
GLOBSEC TATRA SUMMIT 2019 FOCUS GROUPS

** Please note that the Focus Groups are preliminary and might be subject to further changes.
Focus Groups will take place in parallel on Friday, 11 October 18:00 – 19:30 and Saturday, 12 October 8:30 – 10:00.**

POST-BREXIT: EU COMPETITIVENESS COMPROMISED?

The possible effects of all the different Brexit scenarios have been widely debated with regards to businesses on both sides of the Channel. Beyond the most fundamental issue of future trade relations, however, lies the question of competitiveness of European businesses post-Brexit. Will the departure of the UK enhance or weaken the European business environment? How will the new rule book affect research and development as well as manufacturing plants of EU-wide businesses currently based in the UK? What can be done to ensure a smooth future cooperation and thus a strong European position on the global playing field?

FUTURE INDUSTRIES

All around Europe, industries face a challenge of digitalisation. New opportunities in connectivity, deployment of AI, 3D printing and other technological innovations rapidly change the way companies do business, educate, hire and employ workforce, and the way they produce, distribute and sell. This change is particularly relevant for countries where economy rely strongly on industrial production, the wider Central Europe being a prime European example. While this transformation has been enabled by technologies, it remains a major test for public institutions, policymaking and human cooperation. Do we have an effective structured dialogue between businesses and public institutions on necessary actions to be taken? What is the role of public institutions, politicians and policymakers in mastering the change? Do we know what needs to be done? Is it clear how responsibilities are divided between the EU, national and municipal level? What tools do governments have available to keep the presence of multinationals in their economies and how do they reach out to their headquarters?

SUSTAINABLE LABOUR FORCE: CHALLENGES AHEAD

Long-term issues such as the aging of population are not attractive in political competition and therefore are often carelessly dismissed by policymakers. However, they might very soon pose real threats to European states. From pension and welfare systems to healthcare and labour market, many areas of public policy will be affected if the current trend continues. What are the solutions for European countries? Are reasonable migration policies the way to go? How can states sustain the care for elderly without overburdening the productive population? Is a European-wide solution tangible?

SMEs – THE FUTURE OF CEE?

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises account for 99% of entrepreneurial entities, yet they are the most vulnerable subjects and are very sensitive to inefficient regulation. The CEE region leads in the number of new SMEs being established; their increased share is especially strong in high-tech sectors. Could SMEs be the recipe for mitigating the dependence of economies on manufacturing and transition towards innovation and entrepreneurship? What regulation and support mechanisms should be adopted on national and European levels to support the growth of SMEs? How can SMEs contribute to the increase of research and development activities?

BELT AND ROAD: CHANCE TO ENHANCE CONNECTIVITY?

Europe and Asia account for over 60% of the world's GDP and their trade exchange reaches around 1,5 trillion euros annually. This creates a demand for stronger connectivity between Europe and Asia, as well as within their macro regions. The Belt and Road Initiative has become a divisive issue for Europe. Some see The Belt and Road Initiative as an opportunity for building infrastructure and attracting foreign investment. Others remain wary of the Chinese global project; warning of its geopolitical implications. Could it be an opportunity to tackle the issue of connectivity on a complex scale? How can the EU and China cooperate to build sustainable and efficient connectivity? Can the EU apply its experience in creating transnational networks on a global scale? What is the role of private sector in this initiative?

TECHNO-NATIONALISM: PURSUIT TO OWNING THE FUTURE?

Guided by protectionist tendencies, policymakers are tempted to apply anti-globalisation principles to technology transfers and innovation. Technological strength is a major determinant of how big a role a nation will play in global affairs; a dynamic that is rendered more complex due to geopolitical realities. There are a host of security implications while the role of private sector players remains undefined even as they lead development of technological capabilities. What, then, is the position of Europe, when the leading tech companies originate from the U.S. or China? What are the implications for the competitiveness of the European Union and can it adopt a unified front?

TAXATION: HOW TO STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN HARMONIZATION AND NATIONAL NEEDS?

Taxation policy is largely reserved to Member States, but the European Union should nevertheless do more to address the concerns of its citizens and combat tax avoidance, evasion and fraud, and at the same time provide more flexibility of implementation at national level. EU should promote predictability in taxes, flexibility and foster innovation by decreasing the cost or providing tax benefits for innovative activities. It has become increasingly important to consider a more efficient law-making in the field of taxation as announced in President's Juncker 2018 State of the Union. How can member states embrace taxes as an efficient tool of regulation? How should tax systems adapt to the disruptive reality we are facing? Can we build a smarter taxation system to fulfil international goals whilst taking into consideration national needs?

DRIVING CEE CLEAN MOBILITY ONTO THE EU AGENDA

The aim of this Tatra Summit 2019 Focus Group is to outline a programme and demand action from incoming Commissioners and MEPs to accelerate the development, application and use of clean transport technology in CEE. The recently published GISM report 'Financing Social and Technological Innovation in CEE Sustainable Mobility' will serve as the basis of discussion focusing on unlocking blending facilities and spurring green transport project pipelines across the region. Since the bloc has agreed to a strong midterm 2030 emissions reduction target, how does CEE translate more ambitious climate and environmental policies into innovative and competitive industries that contribute to economic growth in the future low carbon economy? What are the limiting factors to regional clean mobility investment and what actions can national and local governments take to mitigate them?

GENDER DIVERSITY: KEY FOR INNOVATIONS

According to recent studies, companies supporting gender diversity within their structures, including top management positions, tend to increase their profits between 5 up to 20%. Higher gender diversity boosts both public and private sector's ability to attract and retain talent, and enhances innovation, creativity and openness. Gender diversity has also positive implications in terms of economic growth and sustainable policies on national levels. What impact does a more gender-equal work environment have on innovations and investment? How can we remove the barriers and move towards more gender diverse work environment as well as society? How does a gender equality enabling environment look like?