49th IER Committee Meeting

Rue Belliard 40 / Belliardstraat 40
1040 Brussels – Belgium
T +32 (0)2 786 30 45
www.ceemet.org
@ceemet
EU Transparency Register
61370904700-45

Brussels, 19th November 2025

1. ROUNDTABLE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Mads Storgaard Pedersen from Denmark began his intervention by mentioning that the Danish economy is doing quite well, and that unemployment continues to be very low in Denmark.
As regards collective bargaining, DI concluded agreements in 2024. The collective agreements in the MET sector were renewed on 1st March 2025 and cover a three year period *(please refer to the national report for more details).*

Regarding the *automotive sector*, it is very limited in Denmark, so the question had little relevance.

On the topic of *AI management in the workplace*, Mads stressed that there are no discussions at national or CB level. Trade unions are not interested in this topic as this is managed at company level.

Regarding *remote work and the right to disconnect* in collective agreements, there are currently no discussions with the unions in Denmark, nor legislatively developments in this area. Remote work is quite flexible in Denmark, so this is not really an issue.

Jarkko Ruohoniemi from Finland began his intervention by referring to the latest TIF collective agreements. A new collective agreement for technology industry blue collar employees was concluded this year, covering the period from 22 February 2025 to 30 November 2027, with agreed wage settlements for 2025, 2026, and 2027 *(further details can be found in the report).*

He further mentioned that there is the possibility of terminating collective agreements next year, but this is unlikely to happen which will lead to two years of industrial peace.

Regarding restructuring plans within the automotive sector, he explained that the situation of the only automotive assembly plant in Finland is extremely challenging, and the factory is undergoing significant workforce reductions. At the same time, the plant is redirecting its production focus towards the defense industries.

On *AI management in the workplace,* Jarkko stressed that this is not such an issue for the moment. On the contrary, the AI Finland project and other initiatives promoting the use of artificial intelligence within the technology industry are progressing as planned.

He further mentioned that TIF is having preliminary discussions with the Industrial Union regarding artificial intelligence and the development of robotics. These discussions are informal and at a very early stage. The rapid development of robotics in the coming years is expected to be significant, and its impact on working life is also of great interest to trade unions. AI and robotics is a very interesting combination for the industry and as a result many events are being held in Finland on this topic.

As regards remote work, he explained that this is not issue, as everyone is doing remote work. On this topic, he also explained that whereas some white-collar unions have started to speak about the possibility to request an individual right to remote work, some companies are bringing people back to the offices. The issue of the *right to disconnect* has not been raised up in Finland.

Last but not lease, Jarkko Ruohoniemi referred to the *economic situation* which has not improved very much and still is unstable. The unemployment rate is of around 9.2%.

Lucile Uhring from France began her intervention by highlighting that the *political context is unstable*. Regarding the economic figures they are not excellent but not bad neither. On another note, she mentioned that recruitment difficulties are easing – and there is a declining trend in the vacancies rate.

However, the overall employment situation remains fragile, marked by a persistently high number of employees affected by job losses. However, the unemployment rate has managed to remain stable. The projected unemployment rate for 2025 is 7.5% and 7.8% .

As regards the industries, the **s**ituation is very contrasted between the different sectors (for example while the aerospace is recruiting , the automotive sector has experienced a sharp contraction of nearly 17% since the end of 2019, and metal products have declined by 5%).

Regarding the collective agreements in the MET industries, on 20 February 2025, the negotiations on wages in the metal industry ended without success. This was the first time that the new national minimum wage scale was reviewed. As a result of this failure to reach an agreement, the minimum wage scale applicable in 2024 continued to apply in 2025. The negotiations on the minimum wage scale applicable for 2026 have resumed on 25th November.

On another note, she mentioned that UIMM is currently engaged in discussions with the trade unions on several key topics including the employee saving schemes, and around employment, training and disabled workers – *more information can be found in the report.*

Regarding AI management in the workplace, UIMM is developing together with the trade unions a study of the joint skills observatory in the metal industry. The following axes are part of the study:

- Defining industrial AI and drawing up a map of AI companies producing solutions (belonging to the metal sector and beyond);
- Defining the frameworks for use (use cases and regulations) and the impact of AI for companies, employees and training organisations by clearly identifying the use cases for this technology;
- Defining the impact of AI (in particular generative AI) on the professions and associated skills in the value chain of mainly industrial SMEs;
- Analysing the types of AI training that already exist and comparing them with the needs expressed.

Sabine Schaeffer from Germany started her intervention by highlighting that Gesamtmetall is currently halfway between collective bargaining rounds. Last year, Gesamtmetall agreed on a term of 25 months, so the next round will not start until autumn 2026.

As regards *restructuring plans in the automotive sector*, this happens at company level. To support companies Gesamtmetall has concluded a collective agreement, called the Future Collective Agreement. This is a framework that companies can use to support the transformation and avoiding that they have to sign their own company agreement.
Overall, she mentioned that the situation in the automotive sector is very difficult and challenging. There are lots of regulations in place and the industry need companies to stay in Germany and not to relocate.

On the *point of AI management*, Sabine Shaffer stressed that this is not a collective bargaining issue, so there are no initiatives in this area. It is more of a legislative issue: regulations in the Works Constitution Act heavily regulate AI. For Gesamtmetall, simplifications in the area of legislation on AI management in the workplace would be useful; however, trade unions see things differently.

As regards *remote work and the right to disconnect*, Gesamtmetall has a collective agreement on mobile working since 2018, thus providing the guidelines that companies need.

The right to disconnect is not a topic of collective bargaining in Germany. There are occasional attempts in the political arena to regulate this issue, but these have so far been successfully resisted. Otherwise, there are some regulations at company level.

Eva van der Boom from the Netherlands started her intervention by referring to the *economic situation* and stressed that they have a modest growth of 1.1%. The inflation rates continue to be quite high over 3% and the unemployment rate is of around 4%. According to Eva van der Boom, increases in wages that have been quite large over the last years have contributed to the high inflation rates. Regarding the labour market, there has been a minor growth in unemployment, but still, they have more vacancies than unemployed people

As regards the industries, some parts of the sector such as- semiconductors, machinery are performing well. Energy intensive sectors and traditional manufacturing are still struggling. Thus, there are very big differences within the industries.

As regards the collective agreements in the MET industries, a new bargaining round started in September. This round is very challenging as trade unions are requesting a 6% salary increase. Employers do not agree with this request and are expecting to face more strikes. During this round of negotiations, the following topics were addressed:

- Sustainable employability & generational policy
- Working hours, leave, and workload
- Overtime and flexibility
- Training and development
- Equal treatment
- Travel expenses and mobility
- Union and participation
- Wage

Eva van der Boom also highlighted that sick leave is big problem, as it has increased steadily since the covid pandemic and there are no signs that it will decrease. This is not only due to physical illness, but illness related to mental health (work pressure).

In order to address this issue, FME is speaking with its members and looking at ways to come up with a plan to get it down. Moreover, she also mentioned that both employers and employees acknowledge that absenteeism is a major problem and want to work together to find solutions.

Regarding the automotive industry, the Netherlands only counts with high tech producing plants. For the moment, they have no issues as they are having high demand for their products.

On AI Management in the Workplace , she explained that the Netherlands is among Europe's leaders in workplace AI adoption. Around 95% of Dutch organisations run AI programmes, with large companies increasingly using AI for algorithmic management—automating tasks such as scheduling, resource allocation, and performance monitoring. The use of AI is promoted by the Dutch government in order to increase labour productivity. In addition, AI is growing in importance for the automation of knowledge work and customer service.

Andreas Edenman and Anton Wemander Grahm from Sweden referred to the latest developments regarding the MET collective bargaining/agreement in Sweden.

As informed in the June 2025 National Report, Teknikföretagen entered into new collective agreements, for both white and blue collars in April 2025:

- The agreement is valid from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2027.
- The agreement value for the new agreements is 6.4 percent. The cost of the agreement is allocated at 3.4% for 2025 and 3.0% for 2026.
- The salary review takes place on 1 April 2025 and 1 April 2026.
- Apart from salary increases, a key issue has been reduced working hours, particularly for white-collar employees. The trade unions strongly pushed this demand, resulting in further working time reductions in the new collective agreements for white collars

On the point of *AI management in the workplace, they* explained that for the moment the trade unions have not put forward any concrete demands on this topic. They further emphasized that trade unions maintain a positive and pragmatic attitude toward technological development, recognising its importance for maintaining competitiveness and safeguarding industrial jobs in Sweden.

However, issues related to privacy and the use of personal data are of increasing concern to both white-collar and blue-collar unions. This is particularly evident in discussions concerning crime prevention measures in the workplace, such as background checks during recruitment and the use of drug testing among both job applicants and current employees, where trade unions have expressed growing skepticism. Since similar privacy and data protection concerns may arise in connection with AI, particularly in HR and employee management systems and this could become a more prominent issue in the future.

Still, for now, however, AI remains an area where the social partners share a largely constructive and forward-looking view.

As regards the *automotive industry*, they referred to lay offs at Volvo cars and to the fact that more than 3000 employees had been made redundant.

Last but not least, they mentioned that the Swedish economy it is slowly improving despite the industry being try still under quite pressure. Furthermore, there is still considerable uncertainty as regards the direction of future US policy, particularly trade policy.

Marcel Marioni from Switzerland started his intervention by highlighting that their *collective agreement* will only end in June 2028 and thus discussions for the next bargaining round will only start in 2027. On this topic, he mentioned that in general, the climate in the social partnership in the MET industries has improved in recent years (and to this end he referred for example the joint demand for an extension of short-time working compensation to 24 months).

Regarding *restructuring trends,* he highlighted that the number of employees in the tech industry has been declining in recent quarters. Without an improvement in the situation, further redundancies are to be expected in 2026.

On *AI management at the workplace*, he stressed that AI is playing an important role and the issue is discussed company by company and not centrally by the government. For the moment there are no discussions on the topic with trade unions.

On another note, he referred to the economic situation in Switzerland. The first half of 2025 was marked by considerable volatility in foreign trade and GDP data. Furthermore, Marcel Marioni further explained that uncertainty surrounding international trade and economic policy remains high and continues to shape the outlook for both global and Swiss economic growth, particularly in light of sector-specific tariffs announced by the US, which would further slowdown foreign trade.

On this item, he highlighted that since 7 August 2025, the US government has imposed general tariffs of 39% and 50% respectively for steel and aluminium for Switzerland. The Swiss government is currently conducting further negotiations with the US to reduce tariffs and thus make companies exporting to the US more competitive again.

As regards the *economic situation in the MET industries*, revenues have gradually declined over the last few quarters. In the first half of 2025, revenues fell by 2.5% compared to the previous year. The decline is clearly visible. The downward trend is therefore continuing. Since 2023, the industry has been hovering around zero – there have been no growth peaks like those seen in 2017 or 2022. Sales remain in negative territory – the tech industry is therefore still under pressure, with no clear signs of a turnaround.

Rose Sargent from the UK highlighted that the unemployment rate is currently of 5% and that there are plenty of vacancies in manufacturing in the UK

Regarding the *political environment*, she explained that Make UK is still awaiting the lay out of the budget – where it is expected that the government will do their best not to raise national insurance on employers, though this still has to be confirmed.

Make UK thinks that the budget will also take into consideration the issue of the minimum wage. Currently there are different types of minimum wage depending on age: below 18, between 18 and 21 and over 21. It looks like the government will decide to leave only 2 types of minimum wage below 18 and over 18. On this topic, Rose Sargent explained that the minimum wage will be increased by 4.5%.

On another note, she mentioned that the employments rights bill will probably become law by December 2025 or January 2026. The bill that includes 200 pages of legislation on improving working lives of workers touches upon enhanced protection of pregnant women, enhanced protection against dismissal and more rights for trade unions.

The bill will probably also include the Ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting , along the lines of gender pay gap reporting.

2. DISCUSSION ON WORKING TIME

Mads Storgaard Pedersen explained that in Denmark they were having issues with the ECJ rulings as they are disrupting the way in which the Working Time Directive is being implemented.In fact, as a result of ECJ rulings Denmark was forced to revise its holiday act, and other national legislation.

Also, with working time registration they had to revise all the legislation in order to track and register working time. Mads Storgaard Pedersen mentioned that nobody was in favour of this, not even trade unions- so they were left with no choice but to develop a system of global implementation of working time registration.

This is particularly an issue with white collar workers in Denmark as they work and leave depending on the needs of the job and not depending on a strict working time. It is a trust-based relationship; therefore, tracking of working time is very challenging.

Hence, now white-collar workers have to agree (in an annex to the contract) that they are a autonomous in the management of their work in order not to be strictly tracked – in terms of working time.

Jarkko Ruohoniemi explained that Finland had to make some years ago a revision of the holiday act in order to apply ECJ rulings. Thus, the possibility to postpone annual leave, due to sickness during holiday, was already in place. However, with the new ECJ rulings, these rules will become stricter.

Regarding the *working time Act,* white collar unions, in particular engineers, have been very active with the reduction of working time, and they are closely following developments in this area in countries such as Germany which they see as a source of inspiration.

He further explained that white-collar workers can agree with their employer individually that they are autonomous and that they organise their working hours and work autonomously in order to avoid a strict application and tracking of working time. This can also be done with blue collars.

Regarding the reduction of working time, Jarkko mentioned that trade unions will now probably ask for reduction of working time and thus TIF is preparing its arguments to respond to them.

Lucile Uhring explained that the French court de cassation had recently handled two rulings in September 2025 which brought French legislation in line with the case law of the ECJ Court. These rulings relate to sick leave and annual leave :

- The first concerns *paid annual leave and sickness leave*: employees who fall ill during their holidays may now request that their annual leave be carried over, provided they notify their employer of their sickness leave.

- The second relates to *paid annual leave and overtime*: the Court ruled that annual leave days must be included when calculating whether the 35-hour weekly threshold has been reached, meaning that an employee can take paid leave and still be entitled to overtime in the same week.

Although anticipated, these two rulings are considered highly problematic by businesses.

Sabine Shaffer explained that there are no issues with the ECJ rulings regarding holidays as in Germany it was already possible to recover holidays in the event of illness during them.

The ECJ ruling has had no impact neither on the working time regulation. . Having said that, it is likely that the German labour court will want to apply the rules in a stricter manner. On this same note, she mentioned that a social partner dialogue has now taken place in Berlin, which is likely to result in a draft bill in early 2026. Gesamtmetall assumes that working time recording will also be included, but hopes that the exceptions they need will also be taken into consideration. This includes, for example, the exception of trust-based working time.

On another issue, she mentioned that the discussion about reducing working hours has levelled off in collective agreements. Even IG Metall, a key driver of the discussion about the 4-day week, said in the spring that the '4-day week with full wage compensation' should be put in place, this issue is no longer on the union's list of demands.

Eva van der Boom explained that ECJ rulings are not a big issue in Netherlands as employees already had the possibility to recover their holidays if falling sick while being on annual leave.
Regarding the registration of working time, Dutch employers were already required to keep track of working time. However, with the ECJ rulings tracking will have to be done in a stricter manner as inspectors will be looking more to find out if employers do comply with this.

On another note, she mentioned that trade unions are requesting that a standard week of 4 days be introduced in some sectors. A company (outside manufacturing) has already established this system.

On this same note, she explained that trade unions consider that increased absenteeism is due to the fact that that employees are taking more sick leave to use it for caring issues. For this reason, trade unions are asking that the week be reduced to 4 days in order for employees to have the 5th day for caring and thus, as a way to reduce absenteeism.

As regards working time, **Daniela Jimenez from Spain** explained that, in May, a draft bill was introduced to reduce the working week from 40 to 37.5 hours, which also included measures to regulate digital disconnection. However, the measure wasn't finally approved by Congress.

The draft bill had the support of the government and trade unions, but not of employers' organizations, as it could increase labor costs. Confemetal supports improving labor conditions, but through social dialogue and collective bargaining, as the circumstances vary across different sectors.

On the other hand, the Government approved in September 2025 the urgent processing of the Royal Decree on working time tracking, which will require a mandatory digital system, precise to the minute and accessible even during remote work. It must record clock-ins, clock-outs, and breaks, including the compensation of overtime. Remote access by the Labor Inspectorate, an internal mandatory protocol, and staff training are also foreseen. The workers' representatives (RLT) and employees will be able to consult their data and receive a monthly summary along with their payslip. It will affect all companies, except executives and self-employed workers. Currently, it has not yet entered into force, and its final approval could face difficulties and delays

Anton Wemander Grahm and Andreas Edenman explained that in Sweden it is possible to break your vacation if you get sick and thus recover the holidays lost due to illness.
On this same note they mentioned that the ECJ rulings regarding the registration of working time didn't really have impact on Working time regulations in Sweden. Actually, Teknikföretagen recommends their companies to follow what the collective agreement says in this respect.

On another note, they mentioned that the reduction of working hours is quite a contentious issue in Sweden. Both trade unions and left political are now pushing this issue. Employers do not quite understand the reasoning behind this demand but they believe that it is connected to the fact that after the pandemic white collar workers have many more possibilities to telework.

As background, the collectively agreed regular working hours in Swedish industry amount to 40 hours per week for daytime work. This corresponds to the weekly working time stipulated in the Swedish Working Hours Act. For shift work involving nights and weekends, the weekly working hours are shorter, typically ranging from 34 to 38 hours depending on the specific working time model applied

In addition to this, the collective agreements include a working time reduction scheme. Under this system, a number of minutes are accrued to a time bank after each completed workweek. For employees who work throughout the full year, this corresponds to a total annual reduction equivalent to eight days for blue-collar employees and nine days for white-collar employees. The accrued time can be taken as paid leave, which requires an agreement between the employee and the employer. Alternatively, it can be paid out as cash compensation (also requiring agreement). If neither of these options is exercised, the value is instead transferred as an additional pension *contribution at the end of the year, which in practice allows the company to prioritize maintaining current working hours while converting the accrued time into pension contributions*.

It should also be noted that a large group of white-collar employees have agreed to be exempted from many parts of the working time regulations (with consideration taken to the mandatory provisions in the EU working time directive) and overtime compensation rules. These employees have a greater degree of autonomy in managing their own working time and are normally not covered by the working time reduction scheme described above.

Marcel Marioni explained that the Working Time Directive does not apply in **Switzerland**.

Concerning holidays, he stressed that the same rules apply as in another countries: when you are sick during holidays you can recuperate later you holidays.

As regards working hours, the standard working week in the collective agreement of the MET industry is 40 hours per week, but the legislation allows 45 hours per week industry.

Trade unions are trying to request the reduction of working time, despite the fact that economy in Switzerland is not doing well, due to the issue of USA tariffs

Mesut Serin from Turkey explained that there are some discussions around shortening the working week but no real government push for this nor strong demand from trade unions. Thus, MESS does not expect any change regarding the working time in the short term.

Rose Sargent from the UK mentioned that in 2023, the UK decided that they will deviate from the Working Time Directive and hence do not need to abide neither by ECJ rulings etc.
In the UK the maximum working time is 48 hours per week and there is the possibility to opt in to work more. Therefore, there is not a lot of interest in reducing working hours.
Regarding holidays, normally full-time employees are entitled to a 5.6 weeks leave.
On the point of sickness, same as in other countries, employees can recuperate holidays if they fall sick
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Follow-up: this topic will continue to be discussed in the IER and monitored at national and EU level.

3. EU TOPICS

a. Quality Jobs Roadmap

Ceemet briefly referred to the position paper which was released in July 2025. The secretariat also mentioned that the Quality Jobs Roadmap will be released on 3rd December 2025 (please refer to circular 307/25 for more information).

A social partner hearing will be organized on 12th December 2025. Moreover, a written consultation of the social partners will be formally opened after the QJR is released.

b. Just Transition Directive

Ceemet secretariat explained that an own initiative report regarding the just transition in the world of work is currently being discussed in the European Parliament. As part of this draft EMPL report, MEPs are calling amongst others to:

- release a directive to ensure a just transition in the world of work
- to ensure on the basis of the review of the legislative framework that the right to information and consultation of workers is effectively applied in the context of transitions
- to introduce an individual right to training

Against this background and in order to prepare its advocacy, Ceemet has developed a draft position paper which was presented to IER experts. The IER agreed with the paper, with minor changes.

Follow-up: Ceemet position paper was approved by Ceemet GA and is currently being used to develop advocacy work in the European Parliament (please refer to circular 306/25 for more information).

4. SOCIAL DIALOGUE AT EU LEVEL

Ceemet Secretariat reminded members about the social dialogue plenary meeting to be held on 10th December 2025 and asked them to register.

5. AOB & ACTION PLAN

The next meeting will be held in the end of June in Stockholm. It will be held together with the EU Committee meeting.

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