

CONCORDi 2023: Industrial innovation for Open Strategic Autonomy –Leaving no one and no place behind in the EU

9th biennial European Conference on Corporate R&D and Innovation – Seville, 24-26 October 2023

1. Introduction to CONCORDi conference series

CONCORDi is the scientific conference on Corporate R&D and Innovation organised biennially since 2007 by the Directorate for Growth and Innovation of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre based in Seville, Spain (for more information, see [link](#)).

By bringing together the best scientists in the field, it aims at presenting recent scientific evidence and analysis in the field of *industrial research and innovation economics* and, in dialogue with industry and public policy stakeholders, shape a shared and policy relevant research agenda for the coming years.

In this way, the CONCORDi conferences have built over the last 15 years a unique forum for academic discussion in connection with policy-makers and industrial practitioners. More than 600 registered people from 39 countries participated in the last virtual edition in 2021.

2. Focus of CONCORDi 2023

For the 9th edition, the JRC proposes to focus the conference on the topic of Open Strategic Autonomy in the context of the current transition to a green and digital economy. This focus is now at the core of the EU's industrial policy agenda. The EU's Open Strategic Autonomy objective aims to alleviate *vulnerabilities* and reinforce *technological sovereignty* of the EU in strategic sectors of the economy, such as energy, mobility, health, food supply, digital technologies and space-defence-security.

In this context, industrial innovation is pivotal to the development of *critical technologies* for civil, defence and space applications¹, to a more circular economy and for alleviating *strategic dependencies of the EU in key technologies and supply chains*², supporting *EU technological leadership* and the *EU Industrial and Innovation, Single Market, Trade and competition policies* objectives.

Developing stronger industrial innovation and production capabilities in the EU with *appropriate partnerships* will enable and accelerate the achievement of the European Green Deal (e.g. critical green technologies for zero emissions in transport, renewable energy and synergies between digital and green), and the Digital Transition (e.g. addressing dependencies, supporting technology roadmaps, cybersecurity etc.).

Achieving a European Open Strategic Autonomy to deliver on the twin green and digital transition requires a holistic analysis of industrial innovation ecosystems that looks at industrial, product and technological capabilities at global, national and regional levels. This includes the proper involvement of territories in the identification of industrial innovation investments in areas relevant to strategic autonomy and technological sovereignty, as part of region's **innovation-led strategies for sustainability**. This is a relevant dimension to be taken into account in the context of the new **Partnerships for Regional Innovation**³ promoted by the European Commission in cooperation with the Committee of Regions, as part of the EU's climate, cohesion and innovation agendas.

Open Strategic Autonomy relies on **foresight** to identify threats and ensures resilience by anticipating the required responses. Systemic thinking and foresight can be instrumental in helping policy makers reinforce their ability to anticipate disruption and normalise situations that would otherwise generate stress. The EU-wide Foresight Network leads the Commission's efforts to embed strategic foresight

¹ [COM 2022 61 1 en act roadmap security and defence.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

² Products in sensitive ecosystems for which the EU is heavily dependent on foreign suppliers ([link](#))

³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_3008

into its work. Starting on the second half of 2023, the Spanish Presidency of the Council is proposing to pay special attention to foresight and strategic autonomy as key elements for adding resiliency to the EU's long-term objectives of a greener, more digital and social Europe. The Commission and the Council are already involved and the participation of the European Parliament will bring the citizen's perspective to the debate.

Achieving the Open Strategic Autonomy objectives should also be compatible with the EU's economic competitiveness and social inclusion agendas. This certainly includes considerations related to the creation of good quality jobs in the EU, the smooth transition of jobs displacing, and skills development of workers in order to avoid the “innovation divide” phenomenon, within and across EU regions and Member States.

The current twin transition requires disruptive innovation, beyond incremental, business-as-usual strategies. Therefore, start-up and high growth firms sustainably exploiting scientific and technological innovations play an important role for EU *Open Strategic Autonomy* and technological *vulnerability*. This refers in particular, to the start-up and grow of companies⁴ in prominent technological fields such as energy, clean-tech, digital, advanced materials, advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, blockchain, robotics, photonics, electronics, and quantum computing.

Innovation opportunities and epochal industrial, societal and economic transformations depend on several *enabling factors*. The most prominent in the EU are: i) *A solid scientific production*; ii) *A broad industrial base and growing entrepreneurship / start-up and scale-up ecosystems*; iii) *Systemic and mission-oriented innovation* targeting solutions to societal challenges such as on climate change, circularity and environmental protection; iv) *Economic, financial and regulatory framework conditions which are conducive to innovation in the European internal market*, and v) *Increasingly place-based innovation policy for territorial sustainable development and cohesion*.

Public policy along these lines needs a *more and better scientific-evidence to support appropriate new initiatives*. The challenge is to *provide relevant and action-oriented evidence* supporting coherence across different EU policies.

EU industrial and innovation policies (as expressed for instance in the Commission Communications on a “New Industrial Strategy for Europe”⁵, and “A New European Innovation Agenda”⁶) are the main targets of the 9th edition of CONCORDi.

3. Event setting: organisation & partnership

The JRC will host in Seville (Spain) the 9th edition of CONCORDi (2023). This **hybrid event** (participation will be remote and in presence) is **organised by the JRC in cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Spanish Government** as the conference will be part of **the events for the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union** during the second half of 2023.

The event will be *organised in three calendar days*.

The *Scientific Forum* in the first day and a half—from 24 Oct. 14h00 to 25 Oct. 18h00 - will be mainly dedicated to the scientific conference, based on novel contributions selected by a scientific committee (around 30-50 academic papers).

⁴ Such companies also include the so-called “deep technology (deep tech) companies”. These have the objective of providing technology solutions based on substantial scientific or engineering challenges. They present challenges requiring lengthy research and development, and large capital investment before successful commercialization. Their primary risk is technical risk, while market risk is often significantly lower due to the clear potential value of the solution to society. The main scientific or engineering problems being solved by *deep tech* and *hard tech* companies generate valuable intellectual property and are hard to reproduce.

⁵ COM(2020) 102 final “A New Industrial Strategy for Europe” Brussels, 10.3.2020

⁶ COM(2022) 332 final “A New European Innovation Agenda” Brussels, 5.7.2022

The *Policy Forum* in the last half day of the conference – full morning of 26 Oct. - will be devoted to policy discussion with the main stakeholders (industrialists, policy makers, experts) based on the policy relevant outcomes of the first day and existing and up-coming agendas and challenges.

Figure 1. Synopsys of CONCORDi 2023 – Industrial innovation to foster the European Open Strategic Autonomy – Leaving no one and no place behind

Topics to focus			
Industrial innovation to alleviate the <i>vulnerability</i> and reinforce <i>technological sovereignty</i> in <i>strategic sectors for the European Green Deal</i>	Industrial innovation in <i>critical technologies</i> and for the reduction of <i>strategic dependencies</i> for a better Twin Transition	Identification of <i>territorial opportunities</i> linked to industrial innovation for competitiveness, regional cohesion and social inclusion	Creation and growth of firms in prominent tech fields
Enabling factors			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership in scientific production - Broad industrial base and growing vibrant entrepreneurship / start-up and scale-up ecosystems - Systemic and mission-oriented innovation targeting solutions to societal challenges such as on climate change, circularity and environmental protection - Appropriate framework in the European internal market conditions conducive to innovation toward the achievement of the European Green Deal and Twin Transition objectives - Increasingly place-based innovation policy for territorial sustainable development and cohesion 			
Why a science & policy conference?			
These topics and factors <i>need more/better scientific-evidence</i> able to interconnect them to give appropriate support to EU policy-making			
Main EU policies to support			
EU industrial and innovation policies, towards European Green Deal, Twin Transition and Cohesion			

More information are here: <https://iri.jrc.ec.europa.eu/concordi-2023>