

Home » Europe

## 'Eurochambres 60 years: a long time, much content and a lot of success'

Since January 1 and for the second-time Christoph Leittl, former President of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, has been elected President of Eurochambres. EBR had the honour of an exclusive interview with him on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Eurochambres

By: N. Peter Kramer - Posted: Thursday, May 24, 2018

 Gefällt mir 2

 Tweet



text size [-] [+]

Weiterempfehlen 1



'Europe makes up for only 7% of the world population, but accounts for 25% of the world economy and for more than 50% of global social and environmental expenditure, related to our standard of living. The other important world regions are very dynamic. Europe is saturated. The alarm bell is ringing. Wake up Europe, before it is too late!'

### MORE ON EUROPE

[Merkel: Nationalism and egoism out of Europe](#)

[Greek minister: Far-right rise in Europe needs a progressive federalism response](#)

[Never mind Europe's ageing, the EU should focus instead on the impoverished young](#)

[Italy: The new Greece?](#)

[Europe: The psychological gap between East and West](#)

before it is too late!"

"Many people have lost confidence in the European project. Nationalism, egoism, populism rule Europe, instead of unity and solidarity. There are fears of globalisation, technological innovation and migration. But nationalism is not the answer".

#### Q: How to get out of the negative spiral?

**Mr. Leittl:** "We have to find another way. As the business community, we want an open Europe, free trade agreements with all parts of the world and fruitful cooperation with all continents. China, India and others will become stronger; but that must not weaken Europe. We can remain competitive and successful too. With a clear goal and a clear strategy, we can achieve that."

"Do not divide Europe. We need unity. To swim together or to sink alone: that's the question. Let us strengthen our European institutions. We need better coordination instead of centralism; a common foreign visibility towards other parts of the world; an innovation-driven growth and employment. Let me give a concrete proposal: let us double the funding of the EU programme Horizon 2020!"

#### Q: You were already Eurochambres' President from 2001 to 2005. When you look back to that period, what are the most important differences between then and now?

**Mr. Leittl:** "The differences are enormous, it looks to me like a different era, very difficult to compare with nowadays. There was no advanced digitalisation as we are talking about these days, no Artificial Intelligence (AI), no Internet of Things (IoT), no 5G. China was still a quiet, hidden power. We had good relations with Russia, no Ukrainian problem. It was before the 'Big Bang' of the EU; before the crises

by N. Peter Kramer

"1958 – 2018, that is a long time, with much content and a lot of success", Mr Leittl opens the interview, "we are proud of the result. With 46 members, we have more members than the European Union, we are a support for business located in Europe and a bridge-builder for politics.

We have 1700 regional and local chambers, which gives us a lot of power for realising economic goals and strategies. 20 million companies who can give a response to the challenges of our time. These companies employ, educate and innovate!"

How does Mr. Leittl look at today's Europe? "Well, we are dependent of the US with its President; we are afraid of the speeding growth of China and other Asian 'tigers'; our relationship with Russia is worsening constantly; we don't know how to cope with Africa". His conclusion is clear: Europe is in a difficult situation.

#### Q: But how can Europe change this, and bring itself back into the global frontline?

**Mr. Leittl:** "Europe makes up for only 7% of the world population, but accounts for 25% of the world economy and for more than 50% of global social and environmental expenditure, related to our standard of living. The other important world regions are very dynamic. Europe is saturated. The alarm bell is ringing. Wake up Europe,

Europe

### Merkel: Nationalism and egoism out of Europe



German Chancellor Angela Merkel discussed Europe's future with the members of European Parliament and the president of European commission Jean-Claude Juncker at the plenary session of European Parliament on Tuesday

Business

### Ten things to know about competitiveness



Even as globalization has led to unprecedented gains for many from the movement of goods, services, people and ideas, there are those who have lost out – economically, politically or culturally

Editor's Column

### Britain becomes an EU colony?

By: N. Peter Kramer

The dust has a bit settled on Theresa May's Brexit deal with the EU. It looks like that more people took the chance to read more of it and to compare it, for instance, with a no-deal that no one knows what exactly will mean



Tweets from <https://twitter.com/ebreview/lists/ebfavorites>



MARKET INDICES

that changed the European Union. I think the EU had a stronger global position but in a different world".

**Q: Interesting that you mention Russia and the EU's disturbed relations with it. The sanctions are for sure a problem for Russia but also for many European businesses. What's the sense of it, it looks like shooting in your own foot?**

**Mr. Leiti:** "Let me say, in the first place, Russia violated the international laws by occupying Crimea. But, it is understandable that Russia felt threatened after the revolution in Kiev. For its Black Sea Fleet Sebastopol is the homeport. Russia is a member of Eurochambres, and there is a good cooperation. Let's hope there will be a normalisation of relations in the near future".

**Q: Russia is indeed a member of Eurochambres. The United Kingdom is not. Has that something to do with Brexit?**

**Mr. Leiti:** "No, the UK left Eurochambres years before the Brexit discussion started. By the way, I, as a true European, am absolutely against Brexit. I even went to London to participate in a huge demonstration against Brexit, just before the referendum. I hope to get our British colleagues back on board in Eurochambres. One of my first trips after becoming President at the beginning of this year, was to the UK. Eurochambres is more than the EU, we have 46 members, so why shouldn't the UK be included, it is one of the most important countries in Europe, in the world".

**Q: You visited China recently. What you saw there, didn't it scare you that we can never compete with them, their motivation, their energy, their political system? Recently 27 ambassadors of EU countries warned that the new Silk Route Plan of China, to connect China with other Asian countries, Russia and Europe, is not good for the EU. A kind of Fortress Europe thinking, in my opinion.**

**Mr. Leiti:** "Eurochambres signed that plan. We believe in it. The point is, you have to believe in yourself! Indeed, I was in China a few weeks ago. I saw the differences with Europe. People in China are hungry for success and they work in all future relevant sectors. They have close cooperation with all parts of the world and follow a clear strategy with one goal: in 2049, the 100 years' anniversary of the Mao-Revolution, China wants to be the strongest country in the world. And Europe? Europe seems to be tired, the old world...".

**Q: What are your expectations for Europe? Next year there are elections for the European Parliament, there will be a new European Commission with a new President. Do you expect fundamental changes?**

**Mr. Leiti:** "What we need, is mental change, to transform fears into hope, Europe in an open society not a fortress, to overcome borders and integrate cultures. French President Macron suggested to make integration work within local communities and to subsidise them. I would like to add: why not help companies to do the same".

"The business economy can contribute to Europe's strength. With its help, Europe will be among the three economic global powers. But we have to work hard on that".

 Gefällt mir 2

Tweet



Weiterempfehlen 1

Investing.com

Start Trading

Name	Last	High	Chg. %
FTSE 100	7,014.51	7,044.07	-0.31%
S&P 500	2,672.79	2,679.06	-0.02%
SmallCap 2000	1,498.74	1,504.59	-0.47%
DAX	11,312.83	11,401.76	-0.37%
IBEX 35	9,086.15	9,158.00	-0.06%
Euro Stoxx 50	3,167.95	3,187.85	-0.15%
SMI	8,893.10	8,943.80	-0.41%
FTSE MIB	19,153.50	19,305.50	-0.42%
Nikkei 225	21,952.40	22,006.83	+0.64%
Hang Seng	26,331.96	26,417.84	-0.17%

Live World Indices are Powered by Forexpros - The Leading Financial Portal.

Web TV

EBR News of the Week 29...



Magazine

Current Issue

3/2018 2018

- View past issues
- Subscribe
- Advertise
- Digital edition



ARTICLES

Europe

World

Business

Management

Analyses

DOSSIERS

Extrait de Culture

Business Essentials

Davos 2018

Capital Link

SIF 2017

BBSF

RESOURCES

Web TV

Events

Newsletter

EB REVIEW

Company

Advertise

Contact

MAGAZINE

Current issue

View past issues

Subscribe (Printed Edition)

Digital Edition