

A call for the European preference
(Oped to be signed by European industry leaders)

2026 dawned on a world we did not think we'd see again. A world governed by power relations.

Customs duties, massive subsidies, export restrictions, intellectual property violations - international competition has never been so unfair. As the rules of trade are being redefined, we have no choice anymore.

Without an ambitious, effective and pragmatic industrial policy, the European economy is doomed to be just a playground for its competitors. The risks are around the corner: jeopardising our flagship industries and our know-how; shrinking Europe's global industrial manufacturing footprint; letting our continent gradually degenerate into a mere assembly line for external powers.

We cannot let this happen.

That is why, for over a year now, the European Commission, hand in hand with Europe's business leaders, have put competitiveness back at the heart of Europe's geopolitical agenda. Together, we are doing everything we can to improve our industries' access to energy, to raw materials, to investments, to skills and of course, to our market of 450 million consumers.

And yet, this is not enough. The figures speak for themselves. Last year alone, for example, the European Union recorded a record trade deficit of 350 billion euro vis-à-vis China.

So what can we do?

Our answer can be summed up in three words, which have the advantage of being understood in every language across the world: "made in Europe". The Chinese have "Made in China", the Americans have "Buy American", and most other economic powers have similar schemes, that give preference to their own strategic assets. So why not us?

Now is the time for Europe to produce more, and above all, more strategically. To ensure our economic security, we must support and de-risk our key value chains.

We, as economic and political leaders, need to collectively do what we have never dared to try before – mainly out of fear, ideology or habit. We must establish, once and for all, a genuine European preference in our most strategic sectors. It is based on a very simple principle : whenever European public money is used, it must contribute to European production.

Whether a public auction, a direct State aid support or any another form of financial support, the beneficiary company will have to produce a substantial part of its output on European soil. We must of course also apply this logic to foreign direct investments.

And we will apply it 'the European way'. That means without bureaucracy. And taking care to pre-test the economic impacts, to involve our trusted international partners, and to comply with international law.

True to our DNA, we will ensure a necessary balance between preserving Europe's openness to its truster partners, yet promoting our interests by ensuring a level playing field with our

competitors, supporting and protecting our industry, our intellectual capital, our workforce and our values.

This is the rationale that we will defend in every initiative, starting with the Industrial Accelerator Act, which the Commission will present at the end of this month.

This Act is not just another piece of legislation, it is an act of economic independence, a direct implementation of the Draghi report, a call for clear preference for all those who choose Europe.