

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a black welding mask and a red and black protective jacket, stands in a factory setting. She has her arms crossed and is looking directly at the camera. The background shows industrial equipment and bright lights.

Ceemet
European Tech &
Industry Employers

Quality Jobs Roadmap

Position paper and written
contribution to the
European Commission
consultation

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www.ceemet.org

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About Ceemet

Set up in 1962, Ceemet is the European employers' organisation representing the interests of the metal, engineering and technology-based (MET) industries with a particular focus on topics in the areas of employment, social affairs, industrial relations, health & safety and education & training.

Ceemet members are national employers' federations across Europe and beyond based in 20 countries. They represent more than 200,000 member companies, a vast majority of which are SMEs.

Ceemet members provide direct and indirect employment for 35 million people and cover all products within the MET industrial sectors, detailed below.

Together, these companies make up Europe's largest industrial sector, both in terms of employment levels and added value, and are therefore essential to ensuring Europe's economic prosperity.



Introduction

The Commission is set to present the Quality Jobs Roadmap at the end of 2025. This strategy will be prepared with the social partners under the umbrella of the Pact for Social Dialogue.

Ceemet and its member associations, which are the recognised social partners representing the MET industries in most Member States, seek to contribute to the development of such a roadmap.

We welcome the acknowledgement that social dialogue is a fundamental pillar of the European Social model and is today a crucial component in dealing with the twin transition. At the EU level, and given the privileged role that the TFEU gives the social partners, EU policy makers indeed consistently ensure that social partners are consulted in a timely manner on all employment-related topics, as is the case with this Quality Jobs Roadmap.



A competitive Europe: the basis and prerequisite for quality employment

Ceemet would like to highlight that ensuring adequate conditions for companies to become competitive is the basis for the continuing creation of quality jobs in Europe. Indeed, regulation and laws cannot dictate quality jobs: they are created when companies are competitive in the global market. For this, we need to put in place adequate framework conditions to enhance and maintain companies' competitiveness. Without competitive companies, no employment can be created, and no quality jobs can be promoted.

The EU's GDP per capita has stagnated at 70% of the US level over the past 30 years, while other countries have significantly improved their relative position (for example, China increased from 3% of US GDP per capita to 30% during the same period). These structural weaknesses must be addressed to ensure that companies can continue to create quality jobs in Europe.

Hence, policymakers should work towards creating suitable enabling conditions for attracting investment and boosting the competitiveness of European businesses, particularly SMEs. A predictable, stable, and transparent business environment is the foundation for industrial competitiveness to the benefit of companies and workers. The Commission should, therefore, keep focusing on putting forward proposals to streamline and better articulate EU regulations ensuring that EU law-making promotes industrial competitiveness, which is the cornerstone of quality employment, in line with the Single Market Strategy.

In this respect, we would like to highlight that we support the Single Market Strategy and the Omnibus packages that the Commission has launched since February 2025, as they reflect the current geopolitical and socioeconomic challenges of Europe, its companies, workers, and citizens.

2 A Social Europe: AAA status compared to other parts of the world

As regards social Europe, Ceemet would like to underline that the EU is the most social continent on the planet. Indeed, Europe has some of the highest labour standards in the world. Its strong social acquis, reinforced national labour legislation, well-developed social protection, and successful national labour market systems have supported the creation of “quality employment” for decades.

Furthermore, collective bargaining agreements between social partners often improve working conditions. These agreements take into account the specific needs of both businesses and workers, ensuring solutions that are adapted to the realities of each sector or company. This strong EU and national social acquis already guarantee the quality of jobs per se.

Hence, we can safely affirm that every employer within the EU applying all the relevant European and national legislation is already providing quality jobs. Adding an additional layer to the existing social acquis communautaire by the coming quality jobs roadmap is therefore not needed. It would even be the opposite of the current Commission’s objectives “to simplify, consolidate and codify legislation to eliminate any overlaps and contradictions” laid down in the Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024–2029.

Thus, we highlight once again that social legislation and collective agreements are not only the path to quality jobs. Instead, the major precondition for such jobs is a competitive Europe with profitable companies.

The EU is the most social continent on the planet and has some of the highest labour standards in the world.





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MET industries: a sector already providing qualitative jobs

In the case of the metal, engineering and technology-based (MET) industries, the foundations for quality jobs are already there. Our companies provide over 35 million direct and indirect jobs across the continent. Jobs in our sector are typically stable, secure, well-compensated, and increasingly benefit from innovation. Furthermore, the industries provide good wages (wages are usually above average in the MET industries) and working conditions, which are today not only about remuneration but also about good health & safety conditions, flexibility and reconciling work and family life.

Moreover, as representatives of the MET industries, we have many collective bargaining agreements that provide an excellent framework for addressing labour market challenges and adapting employment conditions to the evolving needs of the world of work (connected to the twin transitions and others).

As a matter of fact, MET social partners at all levels continue to play a significant role in shaping working conditions and wage setting in the MET sector through established collective bargaining systems in many Member States.

MET industries have many collective bargaining agreements that provide an excellent framework for addressing labour market challenges and adapting employment conditions to the evolving needs of the world of work.

Beyond collective bargaining agreements, MET social partners at the appropriate level (company, regional, sectoral) are better placed to understand the challenges that companies and workers go through. Thus, they are more likely to find the most suitable and efficient tailor-made solutions that take into account the specificities of their companies and workers.

In this respect, Ceemet would like to underline once again that collective bargaining's flexibility, compared to legislation, leaves a larger room for manoeuvre for social partners at the appropriate level to negotiate customised agreements that provide flexible solutions to a rapidly changing world of work.

4

Skills at the heart of our sector

For MET employers, it is vital that re-skilling and up-skilling policies are placed at the core of a renewed European industrial strategy in order to boost competitiveness and increase continuous employability. The adequate skills development of the industry workforce is crucial to ensuring a successful twin transition and the continuing creation of quality employment.

MET social partners at all levels have a critical role to play in anticipating and managing skills' needs and organising up and re-skilling. For example, they are key actors in counselling and guiding employees, especially low-skilled ones, on the importance of training as well as in furnishing information about the nature of training, tailored to companies' needs and workers' skill sets.

A universal right to training does not guarantee quality or relevance, but rather a misalignment from actual labour market demand in favour of individual interests.

Regarding MET companies, the vast majority of which are SMEs, they also face specific issues when it comes to putting in place training schemes. Thus, we believe that targeted support must be deployed in a simple and user-friendly manner for MET companies to deploy right skilling schemes adapted to the rapidly changing needs of companies and labour markets.

On another note, we would like to highlight that many up- and re-skilling schemes developed by social partners have proven successful at the national and regional level and have effectively boosted training participation in our industries. EU policymakers could facilitate a structured exchange of best practices and leverage these successful examples.

As regards paid training leave, Ceemet believes that it can be an effective tool to boost training, quality employment, and higher rates of job-to-job transition when negotiated by social partners and aligned with the organisational needs of companies. However, training must remain flexible and responsive, not a rigid obligation. A universal right to training does not guarantee quality or relevance, but rather a misalignment from actual labour market demand in favour of individual interests.



No binding labour legislation but a focus on enforcement

For all the reasons expressed above, we believe that striking the right balance between industrial competitiveness and social measures is essential for sustainable growth.

As a consequence, we call on the Commission to refrain from releasing new binding legislation in the framework of the Quality Jobs Roadmap. As explained, the EU and national social acquis are already large enough and extensive to ensure quality employment. Furthermore, the role of collective agreements in improving working conditions, on a voluntary basis, should not be underestimated.

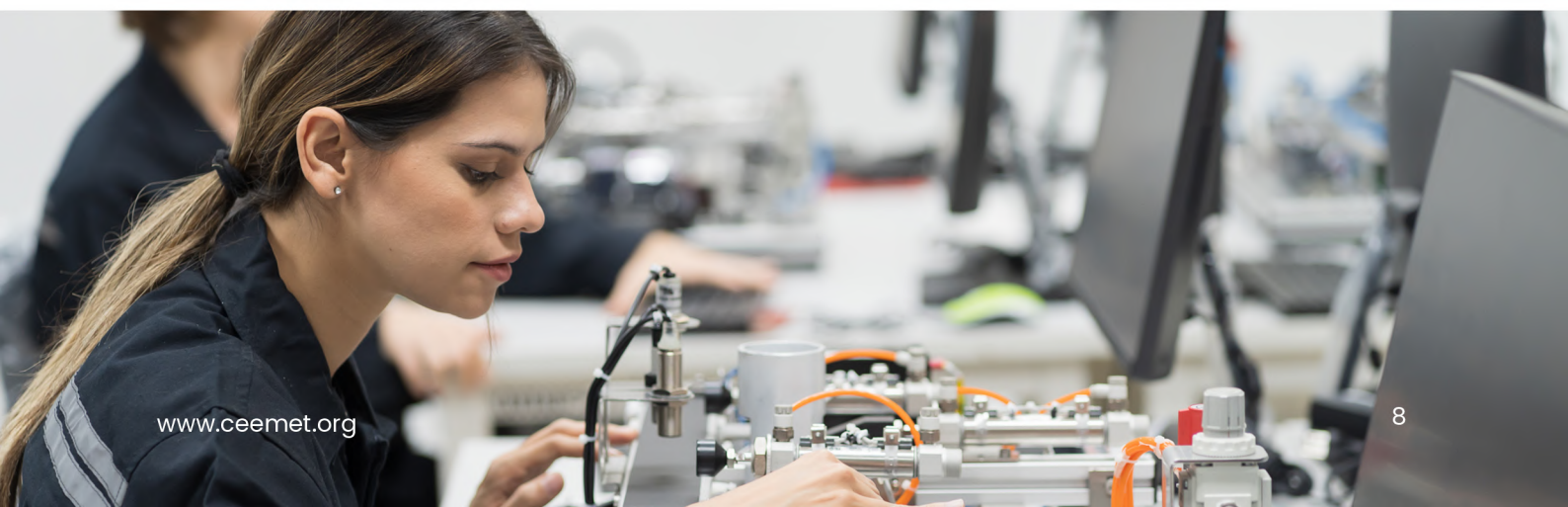
For example, in the field of health & safety, Ceemet would like to emphasise that the EU acquis is already very impressive with 25 Directives on the protection of workers at the workplace. It is on top, complemented by many sector-specific provisions negotiated by the social partners, both at the national and company level.

Hence, the focus should be put on the enforcement of existing and new legislation: we believe that it is important for the Member States to fully and timely transpose EU laws as well to ensure effective enforcement of the existing national legislation. Thus, we support, for example, Commission's initiative to encourage the Member States to further develop effective enforcement mechanisms of labour law.

We call on the Commission to refrain from releasing new binding legislation in the framework of the Quality Jobs Roadmap.



Where necessary, Member States should strengthen the role – and where appropriate also the number – of the labour inspectors, to ensure the correct implementation of labour legislation at the national level. In addition, adequate and proportionate sanctions should be put in place to ensure the enforcement of existing legislation. However, it is fair to recognise that some of the legal rules are not always well transposed, implemented and thus applied and that more efforts would be needed on enforcement that workers' rights are protected and that there is a level playing field for companies. This is important before considering adding new layers of legislation on top of the existing. Also, better information for both workers and employers will enhance a better understanding of their rights and obligations.



As regards the 3 pillars mentioned in the Commission background paper, we would like to highlight that all of them are already covered by EU legislation, some of which are mentioned in the background paper.

1. Fair working conditions are covered by many directives, including the Working Time Directive, Health and Safety legislation, etc.
2. Digitalisation is covered by the AI Act, the Platform Work Directive, the GDPR, etc.
3. Fair transitions are covered by the Collective Redundancy Directive, the European Works Council, Information and Consultation of Workers and extensive legislation at the national level. Furthermore, the Commission has issued many non-binding initiatives in the area of skills, and social partners at the appropriate level across Europe are in the process of discussing the impacts of the twin transition in the workplace.

Some of the above-mentioned directives are still in the process of being transposed into national law. We first need their implementation to assess their effect and impact on the labour market.

We reiterate our conviction that the EU should refrain from introducing new labour legislation in any of the above areas. We could see, however, a role for the Commission to come up with topical guidelines (for example in the area of health and safety) or recommendations and the sharing of best practices on certain subjects in order to support Member States and especially companies in the implementation of complex legislation.

We also stress the importance of avoiding attempts to define job quality rigidly. What constitutes a quality job largely depends on people's needs and varies with life circumstances.



In this context, we also stress the importance of avoiding attempts to define job quality rigidly — it is highly context-dependent. What constitutes a quality job largely depends on people's needs and varies with life circumstances. For example, a student experiencing their first work experience will likely have different expectations of job quality than young parents balancing family life with more qualified work, while employees at the end of their career will have other needs still. Likewise, remote or part-time work can be a key opportunity for some workers, such as young parents or students, while it may pose limitations for others who, depending on life stage, need other arrangements. Therefore, a balanced and needs-based approach is necessary, and it is not feasible to craft a legal definition of what constitutes a quality job.



Conclusion



To conclude, we want to insist on the role of social partners in shaping and delivering the Roadmap. Ceemet considers that they should play a central role, but at the appropriate level (be it sectoral, national, regional or company) and always on a voluntary basis.

Indeed, social partner autonomy is a fundamental principle that must always be respected. Social dialogue is built on cooperation and trust; it takes time. Hence, even though social dialogue and collective bargaining are tools for meaningful change, they cannot be imposed by legislation.

Last but not least, Ceemet would like to stress once more that one one-size-fits-all approach won't deliver the nuance required across different industries, regions and professions.

We cannot continue overregulating. An efficient industrial policy cannot go hand in hand with an increasing burden of social regulations or more constraints for companies, especially SMEs.

Ceemet is fully committed to contributing to a roadmap that works for workers, for companies, and for Europe's future competitiveness.

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