

## EUROPEAN SECTOR SOCIAL PARTNERS

### Joint priorities on skills/education/training for the new legislative term

#### *An industriAll Europe & Ceemet joint position*

**Brussels, October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019** - industriAll Europe and Ceemet are the representative social partners recognised for social dialogue at the European level in the Metal, Engineering and Technology-based (MET) industries. After the European Parliament elections delivered their results and at a time of ongoing discussions on the composition and political priorities of the future European Commission, industriAll Europe and Ceemet want to recall their demands in the area of skills, education and training for the upcoming legislative term.

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#### THE IMPORTANCE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR THE MET INDUSTRIES

industriAll Europe, Ceemet and their respective member organisations have long been advocating for first-class Vocational Education and Training (VET) strategies to support the Metal, Engineering and Technology-based (MET) industries in thriving and adapting to a fast-evolving world.

Anticipation of skills needs, VET, continuous learning, retraining policies and work-based learning are all instrumental for MET sector companies and workers to cope with the major technological transformations in a socially responsible manner, thereby supporting jobs and growth.

Therefore, industriAll Europe and Ceemet will continue to be strong promoters of a responsive VET system that supports the adaptability, autonomy and employability of workers and guarantees real opportunities to a qualifying professional experience and to access the labour market. Responsive VET systems are also key to helping overcome the current skills shortages that are occurring within the MET industries.

Although many efforts have been made to improve VET and further training, these efforts are not fully meeting the ever-changing challenges facing the metal sector. It is high time for swift initiatives in the area of skills, education and training which must help supporting the growth, innovation, capacity, competitiveness and ability of the MET sector to create quality jobs. The associated time pressure must not be underestimated: now is the time to act!

## #1 IT IS HIGH TIME FOR A GENUINE CHANGE OF MINDSET

The debate on the lack of quality and negative image of vocational education and training (both cause and effect of the weaknesses associated with VET), the skills shortages it leads to, and the difficulty of the MET industry to attract the right competences has been ongoing for years.

Therefore, industriAll Europe and Ceemet have long been advocating for making VET a real first-class training choice that provides people with the skills and competences required by labour markets and leads to quality employment in the MET industries.

Improving the attractiveness of VET, especially involving youth, has always been a joint priority of industriAll Europe and Ceemet. Initiatives such as the Vocational Skills Week, have the potential to increase both the visibility and attractiveness of VET as a high-quality training choice. IndustriAll Europe and Ceemet would, in this context, further suggest to the Commission to consider setting up a dialogue with stakeholders on how to communicate the benefits of VET and work-based learning to students, teachers and parents.

Attracting more people to good-quality vocational education and training is essential, but however, not enough to fill the competence demand of industry. Therefore, lifelong learning and Continuing Education and Training (CET) are today vital for both companies and employees. With increasing technological change and the development of a 'knowledge-based society', continuous learning and retraining are a high priority to ensure economic competitiveness.

***With ever-faster changing markets, production or work organisation patterns, learning must be an ongoing process that has to be followed throughout working life.***

Well-planned career guidance is also absolutely central in ensuring excellence in VET and in guiding people towards education that will lead to jobs. Indeed, well-functioning, easily accessible career guidance from an early age and throughout the whole career, involving both education providers and industry, is central to any European policy or actions aimed at VET. Career guidance can be an important means to initiate and to

further strengthen the motivation for LLL in general and occupational further training in particular.

Finally, and in order to reach the objective of changing people's attitudes, a realistic picture of the metal and engineering industry must be presented. Indeed, the MET industries offer more and more workplaces with high health and safety standards, demanding job profiles, responsible jobs, at competitive salaries in combination with career prospects.

## #2 IT IS HIGH TIME FOR MORE RESPONSIVE (VOCATIONAL) EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS

The current combination of challenges we face including global competition, shorter innovation cycles, demographic change and the constantly increasing pace of technological development requires more responsive education and training systems that support the development of adaptability, autonomy, participation and employability of individuals.

National education and training systems should respond to the needs of the economic environment and become more adaptable. Thus, partnership between companies and the respective authorities are of crucial importance.

When it comes to VET, industriAll Europe and Ceemet support an enhanced and effective long-term cooperation between VET providers and industry, to improve VET quality as well as its visibility and attractiveness.

Furthermore, for industriAll Europe and Ceemet, anticipation of skill needs is key and a prerequisite to meaningful VET policies. It is of the utmost importance to anticipate skills needs at the company and sectoral levels in order to anticipate change. This has become even more necessary in the context of the challenges posed by digitalisation.

Anticipating future skills requirements puts companies in a position to adapt their (further) training strategies and social partners or governments in a position to adapt education and training curricula and vocational training systems on time.

***The anticipation of skills requirements can only be a serious exercise if understood and carried out as a continuous process.***

### **#3 IT IS HIGH TIME FOR PRIORITY SKILLS TO BE PROVIDED AT ALL LEVELS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

The demand for digital skills such as coding, programming or using abstract interfaces with digitally enhanced machines is on the rise. It is, therefore, a high priority that all stakeholders invest in training policies aimed at providing workers with both basic and digital skills. Moreover, greater efforts must be made to highlight Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) as priority areas of education at all levels.

However, in a highly digitalised world, skills other than purely digital skills are also needed. Soft skills such as: advanced analytical thinking, innovative spirit, ability to communicate and take decisions, group work, ability to think critically, take initiative, problem solving, and innovation are also of great importance.

### **#4 IT IS HIGH TIME FOR THINKING ABOUT HOW TO DELIVER QUALITY TRAINING**

Ensuring that high quality work-based learning is delivered in flexible ways is essential to raise workers and companies' attractiveness to VET.

Work experience and project-based learning in industry can be very valuable in helping students to develop and internalise the theoretical knowledge gained in other contexts, such as in Higher Education (HE). In addition, on-the-job

***Good quality vocational education and training which has a strong component of work-based learning increases employment prospects and companies' ability to match their skill needs.***

training should not only be improved and developed, but should also be recognised as a valuable contribution or part of one's occupation / further vocational training.

IndustriAll Europe and Ceemet have earlier pointed to the importance of permeability between VET, higher learning and continuing education to enable excellence in VET and raise its attractiveness. Clearly, more focus and progress on this issue is required at the European level. Students should take for granted that VET and HE are parts of a single ensemble with pathways between them and that the choice of one path does not exclude the other. To achieve this, bridge-ways from VET to HE opportunities and vice-versa need to be built and promoted through proper guidance so that the notion of being pigeon-holed is taken away.

The **TRANSPARENCY OF COMPETENCE PROFILES** is highly important in contributing to permeability. The generalisation of the description of qualifications in terms of skills, knowledge and competence (learning outcomes) will facilitate the interface between VET and HE, making visible the overlapping areas of the competence profiles of VET and HE qualifications, notably by identifying the skills, knowledge and technical and technological competences developed by each system and which are transferable between occupation, sectors and countries.

IndustriAll Europe and Ceemet have also already underlined that attractive and flexible ways of delivering training (e.g. e-learning, continuing training split into “modules”, training delivered in different languages) support the development of the attractiveness of occupational/vocational training. They also help tailoring vocational training to the needs of the company and the worker.

Paying stronger attention to teaching and learning methods also implies that greater attention must be paid to the situation of VET teachers and trainers, who must be able to regularly update their knowledge and competences.

#### **#5 IT IS HIGH TIME FOR A GOVERNANCE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS THAT RELIES ON SOCIAL DIALOGUE**

Evidence shows that successful VET initiatives have counted on the involvement of sectoral social partners and local industry who provide their knowledge of company systems and labour market needs. Yet, national and European policy makers often do not consult the sectoral social partners regarding education policy and analysis thereof, thereby missing out on evidence-based input. industriAll Europe and Ceemet therefore call once more upon the EU policymakers to ensure that sectoral social partners are involved in the development of VET and skills policies.

The MET social partners at the national, regional and local levels must be able to play a role in the design and development of courses, training programmes and curricula to ensure that the needs of our fast-moving sector are met.

Particular attention must be paid to SMEs. SMEs often do not have the resources to appropriately address the skills challenge of our industries. The situation of SMEs, which often do not have the financial, organisational or human resources to provide further training should thus be especially taken into account.

***IndustriAll Europe and Ceemet therefore call once more upon the EU policymakers to ensure that sectoral social partners are involved in the development of VET and skills policies.***

## #6 BY THE WAY IT IS NOT JUST ABOUT VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The EU policy on skills must be coupled with ambitious industrial and employment strategies to yield expected results. We need a strong industrial base and manufacturing sector in Europe to offer favourable employment prospects which attract skilled workers and offer incentives for upskilling and re-training efforts. This requires a supportive policy environment which takes account of the importance of the MET sector for the future of Europe and ensures that the necessary conditions are in place at the national level for companies to operate and invest.

These efforts must, however, be underpinned by supportive national and European policies stressing the importance of the MET sectors for the future of Europe.

Education and training policies must be coupled with ambitious active labour market policies, in order to ensure that a solution to the digital transformation of jobs and industries is provided for all workers and companies. However, training must be a shared responsibility between employers and workers.

*To motivate people to invest their time in VET, Europe also requires a strong industry offering favourable employment prospects.*

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## ABOUT

### [Ceemet](#)

The **Council of European Employers of the Metal, Engineering and Technology-based industries** is the European employers' organisation representing the interests of the Metal, Engineering and Technology-based (MET) industries. Through its national member organisations, it represents 200 000 companies across Europe. The vast majority of them are SMEs, providing over 35 million jobs of direct and indirect employment.



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### [industriAll European Trade Union](#)

**IndustriAll European Trade Union** (industriAll Europe for short) is the European trade union federation of workers in the manufacturing, mining and energy sectors. Through its 181 affiliated trade union organisations in 38 countries, it defends the interests and rights of 7 million workers across supply chains.



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