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Social partners renew support for apprenticeships - Member States must do the same

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One year after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the European social partners of the metal, engineering and technology-based (MET) industries renew their Pledge to support 1st class apprenticeships throughout Europe. They combine the renewal of the Pledge with a call to Member States to keep apprenticeships on the recovery agenda.

Sword cutting in two ways

Among the many ways of disruption the COVID-19 pandemic caused, the one on vocational education and training will be one with a long-term effect. Despite efforts made by employers and apprentices, numerous apprenticeships positions had to be suspended, if not cancelled, and hiring opportunities frozen. The first experience of thousands of young workers at the verge of their professional career was uncertainty.

two decades with skills shortages. All efforts and investments done since, have received a push back. We are in severe danger of finding ourselves back at square 1." In addition to that and the struggle to keep companies going throughout the crisis, a huge drop-out has occurred with potential new workers, that would have been right-skilled, not entering the companies. This are the companies that will have to realize the digital and green transition.

Renewing the Pledge

Against this background, realistic and robust solutions must be provided for an entire generation of apprentices and companies of an entire sector. The struggling companies need to be able to continue to provide quality apprenticeships while apprentices must have access to a future-proof apprenticeship. IndustriAll Europe General Secretary **Luc Triangle** urges: "We need to set apprenticeships back on track. And not just any apprenticeships, but quality apprenticeships which lead to quality jobs in thriving industries. A proactive European industrial policy is needed to develop job opportunities in the MET sectors."

The renewal of the 2018 Pledge, when Ceemet and industriAll Europe joined the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, comes with a joint call to Member States to place apprenticeships high on their recovery agendas and to provide the necessary funding as part of their national skills strategies. **Frédéric Touboul**, co-Chair of the 'Education & Training' Working Group of the European MET sector Social Dialogue committee states: "Special attention must be devoted, and support provided, to the youth of 2020-2021 who have missed out on the opportunity to enter into the labour market through apprenticeships or traineeships."

"Financial incentives and other innovative measures will play a key role in putting apprenticeships back on track," adds **Delphine Rudelli**, Ceemet Director General, "Member States need to make sure that the funds they provide in the national recovery plans live up to the needs of MET companies to stem the challenges ahead."

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