

Ludger Ramme at the 2017 Congress of Eurocadres

Speech, 30.10.2017 in Brussels

Dear friends,

For me it's a pleasure and an honour to take the floor at the Eurocadres Congress. I would like to thank through Martin the whole of the Eurocadres for inviting me, and express my most sincere and warm wishes for this Congressional session. Let me also personally thank Martin for the very friendly and constructive personal relation we have been able to develop along these years. And I would also like to remind us all the importance in general of events like the one we are attending today and tomorrow – congresses, as the highest expression of that democratic principle that structures the functioning of all representative organizations, and represent a vital moment in the life of every association.

A long tradition of cooperation marks the relations between CEC and Eurocadres. The Liaison Committee, established in 1999 under the auspices of the then ETUC Secretary General Emilio Gabaglio, is the formal forum in which this cooperation takes place. This has brought to the inclusion of our two organizations into the mechanisms of the European Social Dialogue at interprofessional level, within the Social Dialogue Committee as a part of the delegation chaired by the ETUC. According to the latest Eurostat data available for 2017, the European managerial and professional workforce amounts to around 55 million individuals (of whom around 12 million are managers), almost a quarter of the total European workforce. These figures help us all picture the importance of the professional and managerial workforce in the European economy, and justify the need to ensure an effective and fair representation of its voice, views and interests, within the larger "family" of the varied union movement in Europe.

It is not a dissenting voice, but simply a "different" one, that enriches the debate with other sensibilities, points of view and opinions that better reflect the diversity of our societies, at all levels. More importantly – and this is a message that CEC is particularly focused on – managers can work as bridge-builders between the two sides of the industry: among their professional tasks, they are asked to perform actions that are typical of the employers, but they keep their nature of salaried people. The same intermediation role that they play every day in companies between the ownership and all the workers, managers are ready to play also at social dialogue level, easing the task of developing common solutions that social partners need to find to live up to the institutional role they are given.

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This cooperation is not limited to the institutional aspects of social dialogue, but goes deeper at both at policy and practical level: together, we have concluded several interesting EU projects on themes of particular importance for the people we represent – ranging from the role of managers in the development of CSR strategies to strengthening the share of women in decision-making positions – and we carry a common vision in many areas: the provision of digital skills to prepare our societies for the future, the need for education and training mechanisms that ensure a constant upskilling, even of those who are already qualified are only a few of the positions we share.

For CEC, the cooperation with Eurocadres is an essential part of its strategy – once more during our recent board meeting, all of the CEC member organizations have restated their support for continuing and reinforcing the relations between us. And I am confident that the new Executive Committee that will be elected during this Congress will share this objective.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have very briefly mentioned the weight of the managerial and professional workforce in the European economy. With the decisions that they take daily, they contribute significantly to ensuring that companies remain competitive and respect their social commitments. Yet, the visibility of managers, and the public awareness of their role is lower than what we believe it should be. For this reason, we have the intention to work together with Eurocadres to the definition of a new document describing the role, features and centrality of managers in the European economy and society.

Back in 1993 the Spanish MEP José-Maria Gil Robles presented a report about the European managerial workforce, integrated by a resolution describing the characteristics of managers and listing their main expectations in terms of ease in mobility, recognition of qualifications and access on equal footing to representation at all social dialogue. 1993 was the time of the completion of the single market, a time of high hopes for the European Union, but also a completely different geological era if we look at how many things have changed in our economies, societies and at the level of EU integration. New sensibilities have emerged, new expectations arisen and new economic and global equilibria have settled that change significantly the background against which that resolution was adopted.

It is for this reason that we will soon launch an initiative to ask the European Parliament to adopt a new resolution, more closely based on the reality and the needs of managers of today that can include issues like gender equality and professional/private life balance, environmental sustainability and intergenerational solidarity, digital citizenship and fostered mobility. I am sure that also in this respect, CEC and Eurocadres will be able to find wide room for working together.

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Later today, we will be debating one of the topics that has marked the policy agenda of Eurocadres these past years: the initiative on the whistleblowing protection. The approval of the resolution of the European Parliament last week represents the completion of a long awareness-raising process initiated last year with the launch of the online platform. And the recent, brutal killing of the Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana, who was working on the so-called Panama Papers is a horrifying reminder of how necessary it is for our societies to protect those who keep the public debate alive in search of the truth.

Blowing the whistle is the most visible and immediate way of doing so, reacting to a “something” that stimulates our professional and personal ethics. But there is also a “preemptive” aspect, and in this respect managers play a vital yet often underestimated role. I won’t hide the reality of the different cases in which managerial practices and decisions have originated, rather than prevented, scandals from happening. But there is more behind that – there is a daily commitment of thousands of managers, at all levels and sectors, who make sure that the business policies of the companies they work for do not only have profit, or market positioning as compass for their activity, but demonstrate with facts their social responsibility.

Dear all,

Let me share with you some final reflections. The current times Europe is experiencing are of true uncertainty. Day after day, we are finding ourselves deal with the uncertainty of a process that is possibly the most destabilizing of all in the long process of European integration – Brexit. National election after national election, we see the scores of overtly Euro-sceptical parties raise and think about what will be the next country hit by this wave. Now more than ever, we need to stay firm and unite our forces to make sure that this beautiful construction that is the European Union can resist for the sake of the future generations. All those sitting here in this room today, we all share the responsibility of making our utmost, each in our field and for the share of competence and power we have, to reinforce the Union and help it achieve its fundamental task: provide us, the people, with the best opportunities for growth, social progress and peace.

Once more, thank you for the invitation Martin, and best wishes to you and to all our friends of Eurocadres for a successful Congress.

Thank you for your attention.