Press release

Vocational training must become a first-class pathway for Europe's industry

Brussels, 12 November 2026

Ceemet and industriAll Europe, representing the European Social Partners in the MET sectors, have published a joint position on European Strategy on Vocational Education and Training (VET).

The European social partners welcome the initiative at a time when the green and digital transitions, the rise of artificial intelligence, demographic change and intensifying global competition are reshaping labour markets and driving demand for new skills. In this context, **strong VET systems are central to both Europe's industrial competitiveness and the creation of quality jobs.**

However, vocational pathways are still too often seen as a second choice, which keeps enrolment low despite strong demand for VET graduates on the labour market. At the same time, training is not always aligned with labour market needs and participation in continuing VET remains insufficient. While MET companies are already the largest training provider in the sector, SMEs in particular need better-targeted support, including easier access to European funding, to develop relevant training programmes.

Ceemet and industriAll Europe call for:

- VET to be made a first-class pathway that leads to quality jobs and career progression;
- strong social partner involvement in designing, implementing and evaluating training;
- introducing incentives for companies to invest in more, better-quality and accessible apprenticeships, making them easier to implement for SMEs";
- investment in lifelong learning as a pillar of a just transition;
- better career guidance and easier movement between vocational, general and higher education.

Delphine Rudelli, Ceemet Director General, said: "*Europe's MET industries cannot compete without people who have the right skills. Our companies are already the largest training provider in the MET sector. But SMEs need practical support and better access to funding to offer apprenticeships and labour-market-relevant training. It is important to note that VET systems work best when employers and trade unions shape them together. Social partners know what skills industry needs today and tomorrow. Our joint statement shows that we are ready to play that role, and the Commission should build on it*."

Isabelle Barthès, industriAll Europe Deputy General Secretary, added:

"*Europe cannot build a strong industrial future without investing in its people. Access to skills, training and lifelong learning must be ensured for every worker.*

Workers must be guaranteed the means to adapt to technological and industrial change, develop their careers and secure quality employment throughout their working lives. Delivering this requires strong social dialogue, collective bargaining and shared responsibility between social partners and public authorities. Skills development is not a cost to be minimised, but a fundamental investment in workers and in Europe's future."

Both organisations stress that the European VET Strategy should provide a coherent framework that supports Member States and contributes proactively to Europe's industrial transformation. They stand ready to continue contributing constructively to the process.

Read the full joint statement: https://bit.ly/3V71fD6