



Today marks Europe Day, when the European Union celebrates its achievements of unity and peace. The European elections are also coming up in under a month, which leaves us in the perfect position to ask Christel Davidson, Managing Director of CEPE, a few questions about the last mandate, her vision for Europe, and how downstream users fit into this.

What benefits does the paint industry bring Europe?

The paint, printing inks and artists' colours industry is crucial to Europe, positively impacting our daily lives and the environment. It's hard to imagine our world without paints or inks – they are on every building, road, bridge, vehicle, bedroom wall and book or package label!

Beyond adding colour to our daily lives, paints are essential for protecting surfaces. They extend the lifetime of materials, helping the environment by reducing the need for replacements and repairs. For instance, a coat of paint on a house protects it from weather damage; paint on a car prevents it from rusting and a coating on a ship shields it from the harsh seas.

Paint and inks also enrich our cultural heritage. They help preserve historical landmarks, maintaining the vibrant stories of our past for future generations. This touches on the aesthetic value paint and inks bring to our lives, enhancing our surroundings, boosting our creativity and lifting our mood.

Economically, the paint, printing inks and artists' colours industry is a European powerhouse. CEPE membership counts some 800 paints, 85 printing inks and 20 artists' colours companies, providing over 100,000 jobs. The industry is a hub of innovation, constantly developing more safe and sustainable products and new technologies that align with Europe's green goals.

The paint industry offers more than just surface beauty – it's about protection, sustainability and cultural enrichment, all while driving significant economic activity.

How do you feel about the last five years?

Reflecting on the last five years of the European parliamentary mandate, we've navigated through some exceptionally challenging times. The emergence of COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, and the green and digital transition have tested the resilience and adaptability of our industry, our institutions and our societies.

The European Commission, the European Parliament, and member states have been ambitious in their legislative agenda, particularly with the EU Green Deal. Coatings are an essential enabler of the Green Deal's sustainability goals; however, we still have concerns about the pace and demands of legislative actions, which at times tend to overregulate our industry.

Indeed, the past five years have shown that the voice of industry has been insufficiently heard. When setting environmental goals policymakers must ensure that these are realistic, grounded in scientific evidence and enforceable. A balanced dialogue between all stakeholders is essential to ensure that environmental policies are effective and achievable without compromising economic stability and societal trust.

What do you expect from the Institutions over the next five years?

Looking ahead to the next mandate, there are several expectations for the institutions that could greatly benefit both industry and society at large.

Firstly, introducing an 'industrial deal' reflecting the needs and aspirations outlined in the Antwerp Declaration would be highly advantageous. This should focus on strengthening European industry, particularly the smaller companies that are often the backbone of innovation and employment but can be vulnerable to regulatory and economic shifts.

A fundamental expectation is the return to a scientific, risk-based approach in policymaking. This would ensure that legislative actions are grounded in solid evidence, enhancing their effectiveness, proportionality and acceptability. By basing decisions on scientific research and data, we can ensure more robust and resilient industries.

Moreover, proper consultation and impact assessments are crucial. These must be thorough, transparent and inclusive, with a full representation of all stakeholders from across the value chain – including manufacturers, suppliers, formulators, downstream users and end-users – and representatives from civil society. Such consultations will help to ensure that policies are well-rounded and consider the diverse perspectives and needs within the community.

Additionally, setting a proper pace for implementing new regulations and policies is vital. Rushed legislation can lead to unintended consequences, so a measured approach and adequate time for adjustment is essential. Ensuring coherence between existing and new legislation is also vital.

In summary, there is a critical need for a more balanced, science-based, enforceable and inclusive approach to policy development in the next parliamentary term. This would strengthen the European industrial sector and ensure that it operates in harmony with societal and environmental objectives.

What is your favourite colour and why?

European blue, because I'm a firm believer in the European project.



Photo Courtesy of the [European Parliament](#)