

Executive Vice President of the Commission for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition
Teresa Ribera Rodríguez
 Executive Vice President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy **Stéphane Séjourné**
 Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth **Wopke Hoekstra**

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CC: Executive Vice President of the Commission for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness Roxana Mînzatu, Stéphanie Riso, Director-General for Budget, Kerstin Jorna, Director-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, Kurt Vandenberghe, Director-General for Climate Action, Mario Nava, Director-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

By e-mail

Brussels, 12.02. 2025

A Future-Proof Europe: A Clean Industrial Deal That Works for All

Dear Executive Vice-Presidents Ribera Rodríguez and Séjourné,
 Dear Commissioner Hoekstra,

We strongly support the ambitious Clean Industrial Deal, recognising it as a key pillar of Europe's future. By integrating decarbonisation with competitiveness and social cohesion, the EU has a unique opportunity to lead the global clean-tech transition while addressing Europe's economic and environmental challenges.

For the Clean Industrial Deal to succeed, it must deliver tangible results: accelerating green investment, reducing energy costs and fostering industry-wide innovation. At the same time, we urge you to ensure that Europe's people — our greatest asset — remain at the heart of this strategy.

People at the Core of Europe's Competitiveness and the Clean Industrial Deal

Vice President Teresa Ribera has rightly emphasised the urgent need to expand the active workforce and equip individuals with the right skills to sustain Europe's economic strength. Impact investors, social entrepreneurship and social innovation play a critical role in enabling workforce participation for those who face the greatest barriers to employment. This includes people with disabilities, refugees and disadvantaged groups.

Leveraging Social Innovation for an Inclusive Workforce

1) Empowering People with Disabilities through Technology

- Irisbond (Bolsa Social): Eye-tracking technology enabling individuals with motor disabilities to communicate via gaze. Impact investment helped scale it from 400 to 1,000 devices.

- **Envision***: AI-powered solutions that make visual and cognitive information accessible to people with low vision or blindness.
- **Whispp***: Assistive voice technology that converts whispered or impaired speech into a natural voice in real-time.

2) Bridging Social & Regional Gaps in Workforce Participation

- **ReloSync***: AI-powered support for refugees navigating relocation, bureaucracy and job markets.
- **VOXivers***: AI-driven speech therapy tools helping children improve communication skills.
- **Subul***: A social enterprise fostering tech talent among refugees and disadvantaged individuals.

3) Strengthening Europe's Talent Pipeline

- **Women in Tech & Low-Code Academy***: Broadening access to STEM and digital careers.
- **Generation Europe**: Equipping underrepresented groups with in-demand tech skills such as cloud computing, cybersecurity and data engineering.

Within industrial decarbonisation efforts, expanding the focus on skills and labour to include social entrepreneurship and social innovation will ensure a holistic approach that drives Europe's competitiveness in a sustainable and socially inclusive way.

Key Recommendations:

1) Integrating Social Innovation into the EU Competitiveness Fund

To maintain Europe's global edge, the EU Competitiveness Fund should explicitly incorporate social innovation and impact investment when they contribute to competitiveness in strategic sectors.

Investing in Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship through InvestEU

Competitiveness and clean industrialisation are deeply tied to financial security, mental health and well-being. Impact investors are driving solutions that enhance financial literacy, workforce resilience and social support systems:

1) Mental Health & Well-being

- **Data Against Data**: Helping individuals regain control of their digital lives for improved mental health and productivity.
- **Oncowellness***: Supporting companies in managing cancer risks and facilitating a smooth return to work for employees.

2) Financial Health & Inclusion

- **VVALY* & Oranžová Obálka**: Financial wellness tools supporting employees' mental and financial health.

- Monytri* & Bugeto*: Bridging financial literacy gaps by integrating fintech and edtech solutions.
- Lendorse*: Providing financial support to STEM students, ensuring access to high-demand careers.

3) Workforce Participation & Social Support

- Long-term care solutions that allow individuals to remain in the workforce instead of leaving jobs to care for family members.
- Childcare and work-life balance policies that improve long-term productivity and retention.

2) Strengthening the InvestEU Social Investment and Skills Window

Beyond workforce participation, social impact, social entrepreneurship and innovation are fundamental to Europe's long-term competitiveness, enhancing financial security, mental health and democratic resilience.

The InvestEU Social Investment and Skills Window, backed by a €2.8 billion EU guarantee, has been instrumental in scaling social enterprises and innovation.

We call on the Commission to increase the budget for InvestEU's Social Investment and Skills Window to further support social impact and innovation, reinforcing Europe's economic resilience.

*Examples provided by NN powered by Rubio Impact Ventures

Lead Markets for the Skills Agenda

We fully support Commissioner Hoekstra's statement to MEPs in the European Parliament's industry committee that "we need to come up with lead markets" e.g., creating the right conditions to foster early adoption and commercialisation of Europe's new technologies or products, to help both emerging and traditional industries. However, this principle must also apply to the Skills Agenda.

As Europe accelerates its digital and green transitions, aligning skillsets with industry needs requires targeted policy intervention. Generation Europe has shown that while corporations seek top-tier talent, millions remain unemployed despite job vacancies. If we do not make reskilling and upskilling opportunities accessible to all Europeans, we risk underutilising the very talent needed to drive large-scale decarbonization across Europe's industries. Social innovation and social entrepreneurship can play a crucial role in bridging this gap, ensuring that economic opportunities are accessible to all.

A perfect example of green and social investments going hand-in-hand in a lead market is The Gravity Wave**, which focuses on removing plastic from the ocean. The company collaborates with local fishermen to extract ocean plastic, transforming it into valuable resources, thus promoting sustainability and community engagement, as fishing communities expand their skills to aid the green transition.

**Example spotlighted by the Cartier Women's Initiative

3) Social Impact as a Condition for EU Competitiveness Fund Access

To drive meaningful change, we recommend that access to the EU Competitiveness Fund be conditioned on allocating 5%-10% to social impact, social entrepreneurship and/or social innovation, ensuring that projects integrate inclusive success strategies and social impact mitigation measures.

Large-scale decarbonisation efforts often worsen inequalities, leaving vulnerable groups without reskilling, upskilling or meaningful participation in the transition. Integrating social innovation into major projects will ensure Europe's competitiveness is sustainable, long-term, and socially inclusive.

4) Embedding Social Considerations in Public Procurement

The Commission's focus on "lead markets" should rightly include measures to create demand for decarbonised goods, such as setting quotas for climate-friendly materials in public procurement. However, these efforts must also include similar measures to create a proportionate demand for social innovation, such as setting similar quotas for social entrepreneurship and social innovation in public procurement.


As the Commission prepares to unveil its Clean Industrial Deal on February 26, we strongly urge that social impact, social entrepreneurship and social innovation be fully integrated into its framework.

At the same time, we call on the Commission to adopt a more catalytic approach to financing the Clean Industrial Deal, ensuring that Europe's budget is used strategically to de-risk investments and, most importantly, to leverage additional national, private and institutional financing. Public funds should not replace private capital, but rather act as a multiplier, crowding in private investment, reducing risk and creating the necessary conditions for sustainable and scalable industrial transformation.

Impact investors and financial intermediaries can play a key role in this process by effectively mobilising capital while accessing EU funding instruments. The InvestEU program has already demonstrated how EU-backed guarantees can provide a crucial confidence signal to investors, helping to unlock private financing that would otherwise remain on the sidelines. Expanding and refining such mechanisms will be essential to ensuring that the Clean Industrial Deal delivers both economic competitiveness and social resilience.

A truly competitive and resilient Europe must work for all its people. We appreciate your attention to these issues and remain available to provide further input on ensuring a competitive, inclusive and forward-looking Europe.

Yours sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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