

A Skills Agenda for Europe : no need for *New* but for *Swift* action

An industriAll Europe & CEEMET joint position

Brussels, June 19th 2017 – IndustriAll Europe and CEEMET welcome the European Commission’s effort to relaunch a European level agenda on Skills which could support social partner’s initiatives in keeping up with skills development required for the future of the MET sector. Recalling their shared understanding of high quality vocational education and training, industriAll Europe and CEEMET insist on ambitious actions to take place swiftly so that our industries continue to be competitive and jobs remain sustainable at a time of fast-paced transformation.

CEEMET, industriAll Europe and their respective member organisations have long been advocating for first-class vocational education and training (VET) strategies to support the MET industries in thriving and adapting to a fast-evolving world. Anticipation of skills needs, continuous learning and retraining policies are all instrumental in the ability of the MET sector companies and workers to cope with the major technological transformations in a socially responsible manner, thereby supporting jobs and growth.

Ambitious VET policies are essential for companies of all sizes, from large multinational groups to SMEs, and for workers to keep up with the skills development that is required for the MET sector to remain strong, innovative, competitive and sustainable.

Therefore, CEEMET and industriAll Europe are calling for a responsive VET system that supports the adaptability, autonomy and employability of workers and guarantees real opportunities 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.

The social partners also have a long tradition of promoting strategic skills planning, lifelong learning and work-based learning which contribute to the skilled workforce that the European MET sector needs, especially within the context of ever-growing global competition. This joint position is a starting point for discussion, and sets a preliminary vision of what the issues presenting themselves to the MET sector and to MET social partners may be. Its content will be further developed over time.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S NEW SKILLS AGENDA: A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Against this backdrop, industriAll Europe and CEEMET welcome the European Commission's renewed effort to step up initiatives in the area of education and training via the *New Skills Agenda* launched in June 2016. The aim of the 10 key initiatives of the *New Skills Agenda* is to give a new impetus to provide workers with the skills and competences they need to meet both the labour market needs and personal/work life expectations.

The Commission's initiative is a positive development as national level education and training strategies as well as budgets have been heavily impacted by the crisis

Of particular importance to the MET sector are the three following initiatives:

1) Making VET a first choice

The MET social partners fully welcome the Commission's objective of making VET a first choice. In order to promote VET as a first-class option for learners, in December 2016 the European Commission organised a European Vocational Skills Week during which various VET initiatives were showcased. Such an initiative has the potential to increase both the visibility and attractiveness of VET as a high-quality training choice. The success of the 2016 Vocational Skills Week was such that a second edition is planned in November 2017 which will receive industriAll Europe and CEEMET's support. In addition, the *New Skills Agenda* foresees the continuation of previous EU actions aimed at fostering work-based learning and business-education partnerships such as the European Pact for Youth.

Improving the attractiveness of VET, especially towards youth, is also a joint priority for industriAll Europe and CEEMET and their members. Initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of the benefits of work-based learning in upskilling and re-training workers in the context of fast-evolving industries within a digitalised world are certainly of high value.

2) Getting connected: focus on digital skills

With the aim to tackle the lack of digital skills in Europe, the European Commission launched the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition initiative. The Coalition brings together Member States, companies, social partners and education providers at European level to pledge action and identify best practices which could be replicated and scaled-up. Simultaneously, Member States are invited to develop comprehensive national strategies with the aim of bringing digital skills and competences to all levels of education and training at national level. The Commission encourages labour market stakeholders, public authorities, business, education and training providers to participate in the development of such strategies through the establishment of Digital Skills Coalitions at national level.

Both industriAll Europe and CEEMET welcome the Commission's initiative to involve social partners, and other labour market stakeholders in the discussions at national and European levels on the issue of digital skills and their inclusion in all levels of education and training. [The impact of digitalisation on employment and skills deserves careful attention insofar as the future of the \(cost and non-cost\) competitiveness of the MET industries relies, to a great extent, on its ability to successfully manage the digital transformation.](#)

To this end, in December 2016, [CEEMET and industriAll Europe adopted a joint statement on the impact of digitalisation on the world of work](#). The statement constitutes a basis for the social partners to discuss the effects of digitalisation on the world of work.

3) Boosting skills intelligence and cooperation in economic sectors

Drawing upon the experience of Sector Skills Councils and Sector Skills Alliances, the Commission launched the Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills with the aim of improving skills intelligence, identifying skills needs of the future and addressing skills shortages in specific economic sectors. A first wave of this Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills has been launched in six pilot sectors (automotive, defence, maritime technology, space-geo observation, textile and tourism) and a second wave is currently under preparation.

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 organise strategic skills planning at company and sectoral levels to anticipate change](#). This has become even more necessary in the context of the challenges posed by digitalisation.

FAST-PACED TRANSFORMATIONS OF OUR MET INDUSTRIES CALL FOR SWIFT AND MORE COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSES

The *New Skills Agenda* rightly targets areas of action that the MET social partners have long been dealing with and that they consider key to enabling the MET industries to anticipate and adapt to changes in the interest of jobs and growth. Therefore, the Skills Agenda that the MET sector needs is not so much a 'new' agenda, but swift actions in which social partners have a key role to play.

VET will become a first-class option provided it takes place within a framework which ensures both quality training conditions and effectiveness. Building upon the 2015 Riga conclusions and the December 2016 Opinion of the tri-partite Advisory Committee on vocational training (ACVT), [industriAll Europe and CEEMET call on the EU institutions to support unlocking the potential of VET by adopting a shared vision for quality and effective apprenticeships and work-based learning](#).

In addition, creating links between VET and higher education would help to increase the attractiveness of both the VET and MET industries. Not only should partnership between industry and education providers be promoted as in the *New Skills Agenda*, but also [permeability between VET, general and higher education should be fostered to make it easier to move from one to the other](#).

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 as highlighted in the *New Skills Agenda*. In a digitalised world, however, skills other than purely digital skills are also needed. For example, advanced analytical thinking, innovative spirit, ability to communicate and take decisions in dematerialised, remote and asynchronous working processes are of particular importance.

For this reason, CEEMET and industriAll Europe insist on the need to [pay equal attention to equipping people with STEM](#) (sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics) [and transversal skills](#) (of which the ability to learn is worth stressing) [which they will need in order to acquire new skills, competences and knowledge](#).

Furthermore, CEEMET and industriAll Europe stress that [a comprehensive Skills Agenda also requires a greater focus on lifelong learning and continuous education and training](#) policies that would be beneficial for both current and future workers. For instance, education and training on digital skills is a matter not only for young workers but also for adult workers, and could rightly fit, therefore, into upskilling and retraining policies. Similarly, career guidance should not only benefit low-skilled workers as foreseen in the *New Skills Agenda* but also all workers throughout their whole career.

>> MET industries need a fast-acting Skills Agenda

The discussions about the *New Skills Agenda* take place in a singular context marked by a major driving force: the ever-growing digitalisation of our industries. Although the MET sector has a long-standing experience of technological change and is well-equipped to deal with it, the speed and scope of the shift to digitalisation pose a particularly acute challenge. [The associated time pressure must not be underestimated either: boosting skills intelligence, making VET a first choice, and fostering education and training on digital skills must happen now](#). The expected societal, environmental and technological changes mean that the initiatives envisaged need to be sped up and public support and investment needs to be scaled up (e.g. the *European Vocational Skills week*).

>> The MET industries need the involvement of social partners in the development and implementation of the Skills Agenda

After years of practical experience in dealing with skills, education and training issues at different levels and in different ways (raising awareness campaigns, building close cooperation between industry and VET providers, devising and adapting training pathways), the social partners in the MET sector have demonstrated their invaluable contribution to the development of high-quality VET systems. Evidence shows that successful VET initiatives have counted on the involvement of sectoral social partners and local industry who bring their knowledge of company systems and labour market needs. CEEMET and industriAll Europe therefore call once more on [the EU policy-makers to ensure that sectoral social partners are involved in the development of VET and skills policies](#).

European-level initiatives, such as the coordination and exchange of best practice and experiences, are more than welcome as they support national reflection amongst public authorities and stakeholders when devising local skills, education and training strategies. In line with the Treaty of Lisbon, [EU initiatives in these areas thus complement - but must not replace - national and local level initiatives, especially when underpinned by social dialogue structures](#). The MET social partners at 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.

THE EU POLICY ON SKILLS MUST BE COUPLED WITH AMBITIOUS INDUSTRIAL AND EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES TO YIELD EXPECTED RESULTS

We need companies with job and training vacancies and the confidence to take on learners. We need a strong industrial base and manufacturing sector in Europe to offer favourable employment prospects which attracts skilled workers and offers 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 national level for companies to operate and invest. CEEMET and industriAll Europe reiterate their call for the European Commission to come up with a concrete and realistic industrial strategy aimed at reaching the target of 20% of GDP from industry by 2020.

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 is provided for all workers. However, training must be a shared responsibility between employers and workers.

The actual impact of digitalisation on jobs remains to be seen, effects on employment are foreseen and must be addressed now

ABOUT

[CEEMET](#)

The **Council of European Employers of the Metal, Engineering and Technology-based industries** represents the employers' interests of the metal, engineering and technology-based 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.



@CEEMET

secretariat@ceemet.org

Tel: + 32 2 706 84 65

www.ceemet.org

Bld. Auguste Reyers 80

1030 Brussels

Belgium

[industriAll European Trade Union](#)

industriAll European Trade Union represents 7 million workers across supply chains in manufacturing, mining and energy sectors on European level.



@industriAll_EU

info@industriAll-europe.eu

Tel: +32 2 226 00 50

www.industriAll-europe.eu

Boulevard du Roi Albert II 5 (bte 10)

1210 Brussels

Belgium