

Ceemet Christmas Reception in the framework of the EU elections

On December 6, 2023, Ceemet organised its Christmas reception to present its contribution to the EU elections in 2024. A diverse panel of distinguished speakers engaged in discussions about the future of the metal, engineering and technology-based industries in the EU.

Key messages

In his introductory remarks, the President of Ceemet, Rainer Ludwig, reminded participants that, *“after years of successive crises and faced with an onerous regulatory burden and high energy costs, there is no question that the competitiveness of European industry has taken a major hit. The EU must do more to ensure that Europe is an attractive location to invest and do business”*. This is why Ceemet has come forward with its contribution for the upcoming EU elections on how to achieve a more competitive and social industry in Europe. The Ceemet document, entitled [“For a more competitive industry in a stronger Europe: a Ceemet perspective”](#), provides a blueprint for establishing a robust manufacturing sector, fundamental to the success of our social market economy.

During the event, the panellists and the participants debated the necessary actions needed to ensure a flourishing MET industries in the next EU mandate. They highlighted the four crucial headings proposed by the Ceemet contribution.

The first imperative is to **move towards totally frictionless labour mobility in the Internal Market**. Access to frictionless labour mobility for employees is crucial for EU companies to add value to their products. Delphine Rudelli, Ceemet Director General, explained that *“the mobility of workers within the EU must be urgently facilitated as EU companies are struggling against labour and skills shortages but also against the administrative barriers, even for simple business travel. That is why, Ceemet asks to create an EU-wide eDeclaration in order to standardise and simplify the reporting obligations for postings within the EU.”*

Secondly, to regain competitiveness in relation to third country competitors, the EU must **adopt fit for purpose regulation in full respect of the EU Treaties**. Overregulation stifles business investment and generally slows the economy. Therefore, reducing unnecessary reporting obligations and administrative burden on companies is a must for EU industry. This topic was debated at length by all of the panellists and for the most part there was agreement among them. Minna Helle, Deputy CEO and Executive Director of the Technology Industries of Finland explained that *“we must seriously look at the regulatory burden that we are placing on companies. Industry is broadly positive about many of the initiatives with regard to greening, however the over-regulation of the tech industries is currently an immense challenge.”*

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.

If the EU Commission has been operating under the “one-in, one -out” principle, we are yet to see any which concern social policies or labour law. On the contrary, the legislative agenda concerning social issues has been increased, so much so that companies are getting lost regarding all of these new rules and regulations. As MEP Margarita de la Pisa Carrión explained *“if we want an EU which works to help our citizens, the next mandate should focus on less regulation, but better regulation”*.

Thirdly, in order to **provide a highly skilled workforce** we must deal with the double challenge of labour and skills shortages. Our publication provides a wealth of solutions for EU, and national, legislators in this regard. Alain De Dauw, VP HR Shared Services Airpower of Atlas Copco and Bram Dehaene, P&O Country Head for Siemens highlighted that this issue is crucial for the next EU mandate. However, they explained that workers have all the tools to train, upskill and reskill. There are various constraints and barriers that prevent employees from training: the multitude of tools, their personal lives, the fear and sometimes even the unwillingness to engage in lifelong learning, *“we must change the mentality, stop viewing it as lifelong learning and start viewing it as everyday learning”* according to Bram Dehaene, this will begin to show learning not as a constraint but as an added value. It will be important in the next mandate to take into account the good practices provided by our companies.

Last but by no means least, **social partners must be given a key role in the legislative process**. Too often we see lip service being paid to the contributions of the social partners. If we want to ensure a vibrant European industry, this is one of the key building blocks. Stefan Olsson, Director General of DG EMPL of the EU Commission, recognised that *“we must look at national implementation of EU legislation, as well as the EU legislation itself and that social partners have a key role to play in this regard.”* However, also commenting on the role of social partners, Alain De Dauw, VP HR Shared Services Airpower of Atlas Copco suggested that *“social dialogue is a finely tuned machine which is based on trust built up by everyday interactions. Top down regulation from the EU is not helpful in this context”*

This Ceemet publication has been drafted to spark a new debate on the future of our industries in Europe, and crucially, how the MET industries can remain world-leading manufacturers. This question must become central to the debate during the European election campaign. The Ceemet contribution is available here in English and in several other European languages: French, German, Italian, Spanish, Bulgarian, Slovenian and Swedish.