

Joint statement of the CEEMET-EMF Social Dialogue Committee Ad Hoc Working Group “Education and Training”

Strong focus on high quality vocational education and training requisite for a competitive and sustainable European industrial base.

The EMF and CEEMET are through their social dialogue building a common understanding about the key challenges for companies and workers in the European metal, engineering and technology-based (MET) sectors linked to the competitiveness of the industry and work environment. Their discussions are the basis for their joint contributions to European policies.

CEEMET and the EMF are united in their demand for a strong industrial base and manufacturing sector in Europe. They believe that strengthening the industrial base in Europe is paramount to the realization of the Europe 2020 Strategy and will work together to attain this goal.

Crucially, both organisations underline that a strong, competitive and sustainable MET industry is **dependent on a skilled and motivated workforce**. The EMF and CEEMET therefore welcome the importance the European Commission attaches to this issue in their communications including the ‘Europe 2020 Strategy’, the ‘Industrial Policy Strategy for a Globalised World’ and their policies on European cooperation in vocational education and training, also recognising that industry has an important role to play in education and training at all levels. To motivate people to invest their time in VET, Europe also requires a strong industry offering favorable employment prospects. Furthermore, an educated workforce can actively contribute to industrial innovation.

A central issue and joint priority for the EMF and CEEMET in this context is the **attractiveness of vocational education and training (VET) as well as of the MET industry**. Ensuring a plentiful supply of qualified personnel, including young people, is vital to the industry’s future and **can only be achieved through the provision of high quality initial and continued VET** – first choice education that provides people with the skills and competences to meet labour market needs and personal work life expectations. This must also be the focus of any actions or policies pertaining to VET proposed at European level.

The debate on the **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 competence has been ongoing for over a decade. In fact, many efforts have already been made by social partners at different levels and in different ways to deal with the issues above to ensure that more people are attracted to VET and the industry, from increasing cooperation between industry and VET providers to ensure that curricula match labour market needs to campaigns to attract women to VET and a career in the industry.

Based on exchange of experiences and open dialogue, CEEMET and the EMF agree that the most effective level to deal with these issues is the **local level**, increasing cooperation between industry and VET providers, and directly interacting with the existing workforce, young people, parents and teachers. However, the success of these efforts also rests on **supportive policies at the national and European level**.

The EMF and CEEMET agree that any European policies or actions aimed at VET must focus on raising the quality and image of VET. Central to this is:

- well-functioning, easily accessible **career guidance** from an early age and throughout the whole career, involving both education providers and industry
- increased **permeability** between VET, general and higher education, making it easier to move from one to the other – this will increase opportunities for the individual and thereby also attractiveness of VET
- stronger attention to **teaching and learning methods**, making it easier for VET teachers and trainers to update their knowledge and competences, to meet the learning requirements of people and facilitate career development planning.
- enhanced and effective long-term **cooperation** between VET providers and industry, allowing natural communication of labour market needs and networking by students, teachers, employees and employers
- **dialogue** at European, national and local level building on mutual trust and openness between schools, industry and government to help give the education system the **flexibility** required to make necessary adjustments efficiently

Further, despite the current economic and financial difficulties, vocational education and training must not become the target of budget cuts. Now is not the time to save on future investments in skills and competences for the industry.

In addition, CEEMET and the EMF fully appreciate that social partners have to become better ambassadors for careers in the MET industry, showing young people and those who have already entered the labour market that the industry can offer them a good career and work-life balance, and that technical education gives you a wide scope of possibilities for professions of the future. These efforts *must*, however, be underpinned by supportive national and European policies stressing the importance of the metal, engineering and technology-based sectors for the future of Europe.

Finally, the current combination of challenges we face including global competition, shorter innovation cycles, demographic change and the constantly increasing pace of technological development requires a more responsive education system that supports the development of adaptability, autonomy, participation and employability of individuals. **The EMF and CEEMET are strongly committed to continue working together towards this goal**, further exchanging information and good practice on what social partners can do both at the local, national and European level to attract the right people to the industry and to ensure high quality education and training for both young people and adults.