the lifecycle of machines through repair and refurbishment, aligning with the EU's sustainability goals.

Mr. Rene Delbé, Worldwide Sustainability Community Lead at Microsoft expanded on the role of AI, stating that its integration in the workforce has already begun, with applications such as predictive maintenance and robot optimisation enhancing efficiency. He stressed that while AI is transformative, humans remain central to decision-making processes. However, he warned that companies not adopting AI could face job losses, as employees who use AI will gain a competitive advantage. Mr. Delbé highlighted the importance of data sharing for the factories of the future but acknowledged the hesitancy and regulatory challenges surrounding it. He also underscored the critical need for cybersecurity as factories increasingly connect IoT devices and integrate OT and IT systems.

On sustainability, he shared Microsoft's ambition to be carbon negative by 2030, acknowledging the challenges while expressing optimism about progress. He envisioned future factories prioritising sustainability, seamless data-sharing, and detailed emission reporting.

Mr. Stephane Perret, Head of Sales Coordination at FANUC Europe emphasised the need for skilled workers in manufacturing, noting that the lack of skilled personnel is one of the industry's most significant challenges. He discussed the potential of collaborative robots, or "cobots," which not only assist workers but can also adapt to human-generated orders. Mr. Perret highlighted the role of AI in tasks such as preheating machines, predictive maintenance, and data analysis, but noted that companies are still reluctant to share data openly. Regarding sustainability, he advocated for a balance between performance enhancement and sustainability, referencing the "right to repair" as a critical component of making manufacturing more sustainable. This approach, he argued, helps extend product lifecycles while maintaining competitiveness.

Mr. Christian Bölling, Managing Director at EIT Manufacturing Central stressed the importance of upskilling workers to handle AI and advanced technologies, highlighting the need for training during the transition phase. In this regard, EIT Manufacturing has launched large-scale programmes aimed at training one million workers, from blue-collar to white-collar roles, in areas such as cybersecurity, AI, and quantum technologies. He pointed out that startups play a pivotal role in driving innovation, as they bring fresh ideas to established industries. However, he noted that this requires an openness to collaboration and a willingness to integrate new concepts into business processes. Mr. Bölling emphasised the importance of embracing a positive and experimental mindset, encouraging people to be open to trying new solutions, even if they might fail at first.

In closing, the panellists shared a cohesive vision for the factory of the future, each offering complementary insights. Mr. Delbé emphasised the importance of seamless data-sharing frameworks and comprehensive emission reporting systems as foundational pillars. Building on this, Ms. Bader envisioned interdisciplinary teams collaborating to tackle complex challenges, while Mr. Perret stressed the need for greater cooperation on AI and wider access to actionable data. Mr. Bölling concluded by advocating for a culture of experimentation and openness to new ideas, highlighting the pivotal role of start-ups in driving innovation. Together, they painted a future where factories are technologically advanced, sustainable, secure, and centred on human collaboration and ingenuity.





OPENING OF THE MACHINE TOOLS INNOVATION AWARDS

By Kerstin Jorna, Director General at Director-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) , European Commission

Ms. Kerstin Jorna, Director General at DG GROW at the European Commission, officially opened the 2024 MTI Awards with her address, highlighting the Commission's unwavering support for the manufacturing sector as a cornerstone of Europe's economy and a key player in achieving decarbonisation. She stressed the shift from defining "what" needs to be done under the Green Deal to focusing on "how" through practical implementation. Addressing critical areas such as raw materials, clean energy, and resource efficiency, Ms. Jorna emphasised the importance of affordable, renewable energy, particularly for energy-intensive sectors like chemicals and metals. Acknowledging challenges like intermittency in renewable energy supply, she called for optimised grid systems and solutions to ensure sustainability and competitiveness.

On financing, Ms. Jorna underscored the need for smarter risk-taking to attract private capital, citing tools like InvestEU and the Capital Markets Union as essential for aligning public and private funding. She highlighted innovative mechanisms such as hydrogen banks to drive clean hydrogen markets, while advocating for reduced dependency on non-European components to foster local industries. To boost demand for sustainable products like green steel, Ms. Jorna proposed incentivising early adoption through public procurement and corporate venturing. She concluded with a call for strategic collaboration and innovative thinking across governance levels, urging manufacturers to lead Europe's transition towards a sustainable, competitive, and resilient economy.

MACHINE TOOLS INNOVATION AWARDS

As part of the 2024 Brussels Forum, the second edition of the MTI Awards took place, recognising and celebrating exceptional contributions to the machine tool industry.

In addition to the MTI Award for Best Overall Solution, the 2024 edition has introduced two new subcategories this year: Green Impact Award - for outstanding sustainability potential and contribution to a greener future and SME Excellence Award - for the best solutions presented by small and medium-sized enterprises.

The 2024 **MTI Award for Best Overall Solution** was proudly awarded to **AdaptX** for its innovative project, "Eliminating Metalworking Fluids: A Sustainable Path to Efficient Machining." The award was accepted by the company's co-founder, Mr. Tim Bornemann. As part of this prestigious recognition, AdaptX will have the opportunity to showcase their project at EMO Hanover 2025.

The Green Impact Award was won by **Prima Additive** for their project, "Metal AM for Industrial Mass Production: Flexible Robotic System for Brake Discs Coating to Enable Sustainability in Automotive." The award was accepted by Mr. Paolo Calefati, CEO of Prima Additive, while the SME Excellence Award was presented to **Valcun** for their project, "Deployable Metal Additive Manufacturing for Industry." The award was accepted by Mr. Jonas Galle, CEO and Co-founder of Valcun.





THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING THE 2024 CECIMO BRUSSELS FORUM!

We look forward to welcoming you to our upcoming events.

A big thank you to our sponsors!

