



## An Industrial Deal focused on ensuring quality industrial jobs in Europe

*On 20 February 2024, the Antwerp Declaration set out 10 priorities for an Industrial Deal for Europe to deliver the Green Deal and ensure quality industrial jobs in Europe.*

There is an urgent need for clarity, predictability and confidence in Europe and its industrial policy. To meet climate neutrality by 2050 and the recently communicated 2040 target, Europe's electricity production will need to multiply, and industry investments will need to be six times higher than the previous decade. This enormous challenge comes at a time when both large companies and SMEs face the most severe economic downturn in a decade: demand is falling, production costs increasing and investments moving to other regions. A US economy that benefits from the financial support of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and its ease of accessibility, a Chinese overcapacity, and increasing exports to Europe, increase the pressure on the European industry even more. Our companies face this challenge every day. Sites are being closed, production halted, and people let go. Europe needs a business case, urgently.

An Open Strategic Autonomy for a competitive and resilient EU is crucial for the transition of Europe in an ever-changing geopolitical landscape. It can, however, only be achieved if foundation and energy intensive industries remain and invest in Europe. Without a targeted industrial policy, Europe risks becoming dependent on imports of even basic goods and chemicals. Europe cannot afford for this to happen.

**In the Antwerp Declaration, signatories specifically called for:**

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- Public de-risking of private investment, with guarantees to ensure the retention and creation of quality jobs in Europe;
- Targeted programmes to ensure the supply of skilled workers for the industrial transformation;
- Strengthened social dialogue, as agreed in the Val Duchesse Tripartite Declaration;
- A Just Transition.

The social dimension of an Industrial Deal is vital to ensure its success and social acceptance. To achieve this objective, as social partners representing employers and workers in Europe's manufacturing, mining and energy industries, we jointly call for a European Industrial Deal which must:

### **1. Ensure a Just Transition for our industries and workforce**

While the scale of industrial policy and disruptive state subsidies elsewhere, in particular in the US and China, has dramatically increased the European competitive disadvantage to those countries, the EU must develop a robust industrial strategy that leads to retention and creation of quality industrial jobs across Europe.

An industrial policy must not only be about supporting 'clean tech' investors, but also supporting the transformation of existing industrial assets in the founding industries, which are essential parts of the strategic value chains.

The green and digital transformation has never been more challenging for both companies and workers. It must go hand in hand with a Just Transition framework which ensures the effective anticipation and management of employment and skills; provides security for companies and employees faced with these industrial transitions, underpinned by the strong and stable involvement of social partners at all levels; and quality training.

The availability of financial resources is necessary to stimulate industrial investment in innovative green and digital technologies and production methods in Europe, with guarantees to ensure the retention and creation of quality jobs, while ensuring a fair distribution of the wealth created. Strict criteria on access to EU funds should promote a fair transformation of our industries, focusing on social cohesion, quality employment and promotion of social dialogue.

### **2. Develop a re-skilling and up-skilling agenda**

Re-skilling and up-skilling policies must be put at the core of a renewed European Industrial Deal. They are also a pre-condition to successfully deliver on the green and digital transition. As social partners, we continue to persistently advocate for decision-makers throughout Europe to firmly support the re-skilling and up-skilling of the industrial workforce, in particular in industries which are experiencing significant technological transformations.

Urgent steps are needed to enhance workers' skills through labour market-relevant continuous vocational education and training (CVET), throughout their careers.

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, on the importance of undergoing training,



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as well as in providing information about the nature of training, tailored to companies' needs and workers' skill sets.

SMEs face specific issues when it comes to putting in place training schemes. Targeted support must be deployed in a simple and user-friendly manner for authorities, companies and workers to deploy right-skilling schemes adapted to the needs of labour markets.

Many up- and re-skilling schemes have proven to be successful at the national and regional level and have effectively boosted training participation in our industries. EU policymakers should facilitate a structured exchange of best practices and leverage these successful examples.

Responsive VET systems are crucial in addressing the prevalent skills shortages within our industries and in boosting our industrial basis. EU policymakers must ensure that adequate funding is made available and targeted to the right priorities (green, digital and demographic transitions) to support well-functioning Vocational Education and Training systems. Furthermore, it should be possible to ease the rules governing EU funding in the event of a major transformation, in particular for SMEs and regions which do not have other specific resources at their disposal.

The rapid transformation of our industries underscores the growing demand for professionals in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Intensifying the investment in STEM-related studies and disciplines is a necessity to deliver on the green and digital transformation.

Furthermore, strategies to anticipate skills needs are vital in order to design education and training programmes that are labour market-driven, but broad enough to provide a basis for further education if needs change.

### **3. Promote social dialogue and social partners' involvement**

Social dialogue is a fundamental pillar of the European social model and is today a crucial component in dealing with the twin transition.

At national level, recognised sectoral social partners play a critical role in shaping the world of work in the frame of collective bargaining. Collective agreements remain an important tool to deal with the rapid transformation that the world of work is undergoing due to multiple structural factors including the twin transition, the shortage of labour and skilled workforce, the ageing of the workforce, etc. These agreements provide a framework to address labour market challenges and adapt employment conditions to the evolving needs of the world of work.

A robust and effective social dialogue can significantly contribute to industrial competitiveness and the creation of quality jobs. In fact, countries with strong social partners and a higher prevalence of collective bargaining tend to have more resilient labour markets, characterised by lower numbers of low-paid workers and reduced levels of unemployment.

National and EU policymakers need to defend the key role that social partners play while fully respecting their autonomy. It is essential to leave social partners the necessary room for manoeuvre to find the most suitable and efficient tailor-made solutions that can sort out the growing challenges of the world of work. Sectoral social partners have a better



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understanding of what is happening on the ground and of the problems faced by their workforce and companies, and can thus, in cooperation, consider the specificity of their companies and of the workers in a certain sector.

Sectoral social partners play a significant role in shaping working conditions and wage setting through established collective bargaining systems in many Member States. Social partner autonomy should be respected. Well-functioning collective bargaining systems are the core of industrial relations and thus of industrial competitiveness and quality employment.

At the EU level, and in view of the privileged role that the TFEU gives the social partners, EU policymakers should consistently ensure that social partners are consulted within the appropriate time frame on all employment-related topics, as well as on those initiatives that have an impact on the labour market.

In the transformation underway, all policies and legislative proposals are interconnected. Consequently, "greening policies" and "industrial policies", for example, exert a substantial impact on labour markets and their principal actors: companies and workers. In light of this, we will continue to advocate for policymakers to consult social partners in the formulation and implementation of such policies. Ensuring the involvement of social partners is essential to comprehensively address the implications of the different policy initiatives in the world of work.

### **4. Ensure a stable and coherent regulatory environment for our industries**

Our industries and workforce operate today in a highly complex, competitive, globalised economy and in a world of growing socio-political and economic uncertainties. Along with these challenges, our industries and their workforce are currently facing massive technological changes while trying to deliver on the green and digital transformation.

The current fragmentation of the EU regulatory framework for our industries creates a context of uncertainty that undermines investment and weakens market demand. The EU should reshape and improve the rules of the Single Market by removing barriers for cross-border trade and labour mobility, including posting. Effective and efficient enforcement measures, along with criminal law, should be in place to combat fraudulent labour supply agencies and intermediaries.

The Commission should make proposals to streamline and better articulate regulations, ensuring that EU law-making delivers for everyone, including workers, companies and trade unions. The Commission should also conduct extensive impact assessments and competitiveness checks before proposing new regulations, including closely monitoring investment, skills and innovation capacity. The Regulatory Scrutiny Board and competitiveness checks must uphold working conditions and environmental and consumer protection standards. Social partners should be involved in the Regulatory Scrutiny Board.

For us, quality regulation is a long-term investment in the general interest and a solid basis for a well-functioning internal market.

As the Antwerp Declaration concludes, "We need to keep industry in Europe because the industry will deliver the climate solutions Europe needs. Solutions that citizens and governments can use, but that can only be invented and implemented with speed and



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scale by the industry, and the support from governments. Only with a strong industrial fabric and strengthened social dialogue in Europe can we ensure that the green transition will be a Just Transition, as agreed in the Val Duchesse tripartite declaration. A competitive European industry, based on a European Industrial Deal, is the “conditio sine qua non” for the successful delivery of the EU Green Deal. It is also the only way to show to the rest of the world that the Green Deal works for all.”

Brussels, 15 May 2024

Co-signed by: industriAll European Trade Union, CEEMET, ECEG, IMA-Europe, CEC Footwear, CEPI, Euratex, Euromines, Eurofer, SEA Europe, Aggregates Europe - UEPG, Cotance, Cerame-Unie Eurometaux, CLEPA, ACEA and Eurelectric

