

To:

President Von der Leyen,
Executive Vice-President and Commissioner for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy Séjourné,
Executive Vice-President and Commissioner for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness Mînzatu,

Brussels, 4 May 2026

Subject: Strengthening the Union of Skills to Support Europe's Competitiveness and Industrial Transition

Dear President Von der Leyen,
Dear Executive Vice-President Séjourné,
Dear Executive Vice-President Mînzatu,

In 2020, the previous European Commission launched the Skills Agenda to stimulate sustainable competitiveness, promote social justice, and strengthen resilience against crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2025, the current Commission updated and expanded this approach through the Union of Skills. In light of the extraordinary challenges posed by the transition to a carbon-neutral economy, evolving security needs, demographic change, and the demand for greater innovation, this agenda is more essential than ever. However, the signatories urge the Commission to place the Union of Skills at the heart of its competitiveness strategy as a matter of priority.

Creating a sustainable and future-proof economic fabric, while ensuring the welfare of all 450 million Europeans, will only be possible if the European Union anticipates the profound impacts of artificial intelligence, demographic change, and decarbonization on the labour market. As economic activities and employment patterns inevitably evolve, these transformations, if properly managed, offer significant opportunities for Europe and beyond. They can enable citizens to access meaningful, high-quality employment in expanding sectors such as healthcare, where demand for a skilled workforce will increase substantially due to demographic trends, as well as in clean industries driven by the transition to carbon neutrality. At the same time, this shift can help create opportunities for individuals more distant from the labour market and for students to better align their skills with the needs of the economy.

Since 2020, the global context has changed considerably, with a succession of crises sharpening Europe's focus on competitiveness and strategic geopolitical autonomy. The European industry is rightly calling for swift and effective responses to challenges such as unfair competition, elevated energy costs, and the pressures associated with decarbonization. As highlighted in the Letta and Draghi reports, deeper integration of the European internal market remains a key part of the solution. In this context, a Union of Skills is not only essential for workers, but also a critical enabler for industry, as a well-functioning single market depends on stronger European cooperation and integration in skills policy.

At present, the priority of extending single market integration to European skills policy is missing from the Commission's approach. To turn our competitiveness into a success story, we must place human capital, which is the most important asset for our industry, back at the

center of European policymaking. European employers must be able to rely on well-trained employees to enable the shift towards sustainability, security, and digital challenges. A fragmentation of European skills policy in this regard between the Member States would be counterproductive and unacceptable.

Delivering the Union of Skills requires anticipating emerging trends in our European economy and our labour market, while addressing the urgent need for enhanced European coordination of national education systems and vocational training. Given the rapid pace of technological change, particularly in AI, and the uncertainty we face, this is a complex task. The signatories therefore welcome the launch of a European Skills High-Level Board. The Board should include representatives from key sectors such as heavy industry, carbon neutral sectors and healthcare, education and major technology companies, alongside scientists, training providers and social partners.

To ensure its effectiveness, the Board should be given a clear and operational mandate. It should be tasked with rapidly delivering concrete recommendations to implement the skills agenda in EU policy initiatives such as the skills pillar of the EU's industrial strategy. It should also identify practical measures to facilitate labour mobility across sectors through a skills-based approach, enabling workers to transition more easily between industries in transformation, including in cases where companies shift production from declining to emerging sectors in response to changing market and geopolitical dynamics.

Furthermore, the Board should contribute to establishing a structured and continuous dialogue on skills at European level. The Union of Skills should become a standing item on the agenda of the Tripartite Social Summit, ensuring systematic involvement of social partners in shaping and monitoring progress. In addition, the Commission should further develop a transparent dashboard of key performance indicators to track the implementation and impact of the Union of Skills, allowing for regular reporting and accountability.

The current budget of 14,5 million EUR, mainly focused on workers in the automotive industry, is far insufficient given the strategic nature of the skills debate. The European Social Fund (ESF+) could support the Union of Skills. However, considering its importance for competitiveness, additional funding sources such as the Competitiveness Fund, Horizon Europe, InvestEU and the Innovation Fund should also be mobilised. Overall, funding for the Union of Skills must be significantly increased to achieve its objectives.

In conclusion, the signatories urge greater urgency in advancing the Union of Skills within the competitiveness agenda. This initiative should not be limited to people already active in the labour market but should also include job seekers, people with a larger distance to the labour market and students. The European Union needs a coordinated and binding skills approach, across all Member States to ensure the right to training for every European citizen and to enable companies to benefit from a true single market for skills.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and would be most grateful to receive your considered response at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

MEP Liesbet Sommen
MEP Dennis Radtke
MEP Andrea Wechsler
MEP David Casa
MEP Wouter Beke
MEP Andrzej Bula
MEP Pascal Arimont
MEP Maria Walsh
MEP Martine Kemp
MEP Niels Geuking
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