



European Chemical Regions Network for a competitive Europe

The European Chemical Regions Network (ECRN) highlights the following recommendations for consideration in the debate on industrial competitiveness at the European Council meeting on 20-21 March 2014:

- A **coherent, integrated and effective policy framework** is important for supporting, fostering and enabling industrial competitiveness. Europe's industry should be strengthened given the great potential and spill-over-effects for job creation, having in mind the DG Enterprise & Industry's 20 per cent target for the EU.
- The **key role of regions** and the importance of **regional dialogues and stakeholder collaboration**, including dialogues on industrial development, need to be recognized and leveraged.
- European Council's discussions on industrial policy provide an opportunity to reach concrete steps to enshrine **innovation at the core of EU industrial policy**, and to pave the way for a **more sustainable and low-carbon-economy**.
- **SMEs have a highly important role in competitiveness and innovation** and should be supported with dedicated efforts.
- Considering i.a. the **smart specialisation** approach, activities on innovation need to focus on strengths, enhance **access to finance**, particularly in Europe's regions affected by credit crunch, and leverage **new financing instruments/synergies**.
- **Skills needs and challenges** vary across Europe and regions and therefore collaboration and targeted measures against skill shortage should be adopted where needed at the relevant policy level, facilitated by the EU.
- To address the issue of **energy prices** in Europe, greater coordination and adjustments in energy regulations should be sought, where useful, and a high degree of **energy and resource efficiency** should be ensured in the EU. This would contribute to avoiding disparities in terms of regional and international competitiveness. A climate of openness to new technologies and innovative solutions or alternatives is necessary.
- **Raw materials, resource efficiency, energy efficiency and bio-economy** are important areas for future development and need to be addressed at all levels with sustainable policies and strategies.

- EU measures in the field of **energy and climate policies** should therefore be developed in coordination with **industrial policy** considerations so as to profit from a maximum of **synergies** through an **integrated and coherent** horizontal policy framework.
- **International trade and support for internationalization** are keys to competitiveness, especially for SMEs. **Cluster activities**, including at the regional and trans-regional level, can play an important role in this context and should be supported by the EU.

*European Chemical Regions Network (ECRN)
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The European Chemical Regions Network (ECRN) is an association of regional authorities from across Europe. Originally started as an INTERREG project in 2004, the ECRN has now a permanent Secretariat in Brussels and is registered as an association under German law. ECRN is recognized as a European stakeholder for regional issues concerning the chemical industry and policies. The network represents regions where chemical industry is an integral part of the local economy and seeks to bring regions together to tackle the challenges by exchanging information and exploring solutions to common problems. The aim of the ECRN is to improve the competitiveness of chemical regions, facilitate collaboration between regions, and to represent the common interests of the chemical regions in Europe.



EUROPEAN CHEMICAL
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