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Call for closer trading ties as London hosts major European fastener manufacturer's assembly

The most influential leaders in the European fastener sector were in London last week to discuss the need for greater collaboration, sovereign production and the threat of cheap imports from the Far East.

The European Fastener Manufacturing Industry (EIFI), which represents over 300 member companies employing 113,000 people, held its three-day General Assembly in the UK capital.

The profound transformation affecting manufacturing and its respective supply chains was at the heart of all discussions with Europe and the UK's industrial future set to depend on its collective ability to combine competitiveness, resilience and innovation with strategic autonomy.

Both the Automotive Market and the General Industry & Distribution Market Group sessions addressed geopolitical instability, trade tensions, competitiveness, sustainability, regulation and the accelerating reconfiguration of global industrial value chains.

They also acknowledged that whilst economic pressures were bringing unprecedented uncertainty, there were new opportunities emerging in construction, nuclear and defence.

"London provided a fantastic backdrop for this year's General Assembly, which was extremely timely considering the global uncertainty," explained EIFI President Paolo Pozzi, who opened the event.

"We represent 75% of all European fastener production, so there was lots of industry experts present to discuss tariffs, rising energy prices and other key issues, including the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and the growing impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI)."

He continued: "A key contribution was delivered by Tommaso Pardi, Director of GERPISA - Le Réseau International de L'Automobile. He examined the rapid expansion of Chinese automotive exports, the implications for European industrial sovereignty, and the need for stronger 'Made in Europe' industrial policies and local content strategies."

The EIFI is a non-profit making organisation representing the interests of the European fasteners manufacturing industry and its supply chain.

It brings together six national trade associations from France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK, as well as several individual companies from Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Romania, Sweden and Switzerland.

Services for members range from think tanks and reflection forums to co-ordination of technical activities, analysis of the market and lobbying on a pan-European level.

In 2024, its membership was responsible for 1700 kTONNEs of production, worth more than €10bn.

Competitive Europe



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The main keynote speech was delivered by Massimiliano Salini, Member of the European Parliament and Rapporteur, on CO₂ emissions standards for vehicles under the EU 'Fit for 55' climate package.

He focused on the need for a stronger and more competitive European industrial policy, capable of safeguarding strategic manufacturing sectors and their supply chains.

During his speech, Mr Salini addressed key topics currently at the centre of the European debate, including industrial competitiveness, trade defence instruments, technological neutrality, energy transition and the impact of global overcapacities on European industries

Hans Führbeck, General Manager at EIFI, picked up the story: "The three days were crammed with discussion and strategic insights and that really resonated with our delegates, who also had time to explore London and nearby Windsor Castle.

"Jelte Wiersma, Secretary General of CEMA, provided an in-depth overview of global agricultural machinery markets, international trade dynamics and the growing competitive pressure from China, while also analysing the effects of US trade policy and emerging opportunities linked to new trade agreements with Canada, Mercosur and India.

"We also heard from PwC UK's Alex Hawley on new European compliance framework around packaging, Digital Product Passports and the growing importance of data across our sector.

"Being in the UK, we had to address the issue of Brexit ten years on and the opportunities that could exist from closer alignment between the two parties when it comes to trade. That was a fascinating conversation facilitated by Daily Telegraph columnist and well-known economic commentator Liam Halligan and proved there was a lot of interest in greater collaboration."

Steve Morley, President of the Confederation of British Metalforming, added: "It's always a major honour to host the EIFI, an organisation we work extremely closely with to support UK fastener manufacturers.

"Europe will always be one of our closest trading allies and there is plenty we can do to ensure regulation - both current and future - aligns so that positive trade arrangements can be made and completed. The biggest threat for both parties is cheap imports from the Far East and that's something we're all committed to addressing."

EIFI is set to celebrate its 50th anniversary and 2027, with plans underway to mark the milestone with the largest General Assembly yet.

Paolo Pozzi, President of the EIFI, concluded: "All of the discussions confirmed that Europe must continue pursuing its climate and sustainability objectives while ensuring that industrial competitiveness remains at the centre of EU policymaking.

"The European industrial fasteners sector, and its supply chain, are essential to many strategic industries, including automotive, machinery, construction and infrastructure.



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“In an increasingly challenging global environment, manufacturers need balanced, pragmatic and predictable policies capable of supporting investment, innovation and employment across Europe.

“EIFI will continue to support a strong and competitive European industrial base, promoting open dialogue between institutions and industry.”

For further information, please visit www.eifi.org