

Evangelos Mytilineos

Statement

Brussels, 13 October

I’m honoured to be elected as President of Eurometaux, though I must say I would’ve preferred to take on this role … just about any other moment in time **but** now!

I won’t sugarcoat it: we all know that the economic situation in which the European non-ferrous metals industry finds itself today, is the worst since World War 2! In the letter to the Commission, which I guess most of us co-signed last month, we tried to describe the dramatic reality experienced by our sector over the past 12 months.

So far, despite the commendable efforts of Mikael, Guy and the team, Chris, Adina, Elena, Kamila, Violaine and all the rest, it seems the Commission isn’t getting the message. It’s that, or -as some suggest- they’ve resigned to the idea that energy costs will continue to be high in Europe, so we cannot afford to have energy intensive industry. First time I heard something so crazy and cynical was 10 years ago, during a meeting with a Commissioner; I remember I almost got into a fight with her back then.

This train of thought is simply unacceptable; it’s not just disastrous for our companies, our employees, our customers, and the local communities that depend on us: it’s also suicidal for Europe. Deindustrialization is not an option. We need to be very vocal and blunt about it.

The scientific reports we’ve carried out, with the help of KU Leuven earlier this year and the IES a couple of years back, **prove** that Europe will need an awful lot of metals and raw materials on its path to 2050.

Mining and producing them in Europe must cover as much of those needs as possible, to ensure Europe’s strategic autonomy. By all means we have to avoid making the same mistakes we made in the whole Energy sector, like external over-dependance, as well as the awful “not in my backyard” scenario, concerning, for example, renewable energy.

The energy crisis, which began to show its teeth months before the war in Ukraine, has shed a light on some of Europe’s errors in judgment and policy; it’s now clear that if we overlook affordability and security of supply, the green transition will be delayed or even jeopardized. A more balanced approach is required.

I don’t think any of our members reject the objective to do all that can be done to mitigate climate change. But pragmatism isn’t optional; wishful thinking alone will get us nowhere if security of supply and competitive energy prices are not an equal priority with the Green Transition. Not just because European industries will fail, as we’re sadly witnessing now; but also because the people will not get behind this. At this stage, the European Commission, national governments and even huge companies, like Uniper, are at a loss, with Member-States adopting all kinds of different national measures, risking the very foundations of the internal energy market.

While this crisis is unfolding, without a solution in sight, Brussels -to a large extent- continues to pursue certain initiatives, as if this was “business as usual”: I’m referring to the CBAM, the reform of the ETS, the Industrial Emissions Directive and other files, all putting more pressure and costs on bleeding industry. On the other hand, promising initiatives, such as the new Industrial Strategy and the Critical Raw Materials act are mostly empty words, since they don’t set binding EU-wide rules that would enable industrial growth. Europe’s much anticipated response to the energy crisis, the REPowerEU has failed to address -or even consider- our existential crisis; instead the only “solid” proposal was further demand destruction to get us through the winter. Other than that, we just got higher and more frontloaded RES targets, without any consideration of the EU’s import dependence and the global value chains disruptions, without any consideration of the grids, without any consideration of the costs and -more importantly- ignoring the justifiable reluctance of investors to move ahead faster, in times of such uncertainty.

My purpose today wasn’t to state the obvious; my message is clear: we will work hard; I’m determined to put in personal effort, and I’m sure I can rely on Guy, the entire Eurometaux team and our members, to get the message through. I have a lot to learn, I don’t pretend to know the full spectrum of our association’s engagement or the details of all our members’ activities and challenges faced.

But I can promise you this:

My intention, as newly elected President, is to reach out to policy makers, starting already today, and force them to listen; demand that they act immediately and efficiently. It’s not going to be a walk in the park. Lots of key people see us as dinosaurs, about to go extinct; some even wish for it, I fear!

But we will not sit back and be forced to make the most difficult decision a CEO has to make, shutting down industries and sending our people to unemployment.

We know the reality and we will strive to turn this destructive crisis into a wake-up call; a call for action. And in line with Eurometaux’s track record, we will not stop at just pointing out the problem: we’ll bring concrete proposals to the table, that will help revive our industry and ensure our global competitiveness. I’m counting on your support.

As a closing remark, let me personally thank Mikael for his dedication and strong efforts these past four years. Mikael and I have agreed to work together in the months ahead, to make the transition as smooth as possible and I’m counting on him and Guy to tap into their vast experience and give me some useful pointers*.*