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What are the opportunities for European automotive suppliers in today's rapidly changing industry?

The opportunities lie in the changes in mobility that will transform the car itself. These changes are transforming auto manufacturers and they are changing the role of suppliers. As car manufacturers shift focus and investments to other parts of the business, there will likely be an even more active role for suppliers in the value chain. There will be additional opportunities in areas such as new technologies, new platforms and new powertrains.

What is the biggest threat European automotive suppliers face today?

There is a big threat that we could lose business in key new areas such as artificial intelligence and electrification. The strong players in these fields are in the US and Asia. McKinsey says that 85% of new investment in artificial intelligence takes place in Asia and the US.

Against this backdrop, what should European suppliers do?

I believe we need to face this threat with strong joint actions. Regulators, politicians and industry need to work closely together. Europe's economy is about the size of the US, but in terms of innovation, we face stagnation and are investing less in innovation than the US and China. We need a European industrial policy focusing on the big industries and their supply and value chains. Automotive is clearly one of those industries. All EU member states need to pull together and adopt a coordinated, united approach to the future of the auto industry. Bilateral deals are not the solution. I'm talking about an industrial policy at the European level. Europe's weakness is that national states are defending their own markets. But the coming challenges we face will play out globally and to be competitive in a global

market, you need a strong European industry. The need for a unified European approach doesn't just apply to the automotive industry. It's also key in other areas such as energy and digitalisation.

Do you have any concrete policy recommendations?

Take innovation, which is crucial. We cannot continue as we did in the past with programs to boost innovation. In the future, we need to have a clearer and more focused approach. That means that incentive programs and research should reinforce the industrial competitiveness of key areas of the manufacturing industry. They should be aimed at helping with the technology transformation and the industrial application of new technologies. If you don't want to waste resources, the money should be allocated as part of a European industrial policy.

You're calling for more Europe at a time when, in many countries, governments are more openly espousing national interests.

I believe that, regardless of countries' dominant political orientation, governments will take into account how their manufacturing industries can remain competitive. I'm positive that we can master the transition now underway. But we need policies to manage the transition.

You head a mid-sized specialist automotive supplier. How do small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) capitalize on the transformation?

The major players tend to have multiple strategies, but most don't have a strong and clearly articulated view. For smaller companies that means the details of the transformation are received and reacted to, rather than being anticipated. The exception is the niche players in important new technologies. Overall, the threat from the disruption is even bigger for smaller companies than for the big tier 1 suppliers. But the reality is that small and medium-sized companies employ huge numbers of workers. I believe SMEs have an opportunity to grow and participate in the mobility transformation. If you develop some big European champions in key new technologies, they can bring their supply base along.

Is Europe doing enough to support startups?

Access to capital is an issue in Europe. We need more M&A and more available risk capital. We are still financing too many activities with bank debt and that, too, has to change at the European level. I don't want Europe to more strictly regulate its internal market, but we need more cohesion to make our industries globally competitive. So, we need a stronger Europe to better protect the interests of European business and more aggressively help European companies compete globally.