

Robust MET industries require future-proof apprenticeships

An industriAll Europe & Ceemet renewed pledge

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Among the many consequences of the COVID-19 crisis is the disruption of vocational education and training across Europe and its disproportionate impact on youth. Companies have used online training wherever possible and got apprentices back to training centres and shop floors as soon as possible. Young people/apprentices have shown flexibility and both sides have demonstrated that in many cases, vocational training could go on. Yet despite this, numerous apprenticeships positions have had to be suspended, if not cancelled.

Furthermore, the corresponding hiring opportunities were frozen, as internships were no more available, schools were closed and job fairs shut down. This situation has left thousands of young workers facing uncertainty about the start of their professional careers. Drop-out rates from apprenticeships have consequently increased, presenting companies that have also been hit hard by COVID-19 with the risk of losing the next generation of industrial workers.

Skill challenge requires first-class apprenticeships and VET

At the same time, the skills shortages which had already been identified in the metal, engineering and technology-based [MET] industries 20 years ago (e.g. engineers, welders, highly skilled experts) remain unsolved, while new skills shortages come to light as Europe embraces the twin green and digital transition which the COVID-19 crisis has further accelerated. The skills challenge might even be much greater for those MET sectors hit exceptionally hard by the pandemic and at the same time by structural change (automotive, aerospace and others).

Ceemet and industriAll Europe both strongly believe that robust MET industries rely on a skilled workforce. Future-proof apprenticeships and vocational education and training are instrumental in attracting young workers to the quality jobs that a competitive and innovative MET sector can deliver. Missing out on a generation of qualified workers is not an option, especially as skills tailor-made to fit future changes in the MET industries will be needed to drive the bounce back.

Realistic solutions must be provided to this lost generation of apprentices, and sustainable investment in future-proof apprenticeships secured. At the same time, support for SMEs - many of which have been hit hard by COVID-19 and still remain in a very uncertain situation - to be able to continue to provide quality apprenticeships schemes should also be deployed.

Delivering on our social partners' Pledge

In 2018, industriAll Europe and Ceemet joined the European Alliance for Apprenticeships. One year after the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, industriAll Europe, Ceemet and their member organisations reiterate their pledge to support first-class apprenticeships throughout Europe. The implementation of the [Council Recommendation on a European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships](#) is needed throughout the MET sector more than ever. MET sectors' Social Partners stand ready to team up for joint actions. Indeed, Social Partners have already found new ways of communication to address school leavers/young people and awake their interests in the professions within the MET industries. Last October for instance, in Germany, [IG Metall and Gesamtmetall adopted a joint appeal](#) to companies and young people to embark on apprenticeships. In Germany, as in other countries, sectoral trade unions and employers' organisations have continuously highlighted that dual training helps ensure a high level of employability and enables companies to be fit for the future.

Putting apprenticeships back on track

Ceemet and industriAll Europe jointly call on Member States to place future-proof apprenticeships high on their recovery agendas and to dedicate the corresponding funding as part of their national skills strategies. Financial incentives, such as apprenticeship bonuses, set up in some countries (e.g. Austria, France, Germany, the United Kingdom) and any other innovative measures, such as support for SMEs, aimed at putting apprenticeships back on the right track, are urgently needed in line with national practices and social partner traditions. Those measures will require a proper governance and evaluation with a timely and active involvement of social partners. Special attention must also be devoted and support provided to the youth of 2020-2021 who have missed out on the opportunity to enter into the labour market through apprenticeships.

IndustriAll Europe, Ceemet and the respective trade unions and employers' organisations at national level confirm their willingness to take on the challenge of apprenticeships to secure the future of robust MET industries.

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 industries. Through its national member organisations, it represents 200 000 companies across Europe. The vast majority of these are SMEs, providing over 35 million jobs of direct and indirect employment.



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[IndustriAll European Trade Union](#)

IndustriAll European Trade Union is the voice of 7 million working men and women across supply chains in manufacturing, mining and energy sectors across Europe. We aim to protect and advance the rights of the workers.



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