

## ACEA BOARD STATEMENT: MAKING THE CASE FOR EUROPE

On 25 March we will celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European project. Exactly six decades ago, the foundations of the EU were laid with the Treaty of Rome. On behalf of the 15 European automobile manufacturers, we would like to congratulate Europe on its 60<sup>th</sup> birthday – not only policymakers, but also the 500 million citizens that benefit from the EU's achievements on a daily basis.

Unfortunately, recent political developments are putting our continent's confidence to the test. In these times, when principles such as free trade and the freedom of movement are under pressure, it is more important than ever to make the case for a united Europe. Our European project remains one of freedom and prosperity. Sixty years of integration has been a powerful catalyst for growth, long-lasting peace and stability. Most of all, the EU has enabled its citizens to thrive – both socially and economically.

Our industry values the EU for enabling the free movement of goods, people, services and capital, all key to growth and competitiveness. We now enjoy access to a single market of half a billion consumers, who in turn can profit from the benefits of scale. Today, vehicle manufacturers operate almost 300 plants across the continent, often manufacturing engines in one country and assembling vehicles in another, something that would be impossible without the four freedoms.

At the same time, Europe also enables our companies to contribute to economic growth. Employment in our industry has been going up in recent years, and we now provide jobs for 12.2 million people across the value chain. Moreover, motor vehicles generate a trade surplus of some €100 billion per year for Europe. Looking ahead, the automotive sector invests more than €44.7 billion in R&D each year.

But here's what strikes us: despite the EU's past achievements and future prospects, there's a disturbing level of anxiety in large parts of society. Europe has come under threat. At a time when many countries are putting up barriers instead of removing them, we need to stand by the founding principles of Europe.

Our industry sees the need for an even more competitive Europe with smarter and better regulation. We have faced serious challenges recently. But for us it is clear: we must make the necessary investments to move forward, delivering entirely new levels of clean, smart and safe mobility across Europe. Because in the end, harmonised EU legislation is of

vital importance to us and our customers. Without Europe, we would not have a level playing field in which all 15 of us can compete to offer affordable vehicles to all citizens of Europe. Likewise, following the recent issues faced by the industry, EU rules are important to help win back the trust of consumers.

The simple truth is, trying to turn back time is not a solution. Instead, it is the greatest risk of all. Just like the European Union itself, vehicle manufacturers have never settled for what we have achieved. We have always looked for growth through better solutions and new markets – and took a global perspective in doing so. What is true for our industry, is also important for society: trade barriers, isolation and closing borders are no answers to our challenges. With automotive representing 6.5% of EU GDP, we believe we have a duty to speak up against any attempts to turn back time. It is not about what we can save from the past. It is about being more innovative and working together for a better Europe in which we, as automobile manufacturers, can contribute to growth and employment.

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