

Ms Laimdota Straujuma

Prime Minister, Latvia
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Latvia

Mr Donald Tusk

President of the European Council
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Copy to:

Mr Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Luxembourg

Mr Mark Rutte, Prime Minister, The Netherlands

Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission

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Dear Prime Minister Straujuma,
Dear President Tusk,

The upcoming European Council will address topics of high importance for building a stable and prosperous European Union.

The war underway in Ukraine has far-reaching effects. It threatens the stability of Eastern Europe, and creates a very worrying situation for several Member States.

Ukraine is not the only major issue, as the economic situation is still unstable and several Member States are struggling to get their economies back on tracks.

Those issues illustrate that problems faced in one EU Member State inevitably affect all other members of the European Union. This is yet another argument for a European Union able to develop decisive policies in all directions. European answers are now required, and CEEP is committed to supporting a strong EU.

We therefore welcome the European Commission's strategy for the establishment of an Energy Union. As one of the European cross-sectoral social partners, CEEP sees the necessity for a swift completion of the internal energy market as a way to support the economic recovery within the EU, but also to strengthen EU's external dimension. We believe that such flagship projects are outstanding opportunities to foster policy coherence with clear economic outcomes. Indeed, the Energy Union and the energy transition that it implies will be relevant not only for the energy sector but for the whole society.

The Energy Union has the potential to support sustainable growth in Europe through long-term and well-targeted investments in the modernisation of our infrastructures. CEEP members are committed to contributing to the success of the strategy by stepping up their efforts in creating green and high-quality jobs in the energy and other environmental sectors.

The growth and job creation potentials of the Energy Union can be maximised by involving social partners in its governance and concrete implementation. Our involvement, on a tripartite basis, can represent a success factor in the transition to a more sustainable economy through reinforced training, up-skilling and re-skilling of workers and through adaptation of our services' delivery. At European level social partners can make a concrete contribution to improve the current European framework on recognition of competences, hence favouring a better adaptability and permeability of skills for workers in the many sectors the Energy Union will have an impact on.

The national, local and regional dimension of the Energy Union should be better distinguished. The Energy Union should become an integrated strategy involving actors from all levels in a coherent way. This is especially true for the local level, as citizens need to be involved in the process, in order to gain support for highly needed infrastructure projects. Both European and national social partners have the resources needed to build a coherent Energy Union, articulating all the levels involved. This should be clearly highlighted in the future Country Specific Recommendations that will include, we hope, a clear reference to the need to make the Energy Union a reality. We deem indeed this clear link between the Energy Union and the Semester Process essential to have the flagship initiative genuinely embedded into the European governance process.

The proposal on the Energy Union must also be included in the general framework of climate change negotiations. Concerning the contribution of the EU to the international negotiations, we welcome the commitment taken to reduce EU greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030. We hope that the current bottom-up approach decided in Lima in December 2014 will give a new impetus to the negotiations, and push the rest of the international community to follow the path we are showing.

Finally, when speaking about a strong European Union and while showing the way on climate change, we must not forget free trade agreements currently under negotiations. CEEP supports the goal of boosting employment and improving the investment environment by reducing trade barriers. The sensitive role of public services must however be guaranteed and the negotiations should be made as transparent as possible.

We see the new approach brought forward by both President Juncker and President Tusk to be "bigger and more ambitious on big things, and smaller and more modest on small things" to be well-adapted to the current context. CEEP is fully committed to supporting you in coping with the challenging tasks we currently face.

Yours sincerely,



Hans-Joachim Reck
President



Valeria Ronzitti
General Secretary