

Stefan Richter: **Made in EU**

The topic of “branding Europe” cannot be dealt with without talking about European products and brands. The European Single Market can be seen as one of the core principles of the European Union, providing a base for over 21 million SMEs offering their services and goods to more than 500 million EU consumers.



Nevertheless, the EU Single Market is yet incomplete. The internal market for energy is insufficiently prepared to deal with the future challenges of the Energiewende (the energy revolution, meaning the transition of fossil fuels and nuclear to renewables) and its tremendous impact on existing structures. Existing rules and regulations are under very little supervision. Current control mechanisms like the infringement procedure of the European Commission appear to be slow and “toothless”. Finally, the designation of origin “made in EU” is still more based on customs rather than on brands. So it’s not really surprising that the brand value of the top four European brands – together 120 billion euro – is barely equal to the brand value of California based Apple...

An outlook into Europe’s future shows that we will be facing even steeper challenges:

1) Industry 4.0 and the Internet of Things

IT, telecommunications and manufacturing will fuse into one process, turning existing industry processes upside down. Some even say that by 2050, machines will be more intelligent than humans.

So what will happen to the human workforce?

Will new areas of labour be created?

2) Shared Economy

New European generations are building their standards and their way of living on completely different values. It’s not about status symbols any longer. Instead, people demand the quick and easy satisfaction of their needs.

So what will happen to the service sector?

Who will be paying for our social system?

3) Digitalisation

Economy is drifting away from a typically asset-based industry towards cloud-based, highly digitalized products. Future national location policies will have to offer far more incentives to keep their businesses as they will own few stationary assets and therefore will be highly susceptible to be lured abroad.

So are assets no longer needed?

And where will future net value be created?

In spite of the marvelous and fruitful discussions during the YP meeting in Madrid, those questions could not be answered. Nevertheless, three actions could be agreed on:

- We need to find a sustainable partner for the EU Single Market
- We must create a EU Silicon Valley to tackle future challenges
- Inspiration shall be favored instead of any further regulation