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On 19 March the European Commission's Advanced Manufacturing task force held its first public hearing in Brussels on how advanced manufacturing technologies for clean production can boost the competitiveness of EU industry. The SPIRE PPP initiative was well represented and fully engaged in this key discussion on Europe's industrial future.

Opening the hearing, the Director General of DG Enterprise, Mr. Daniel Calleja, identified the manufacturing-related issues which the Europe needs to address to increase its competitiveness: access to finance, the skills mismatch in education, unfilled jobs and investment in innovation. He noted that manufacturing represents 75% of exports in the EU and 80% of all innovation. "If we neglect manufacturing it will not be possible to emerge from the current crisis," he concluded.

Peter Marsh of the Financial Times provided a

keynote address focusing on the new industrial revolution and how to build upon Europe's existing strengths through supporting good businesses, encouraging technology take-up and promoting science and engineering to tackle the skills-shortage.

SPIRE

The first of three panel discussions addressed the question: How to accelerate the dissemination and commercialisation of advanced manufacturing technologies?

Gernot Klotz, member of the A.SPIRE Board of Directors, (re)presented SPIRE in this session and emphasised that successful innovation was not just about technology but also often requires a change of mindset. He also underlined European strengths. "We have an excellent research basis, a highly evolved ecosystem of big and small companies that work together, the proximity of value chains is a major advantage, and we have the skills to deal with complex (high added value) products and a very demanding market," he stated.

The SPIRE PPP can yield dramatic improvements in resource and energy efficiency for the process sectors but can also provide improvements beyond these areas to associated manufacturing sectors and along the majority of European value chains. After lunch the discussion moved onto a second question: How to boost the market uptake of advanced manufacturing technologies?

Skills needed

The final panel discussion looked at initiatives to reduce skills shortages and competence deficits. Here Sue Fleet of Britest Ltd (member of A.SPIRE) used the illustration of the SusChem Educate to Innovate programme that is working to develop education materials from current FP7 research projects – specifically the SusChem inspired F3 factory project.

"The aim is to develop attractive context-based

learning materials and to act as a promotional platform showing that engineering and science are exciting," said Sue. A small group of innovative university educators will meet in April at the F3 factory demonstrator facility to start the practical development. "There is a need to raise expectations," commented Sue. "And we should use the opportunities of the forthcoming PPP initiatives – such as SPIRE - to do this. Skills and educational activities will also be part of their agenda."

The hearing was summed up by Carlo Pettinelli, European Commission, Director, Sustainable Growth and EU2020. He believes that the task force is a corner stone in the implementation of industrial policy and rediscovering growth and he noted a number of promising ideas already. These included the need for improved dissemination and analysis of output from Commission research projects, the essential role of cross sector collaboration (highlighting the success of Factories of the Future and SPIRE programmes in this area), and the need to produce engineers for industry with entrepreneurial skills.

Your input

The public hearing is the start of the process of consultation on how to increase the industrial competitiveness of Europe following the publication of updated communication on Industrial policy issued in October 2012. A series of workshops will be held in Brussels on 27 and 28 May workshops and a second public hearing is currently scheduled for 19 September.

In addition a structured questionnaire can be found on the DG Enterprise Industrial Policy website, where stakeholders are encouraged to make a formal input to the proceedings. All input will be considered in formulating a final report.

You can find more information on European Industrial policy and the consultation [here](#).
