

“In the new EU mandate, how can we combine social policy and the competitiveness of EU companies?”

On November 13, 2023, Ceemet co-organised with MEP Marie-Pierre Vedrenne (Renew-France) a working lunch on “how to combine social policy and the competitiveness of EU companies”, in the frame of the new EU mandate.

Key messages

In her introductory remarks, Ceemet Director General, **Delphine Rudelli**, reminded participants that, “*after years of successive crises and faced with an onerous regulatory and burden, there is no question that the competitiveness of European industry has taken a major hit as confirmed the Draghi report. The EU must do more to ensure that European industries benefit from an easier access to skilled labour and simplified access to the EU labour market through frictionless labour mobility.*” **Marie-Pierre Vedrenne**, MEP for Renew and co-host of the event added that for the EMPL committee, those two topics are really important for the new mandate.

During the event, the panellists and the participants debated the necessary actions needed to ensure the competitiveness of EU companies and social policy in the next EU mandate. The first panel focused on the need of having a skilled workforce while the second panel addressed the topic of labour mobility.

The first panel moderated by **Isabel Sobrino Mate**, Senior Policy Advisor at Ceemet, reflected on the question of “*how to provide a highly skilled workforce to foster competitiveness and innovation?*”. During the discussion, **MEP Marie-Pierre Vedrenne** explained that the Renew Europe pushes to be always connected to the daily lives of citizens and companies. To this end, she reminded the audience that the EMPL Committee calls for the need to invest on skills as this is the only way to succeed and foster the competitiveness of EU companies. **Leena Pöntynen**, Director of Skills and Competence at Technology Industries of Finland gave some concrete examples on how to foster a qualified workforce such as through regular meetings and discussions between company representatives and teachers, the establishment of a network with scientists and the development of a STEM strategic plan with a particular focus on teachers. **Joep Besser**, expert in the field of STEM, confirmed that it will be crucial to follow a bottom-up approach in the development of the EU STEM Education Strategic Plan. Moreover, he called for the inclusion of a network of STEM learning ecosystems with

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.

scientists, businesses and schools. In the following discussion with the participants, the issue of brain drain between Eastern and Western parts of the European Union was mentioned and on this same matter, **MEP Marie-Pierre Vedrenne** pointed out that mobility of EU citizens can be positive if politicians work to attract back home those talents who left their countries at an earlier stage.

The second panel debated on *“how to move towards totally frictionless labour mobility on the EU labour market?”* **MEP Marie-Pierre Vedrenne** started the discussions by stressing that the EP should be pragmatic and focus on improving and simplifying the EU legislation. **Stefan Solle**, Head of Brussels Office for Gesamtmetall, confirmed that for employers it was crucial to preserve the single market and to make the labour market more flexible. He gave the example of Germany, where companies can sell machines and install them in a foreign country, directly in the client plant. To achieve that, the documents needed and rules to be applied differ from one country to another, with sometimes very high number of collectively agreed provisions especially on wages, which make things extremely complex for just one or two days of work. **Henning Ehrenstein**, Head of Unit at DG Grow reacted by explaining that on that same day, a small step had been made towards simplifying the process with the presentation of the initiative on the eDeclaration. However, it is still a political and sensitive topic, which explains why the proposal of the Commission should remain voluntary. **MEP Marie-Pierre Vedrenne** agreed that the eDeclaration could be an important step forward and added that promoting labour mobility is essential, especially through EU agencies like ELA which shows that mobility is for all citizens. **Delphine Rudelli**, then asked the speakers if they considered mobility of third countries nationals as equally important as intra-EU mobility. For **Stefan Solle**, this debate cannot be avoided as there is no sense for Member States to steal workers from another EU country; it is therefore essential to consider the Blue card also for workers from non-EU countries. **Henning Ehrenstein** clarified the work of the EU Commission on this topic and explained that DG GROW is already working on the recognition of diplomas for third-country nationals, in order to facilitate legal migration. Hence, he confirmed what **Stefan Solle** had said highlighting that the eDeclaration is also for the third-country workers.

Delphine Rudelli, Ceemet Director General, concluded by linking the two panels as *“the mobility of workers within the EU must be urgently facilitated for EU companies who are struggling against labour and skills shortages.”* Last but by no means least, the participants reiterated their commitment to provide good practices and to work closely with policymakers in order to complete the single market and promote the EU competitiveness.