

# Road to Sibiu should lead towards a real debate on the Future of Europe

Ceemet, European Tech & Industry Employers, call for an open and facts-based debate on the Future of Europe, its wealth creation and the way getting there.

**Brussels, 08 May 2019** – The European Council has launched ahead of the summit in Sibiu its Strategic Agenda until 2024. A few weeks before the European elections, accompanied with exceptional imponderables, ground breaking decisions are difficult to be expected. Yet, the obligation and opportunity remains to look beyond a mandate and think where the EU has to be in 15 years and what it has to mean to its citizens.

## CHANGING RATIONALE FOR EU

This is necessary, as the group to whom the notions ‘peace and unity’ means something is declining. That, as *raison d’être* has in addition lost gravity with Europe’s younger generations. Likewise, the EU’s contribution to the creation of wealth for Europeans is consequently being overlooked.

We are witnessing a fragmentation of the political landscape, with a deplorable increase in nationalism and protectionism inside and outside of the EU, going together with a loss of trust in institutions at all levels.

This change is closely connected with surging Euroscepticism in many EU member states. Fear, too often unfounded, and uncertainty ever more determine the debate, including concerns about decreasing prosperity and standards of living.

The ongoing debate on the *Future of Europe* must not ignore the discourse of peace and the creation of wealth. Besides Europe has to avoid a merely inward focus in that debate and get ready to seize the opportunities of managing the digital transformation of all aspects of our lives.

Europe’s citizens need to be reassured that, in times of globalisation and rapid technological change, with emerging economic superpowers, we will do better together in a fit for future European Union than as weaker single nation states. In this prospect more than ever before, Europe needs a common policy on trade and economy, boosting companies’ competitiveness on a global scale.

## COMPETITIVE EUROPE = SOCIAL EUROPE

The current discourse on social Europe puts the proverbial cart before the horse, largely ignoring how social Europe is today and how social policy is financed.

More EU competences and regulation in social and employment policy to achieve upward social convergence, to increase social spending is a precarious misconception as it constitutes an unbalanced and short-termist vision, if it does not go hand in hand with a determination to push Europe’s international competitiveness.

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## About Ceemet

Ceemet represents the metal, engineering and technology-based industry employers in Europe, covering sectors such as metal goods, mechanical engineering, electronics, ICT, vehicle and transport manufacturing.

Member organisations represent 200,000 companies in Europe, providing over 17 million direct and 35 million indirect jobs.

Ceemet is a recognised European social partner at the industrial sector level, promoting global competitiveness for European industry through consultation and social dialogue.

*“New challenges require new ideas. New ideas require a real and open debate.”*

Uwe Combüchen  
Director General  
Ceemet

European citizens and politicians have to realise that whereas the EU only represents 7% of the world population and about 22% of global GDP, the EU-28 spend over 40% of worldwide social expenditures. Getting control of these gigantic expenditures and making them sustainable will only work on the basis of an innovative and internationally competitive economy and industry in Europe, which has to become the top priority of the EU.

A starting point of that deliberation is that Europe's manufacturing and technology industries directly provide quality employment for over 17 million people in Europe, and therefore play a central role in financing Social Europe.

Whereas, intelligent legislation at European level is necessary in areas such as technical standards, a politically motivated push for overly regulated labour markets, when digitalisation requires some room for experimentation, will not benefit the competitiveness of tomorrow's industry and its workers.

### FOCUS ON UNITY & SUBSIDIARITY

We believe that the future of European prosperity largely depends on a successful transition to a digitalised industry and society. If Europe wants to succeed, much of the debate and actions, including massive investments, must focus on a seamless European (Digital) Single Market.

While adhering to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, Europe must be ready to seize the opportunities offered by digitalisation and empower its citizens to do the same.

Diversity is the basis of the European Union, but we need a commonly shared vision that is implemented by all Member States, companies, workers and societies with determination.

Individual Member States alone cannot cope with the big investments necessary for the provision of coherent digital infrastructures, cybersecurity or data protection.

The same unity of the European Union is urgently needed for defending European interests in free and fair global trade given the forceful policy followed by China and the sea-change in the transatlantic partnership.

A strong Europe can offer visions and solutions that give confidence to citizens, workers and industry.

Ready or not, the future will come, and we believe that increasing industrial competitiveness and seizing the opportunities of digitalisation will help maintain a social Europe and, in turn, broaden the support amongst European citizens for the unique European project.

An addition to the Strategic Agenda that is human centric, supporting the empowerment of people, bears the potential of opening a new chapter in Europe's success story, provided there is a real open debate on the future of this fascinating European project.

Yes, it remains a valid prerequisite that Europe should be big on the big things and small on the small ones. It is up to political decision makers to act accordingly for the sake of a strong, united and prosperous Europe in the future.

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### #10POINTPLAN

Ceemet resumed the 10 biggest challenges of our time and tech & industry sector ideas to turn them into opportunities resulting in reinforcing EU.

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