

EUROFER
The European Steel Association

 **industriAll**
EUROPEAN TRADE UNION

**JOINT WORK PROGRAMME OF THE
EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS
2024-2025**

FOR THE STEEL SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE

1. Introduction:

The Social Dialogue Process

The **European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) for steel** was formed in 2006 between *EUROFER* (employers) and *industriAll Europe* (trade unions). Both European social partners aim to contribute jointly to the sustainability and competitiveness of the steel sector in Europe.

The European Social Partners for the SSDC Steel have recently:

- Drafted a joint paper ***EU Steel Action Plan to restore steel's competitiveness, and save its green transition as well as steelworkers' jobs across Europe*** (November 2024).
- Sent a joint letter on the ***EU steel crisis*** (September 2024).
- Shared a joint letter as a ***follow up of the Clean Transition Dialogue on the Steel Industry to foster its green and just transition*** (May 2024).
- Produced a joint statement ***European social partners commit to working towards a competitive transition of the European steel sector*** (November 2023).
- Distributed a joint statement ***Urgent action needed to safeguard the European steel sector and jobs!*** (October 2022).
- Sent a joint letter on the ***Revision of the EU Waste Shipment Regulation*** (July 2022).
- Distributed a joint letter on the EU ETS Review and Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism ***"A sustainable and just transition pathway for industry and workers"*** (December 2021).
- Shared a joint letter on the ***"Revision of the Regulation 1013/2006 on Waste Shipments"*** (July 2021) and conducted follow-up joint meetings with EU policy makers.
- Held a joint event ***"Building an economic and social framework for a successful climate transition by 2050"*** (April 2021).
- Sent a joint letter to the EU Ministers for the Environment ahead of the Environment Council calling for an ***EU-wide steel action plan and dedicated support from the Recovery Plan and other EU and national schemes*** (December 2020).
- Published a joint press release ***"industriAll Europe/ EUROFER - EU steel safeguard decision could nip European steel recovery in the bud"*** (June 2020).

Topics of mutual interest

The social partners continue to work together on topics of mutual interest with the aim to improve the competitiveness of the European steel sector. These topics include:

- **Energy, environment and climate change policies**, with a special focus on the Commission's new Clean Industrial Deal for Europe.
- **Trade policies and their (more effective) implementation**, including trade defence instruments, EU steel safeguards, foreign direct investment, state aid, and overall trade practices, such as protectionism, in non- EU countries, WTO reform, tackling the growing global steel over-capacity and public procurement;
- The **evolution of the EU steel market** and latest developments, focusing on new technology and **skills needs**;
- **Research**, in particular Clean Steel Partnerships, Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEIs), Horizon Europe and Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS)

Objectives

Based on its work programme, the SSDC seeks to:

- Monitor the social, economic and employment consequences of EU policies on the steel sector and steel workers;
- Develop concepts and proposals to influence European and national debates and to give directions and recommendations to contribute to policy developments;
- Conduct exchanges on topics of mutual interest and to develop a capacity for subsequent joint action including statements, position papers and projects.

2. Fields of Action:

A. Market, Employment and Policy Developments

This remains a permanent item on the agenda and the social partners will:

- Provide information on market and policy developments (*EUROFER*) and employment changes (*industriAll Europe*);
- Update the participants on key topics and files being discussed by the EU institutions, including trade, environmental, economic, budgetary and employment and social issues;
- Undertake joint actions when required.

B. Ensuring a sustainable future for the European steel industry

Ensuring the competitiveness, and in turn the success, of the European steel industry is a priority for the social partners. As such, *EUROFER* and *industriAll Europe's* joint *EU Steel Action Plan* provides a clear basis for discussion and debate at the SSDC meetings and the social partners will define and agree potential joint actions when appropriate.

These discussions may result in joint actions such as:

- Calling for a high level EU summit on steel and the establishment of a EU expert group on steel.
- Requesting significant EU investment for FP10, research and development to encourage innovation and support investment, with MS to revise fiscal rules to ensure the space for investment;
- Requesting public financial support for implementation of CO₂-low production technologies and for upscaling breakthrough technologies into industrial demonstrators, with social conditionalities;
- Calling for guaranteed access to sustainable and low-cost energy (preferably from renewable sources), which has a strong supportive infrastructure, at affordable prices;

- Providing a critical assessment of current, and proposed, EU climate, environmental and energy policies regarding their effects on the competitiveness of the sector and organising possible events accordingly.
- Incentives to increase demand for sustainable steel made in respect of decent working conditions.

C. Energy, environment and climate change

European environmental and climate change policies have a significant impact on the European steel sector. The SSDC will:

- Discuss and monitor the Clean Industrial Deal package
- Debate and monitor the development of the needed regulatory framework for CO₂-lean steel production in Europe, including the role of R&D and new innovative technologies, public financial support for implementation of CO₂-low production technologies and the energy infrastructure required;
- Monitor and analyse the potential impact of the EU ETS implementation and its proposed revision, along with the Carbon Border Adjustment Measure implementation;
- Discuss various energy issues that will impact the sector including pricing and availability;
- Discuss potential methods to incentivise the use of scrap steel to keep raw materials in Europe and increase steel's role in the circular economy as well as improving Europe's competitiveness on the global market;
- Work on joint position papers when required on relevant issues.

D. Trade

The European steel sector requires fair trading practices to survive in an expanding global market and to safeguard thousands of jobs in Europe. Trade issues will feature heavily in the SSDC agendas and the social partners will:

- Monitor and analyse the potential impact of various EU policies and measures relating to trade defence instruments, EU steel safeguards, WTO Reform, foreign direct investment, public procurement and other tools that may be developed in the upcoming future to strengthen the EU's toolbox;
- Discuss various trade issues relating to third countries including state aid and protectionist measures (e.g. export restrictions on raw materials, other unilateral measures, and enforcement of existing commitments);
- Work with the EU institutions to provide expert opinions and information as appropriate;
- Produce joint position papers when required on relevant issues.

E. Qualifications and Skills

The social partners agree that skills and training play an important role in the changing technical advancements within the European steel sector. As such, the SSDC will:

- Invite experts to discuss relevant topics, such as skills and training in relation to changing technologies, in the sector;
- Continue to build on the EU-funded project: *Blueprint: “New Skills Agenda Steel”*: *Industry-driven sustainable European Steel Skills Agenda and Strategy*.

F. Industry 5.0

Industry 5.0 is and will be focusing on collaboration between humans and machines to empower people to fully utilize their skills and make work safer, more efficient, and more meaningful. Industry 5.0 also means the introduction of even more advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence and robotics, which can support and complement humans in new ways. The SSDC will monitor and analyse the potential impact of “Industry 5.0” on employment and skills in the sector. The SSDC will establish clear aims and objectives to ensure that the European steel sector, and the quality jobs in the sector, do not suffer negatively from the changes that “industry 5.0” will bring by:

- Looking at the impact of even more advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence and robotics, which can support and complement humans in new ways;
- Inviting experts, such as *ESTEP*, to share technical information and trade union representatives to share examples of best practice of worker involvement;
- Establishing ways to determine market and product changes, anticipating skills needs (and potential re-training needs) and researching EU funding and investment.

G. Presidency

The Presidency of the SSDC will rotate on bi-annual basis and be assumed by one representative from *EUROFER* and *industriAll Europe*.

2024 – 2025 Presidency *industriAll Europe*
2026-2027 Presidency *EUROFER*

H. AOB

The SSDC covers a range of topics including European policies (environmental, energy, trade, economic, budgetary, employment and social), skills (training and education), promotion of the sector and promoting high European social standards in a global market. The social partners continue to value joint discussions and joint actions when appropriate.

New items of importance may be added to the agenda at short notice.