

Ohio: From Industrial Strength to Global Innovation

In this edition of the C.A.S.E. Interview Series, Alina Harastasanu, Director of European Business Development at JobsOhio, shares her perspective on Ohio's economy, its strong ties with Europe, and the opportunities ahead for international investors.

1. Europe has long been an important economic partner for Ohio. How significant are European companies and investors for the state's economy, and which sectors currently drive the strongest transatlantic cooperation?

Alina Harastasanu:

Over 300,000 people in Ohio are employed by international companies and over 50% of those are in manufacturing. We take our FDI very seriously and actively pursue investment from Asia and Europe.

We have about 4,300 establishments from 42 countries, a quarter of which are from Japan, followed by Germany, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Switzerland, and Ireland.

Since Ohio is one of the most industrially diverse states, the nature of foreign direct investment is also diverse, ranging from food and agriculture to aerospace. These days, we are seeing a lot of activity from Europe in manufacturing related to the electric grid and infrastructure across the whole value chain.

2. Ohio has built a strong reputation in advanced manufacturing and mobility technologies. Could you tell us more about the state's strengths in these sectors and what makes Ohio particularly attractive for European companies?

Alina Harastasanu:

European companies are by no means different from our domestic ones, and they are looking for the same things. Ohio is attractive because it is a hub for advanced manufacturing. As such, it boasts a large, skilled workforce, strong research institutions, and robust industrial infrastructure.

Ohio's central location allows companies to reach much of the U.S. and Canadian markets, while its established supply chains and business-friendly environment are especially attractive compared to our competitors.

These happen to be key drivers for any investment project, be it domestic or international.



3. Ohio proudly calls itself the Birthplace of Aviation, reflecting the legacy of the Wright brothers and a long tradition of engineering and technological innovation. How does this heritage continue to shape Ohio's modern aerospace and advanced manufacturing sectors, and what opportunities does it create for international partnerships?

Alina Harastasanu:

Ohio continues to shape space innovation through assets and research partnerships, such as NASA Glenn, the Air Force Research Laboratory, and The Ohio State University.

Companies such as GE Aerospace anchor Ohio's aerospace supply chain, while recent investments like Joby Aviation for the production of eVTOLs and Anduril Industries in advanced defense manufacturing highlight the state's growing leadership in next-generation aerospace.

Again, supported by a strong talent pipeline and advanced manufacturing base, Ohio offers international partners significant opportunities for innovation and investment.

4. Workforce development remains a central topic across the United States. How does Ohio's talent ecosystem—including its universities, technical training programs, and industry partnerships—support international companies investing in the state?

Alina Harastasanu:

Through JobsOhio and statewide partners, European businesses can gain access to more than 200 educational institutions that provide industry-aligned training.

They produce thousands of graduates each year and offer specialized programs in engineering and manufacturing.

JobsOhio works directly with companies to create customized talent attraction and retention solutions and partnerships. This integrated approach helps international investors quickly build skilled teams and scale operations in Ohio.



5. Looking ahead, what are Ohio's priorities for strengthening economic ties with Europe, and what opportunities should European companies be paying particular attention to in Ohio?

Alina Harastasanu:

Through its JobsOhio 2030 strategy, the state is prioritizing five powerful "Super Sectors": Semiconductors & Microelectronics, Advanced Aerospace & Defense, Life Sciences + Biotech, Artificial Intelligence, and Energy Leadership.

Together, these sectors create trillion-dollar global markets and are supported by Ohio's deep manufacturing heritage, research universities, and highly skilled workforce.

Major projects such as Intel's semiconductor investment and next-generation aerospace manufacturing are accelerating the growth of innovation clusters across the state.

The alignment with European priorities is clear.

6. Ohio is known for its deep sports traditions—from college football at Ohio State to professional teams in Cleveland and Cincinnati—alongside iconic cultural institutions such as the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. How does this strong sense of identity and community contribute to making Ohio an attractive place for international talent and companies?

Alina Harastasanu:

As a European, I relate less to the American football reference, despite being an alumna of The Ohio State University.

But Ohio is a great place for Europeans looking for a mix of work and life balance. Cities like Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati have lively cultural scenes, great restaurants, and top universities—all while housing and living costs are much lower than many big cities.

Outdoorsy types can enjoy parks, trails, and plenty of recreational activities, while families benefit from good schools, healthcare, and safe neighborhoods.

Ohio's location makes it easy to travel across the U.S., and the friendly, welcoming communities make settling in easier, as I discovered firsthand.

It's a place where career opportunities and a comfortable lifestyle come together.

