

To the kind attention of: Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen**
Copy to: Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal **Frans Timmermans**, Energy
Commissioner **Kadri Simson**, Internal Market Commissioner **Thierry Breton**, Jobs and Social
Right Commissioner **Nicolas Schmit**, Environment Commissioner **Virginijus Sinkevičius**

Who will make the green & digital transitions an everyday reality?

Brussels, 7 March 2022

Dear President Ursula von der Leyen,

More urgently than ever, we need to ensure that the Green Deal will be implemented on the ground without delay, through sufficient numbers of available, qualified, professionals. This is a matter of climate leadership, generating a green and robust growth and, in light of the current geopolitical situation, enhancing our energy sovereignty and security.

Electrical contractors account for a large share of the professionals positioned at the end of the green and digital transitions' value chain. EuropeOn represents a sector comprised of 1.8 million professionals in small, medium and sometimes big enterprises who deliver electrical installation for buildings and infrastructure, ultimately enabling EU regions and citizens to take part in the twin transitions.

A few years ago, EuropeOn launched the [Skills4Climate](#) campaign, which championed the interlinkage of climate and skills provisions following the 2018 Clean Energy Package. We estimated that the Package required the daily installation of 3,000 solar panels, 15,000 heat pumps, and 1,000 electrical vehicle chargers by 2030. **While we have not met these goals yet, the new Fit for 55 objectives set even higher targets.**

But who will ensure the installation of these technologies? **Today, across Europe, electrical contractors report increasing difficulty in recruiting enough professionals, especially with green and digital skills¹. EU citizens can struggle to find contractors to advise them. Stakeholders active in renewable and clean energy technologies, construction, heating and cooling, power grids, transmission and distribution technologies, e-mobility, lighting and building automation and control systems, have identified the lack of qualified electrical contractors as a potential critical bottleneck and support our campaign.**

Our members are actively committed, nationally and locally, to updating training programmes and making these future-proof technical careers attractive. The EU Pact for Skills, that EuropeOn and many actors of the twin transitions have signed, is a step in the right direction, but more steps need to be taken, and faster.

These challenges are not limited to one economical sector or region: European countries face a number of common structural issues relating to skills, workforce, and the twin transitions. Although the EU has supporting competence regarding education and labour policies, it has shared competence for energy and environment policies, and therefore must ensure that EU targets are not jeopardised by the growing workforce shortages.

Policymakers are increasingly aware of the need to up and re-skill the European workforce for the green and digital transitions. This is indeed crucial and must be encouraged. However, **there is an elephant in the room: technical education pathways, indispensable to concretely implement the EU Green Deal², generally suffer from a poor image compared to academic education or, at best, seen as a last resort.** Member States must prioritise this issue and coordinate best practice, with the EU's support.

With the Fit for 55 Package negotiations, the European Year of Youth, and now the increasing need to assert Europe's energy security, 2022 will be a pivotal year to address the skills and employment bottleneck of the green and digital transitions. If not addressed as a top priority, the lack of professionals with up-to-date technical skills will deprive Europe from massive job creation, competitiveness and resilience.

¹ Germany is reporting 82.000, i.e. over 15% of the whole sector's workforce. France is reporting 20.000 vacancies

² 3/4 of jobs in the solar sector are part of the "installation, operation & maintenance" segment which heavily relies on technical professionals (source : IRENA (2017), Renewable Energy Benefits: Leveraging local capacity for solar PV)

Dear President, we wish to draw your attention on several initiatives that can help the Commission keep the Green Deal on track, while creating abundant and purposeful career opportunities for the next generation, current workers, and all motivated professionals calling for a Just Transition:

- **The revision/recast of directives on Renewable Energy (RED), Energy Efficiency (EED) and Energy Performance of Buildings (EPBD) should require Member States to assess the gap between available and needed installation professionals to achieve EU climate and energy objectives.** This will confront Member States with the pressing discrepancy in available personnel and the challenges they will face in the attainment of EU targets. It will also encourage them to take appropriate action to promote technical careers and set up state-of-the-art training facilities.
- **An ambitious EU campaign must be launched to change mindsets across Europe and enhance the attractiveness of technical/vocational education and careers in the twin transitions.** Such a campaign should also aim at attracting a workforce reflective of the gender and cultural diversity of Europe, presently underrepresented in the sector. A Europe-wide campaign could be kicked off through an EU Skills Summit, inspiring national governments to develop bespoke campaigns in their own markets.
- **Setting up a “Skills4Climate/Climate crafters Platform”, similar to the “Just Transition Platform”, is key to gather Member States, social partners, academia and all relevant EU and national stakeholders.** Together, they can make technical careers a priority in the twin transitions, by alerting Member States of the consequences of inaction, fostering best practices and connecting the challenge to ongoing EU initiatives (e.g. Social Climate Fund, Just Transition Fund, ERASMUS+, Bauhaus initiative, European Year of Youth activities, EU Sustainable energy Week, VET week, etc).

Europe needs new skills for current professionals and new skilled professionals. Although the Commission recently announced that the twin transitions would create 160,000 new “green jobs”, we are convinced that this figure is vastly underestimated. This is both good and bad news as a great number of green jobs can be created but, if those vacancies are not filled in time, they will become Europe’s biggest problem on the journey towards climate-neutrality and a just transition. This holds true not only for the electrical contracting sector but for all stakeholders involved in delivering the Green Deal. In an even wider perspective, the window to fight climate change is closing rapidly. Let’s not make a lack of skilled professionals the limiting factor to its success.

We thank you for your interest and are at your disposal to discuss this priority further in a meeting,

Martin Bailey, President of EuropeOn
Julie Beaufiles, Secretary General of EuropeOn



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