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Measured in terms of labour content since the early 1950's, the manufacturing industry has doubled its productivity every 15 years. Continuous ingenuity combined with new technologies will, in the future, provide rapid productivity increases in even faster cycles. Although this trend implies lower employment levels, the manufacturing industry will remain a major creator of jobs and therefore an important economic sector of most societies.

Today, direct manufacturing activity in Europe represents approximately a quarter of the EU's GDP. Manufacturing in the industrialized world plays an important role in a sustainable and prosperous economy, but its success on a competitive global market depends on continuous innovation in products and processes.

A global company such as ABB manufactures its products and services for a global market. Our own manufacturing issues reflect those faced by many of our customers. With more than 300 factories, our experiences of modern manufacturing methods are considerable. Hence the next issue of ABB Review will look at demand driven manufacturing, and in particular, the latest developments, methods and technologies in this field. The ways in which these have been implemented in our own plants are reviewed and we describe how our products and services can assist our customers in becoming more productive and energy efficient.

We will also feature articles from academic experts and their opinion of these manufacturing trends.