

A welcome boost

An optimistic Europe can only be good for business, writes Euromat general secretary ***Kieran O’Keeffe***

ONE year ago the mood in Brussels was dark: the Brexit referendum result seemed to be the start of a volatile political period for Europe with the Netherlands, France and Germany all watching populist political movements ride high on the back of the UK referendum.

Fast forward a year and the mood couldn’t be more different. The Netherlands and then France saw off the populist surge; France did so with a president who is unashamedly pro-European and pro-globalisation, a platform that Europe’s political leaders seemed to have all but abandoned. Germany looks likely to complete the hat-trick with the populist Alternative für Deutschland dropping in the polls.

Meanwhile, seen through European eyes, the UK’s progress towards exit couldn’t have gone better. The UK is in political turmoil following the vote, its lack of direction unsettling a nervy UK electorate and business community.



While the UK staggering towards the exit is ultimately good for nobody, the more buoyant mood, hastened by the election of centrist governments, is a much-needed shot in the arm for the European economy. Good news for our industry, which depends on consumers feeling positive and with enough disposable income to buy some leisure time.

There may be more direct opportunities as well. For example, France, a market that has been heavily restricted, now has a liberal president promising reform of the sclerotic French state and economy. Many new arrivals at the Élysée Palace have sung a similar tune and failed to deliver, but the high political price of failure this time seems to suggest that change may really be on the horizon.

If that’s the case then our industry needs to start thinking now about the opportunities that might create.