

France's attractiveness: faster, further, stronger! / *Les Echos*

In this place one year ago, 53 of us called for the government and the general public to be made aware of the difficulties we encounter in convincing our parent companies to invest and develop our business activities in France.

Since then, others have joined us in this appeal. We are the "ambassadors" of France and it is up to us to convince our parent companies to choose our country, in order to generate more jobs and wealth in France.

We represent a community of 20,000 businesses, which together make a vital contribution to our country. Companies originating from outside of France now employ 2 million people here, make up 29% of the turnover of French industry, account for a third of French exports, make 29% of the industrial sector's tangible investments and carry out 29% of the R&D of companies working in France.

We decided to launch the appeal last year because we wanted to put an end to France being overlooked in company decisions, taken anything but seriously in global headquarters and excluded from significant new investments because we are not seen as sufficiently up-to-date.

We are delighted that our appeal has not fallen on deaf ears. Since the launch of the appeal, the question of France's attractiveness to global businesses has become part of public debate. Of all the responses that our appeal has generated, the most impressive came during the important occasion of the French President's address to the nation, where he expressed his wish for France to become more attractive. Since then, announcements have been made and initiatives taken which meet the expectations of the appeal team. France's regulatory and fiscal working environment is well on its way to becoming simpler, more stable and more transparent, with lower employer charges compared to its competitors.

We called for a boost in France's attractiveness (*choc d'attractivité*), and numerous measures have been taken to achieve that. Recent pacts for responsibility and solidarity (*pacte de responsabilité et de solidarité*), measures to simplify (*choc de simplification*) and strengthen taxation policies, and relevant strategic advice all demonstrate a clear awareness of the need for France to re-establish its attractiveness.

We do of course welcome these new measures. However, in terms of the daily reality in our companies, no significant progress has been made concerning the question of France's social attractiveness, our "Achilles' heel". It is also regrettable that measures inherited from previous decisions, at odds with what we are trying to achieve, have been implemented alongside the stated objectives.

Are the announcements and measures that have been taken enough to put France back on track alongside the most attractive international investment destinations?

The priority being given to France's attractiveness has not gone unnoticed in our parent companies. Our managers are beginning to take it seriously; but they cannot fully believe it until France puts its words into action.

“Faster, further, stronger.” This is what our parent companies in Atlanta, Stockholm, Berlin, Beijing, Tokyo and São Paulo want from us, and this is the message we want to pass onto you. We firmly believe that, by putting the announced measures into action boldly and rapidly, France will be able to attract more investments and have more influence in our parent companies.

France is already on the right track. We need to keep going forward, speed up the reforms, and put them into place. This is what we are calling for today at “*Etats de la France*”.

We are committed to do all we can to convince our parent companies to choose France, and we resolve never to give in to the “French-bashing” around us.