



THE EESC AND THE EUROPEAN STEEL INDUSTRY

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), in its recently adopted Opinion CCM/245 on the European Action Plan for the Steel and Metallurgy Sectors, expresses deep concern about the current crisis in the EU steel industry and calls for urgent measures to restore competitiveness, maintain quality jobs and stimulate investment in the transition process of the steel and metallurgy sectors. These sectors face a number of challenges, including global overcapacity and unfair practices that undermine the level playing field, with China and India in particular having significantly expanded their production capacity to the detriment of the EU, often thanks to distortive subsidies. In addition, there are high energy costs, carbon leakage and the need to invest in

industrial decarbonisation, a process that is hampered, however, by low profit margins, insufficient funding and a market that is reluctant to pay a premium for green products. The EESC therefore stresses the need to take urgent measures to prevent the closure of new plants, job losses and industrial decline across Europe, and to ensure that the steel and metals industries can continue to produce efficiently for strategic sectors, including clean technologies and defence. Given the current geopolitical context, it is also essential to ensure a stable and resilient supply chain for steel and metals. We must therefore act quickly, implementing immediate measures to safeguard the future of the sector and address the economic and social crisis it is currently experiencing. For Councillor Ulgiati

«the proposal to set up a Just Transition Fund, targeting energy-intensive industries and focusing on skills improvement and retraining initiatives, as well as mobility aid for workers, is welcome in a context where quality jobs need to be protected and promoted, given the direct and indirect employment it generates for millions of workers».



EU: THE FUTURE OF THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

The European Commission has no intention of backing down on environmental targets for the automotive sector, as Climate Commissioner Wopke Hoekstra reiterated a few days ago before the European Parliament gathered in Plenary Session in Strasbourg. The goal of net-zero CO2 emissions by 2035 has been confirmed, leaving open the possibility of revisions to the methods for achieving the target in light of technological advances in hybrid and electric systems. In recent days, Rome and Berlin have sent a letter to the EU calling for a “change of course”. At a crucial stage for the future of the European automotive industry, Italy and Germany have made their voices heard through a letter addressed to the European Commission, a gesture that sends a signal of unity and deter-

mination in addressing the profound transformation of the automotive sector, which is currently at the centre of a technological and regulatory revolution, between ecological transition, digitalisation and market globalisation. The joint letter, signed by Italian Minister Adolfo Urso and German representative Katherina Reiche, expresses the coordinated response of the two main European industrial hubs to the need for an automotive strategy capable of balancing competitiveness, environmental sustainability and protection of the production chain. In the document, Italy and Germany call for a review of current EU automotive policies because they risk disproportionately penalising European companies compared to non-EU competitors, particularly with regard to internal combustion

engines and technological alternatives other than pure electric. Among the measures currently in place to achieve the targets set, the Climate Commissioner cites the targeted and already approved action on CO2 standards for cars and vans, as well as the new European Action Plan for the automotive sector, with measures on clean technologies and automation. Furthermore, by the end of the year, the EU Executive will present a revision of the CO2 Emissions Regulation together with other initiatives on the decarbonisation of company fleets, known as the “Battery Booster” Package, and also a project dedicated to affordable small electric cars, in the knowledge that the mobility of the future must be as sustainable as it is accessible in terms of cost and service coverage.