CESI Congress 2024

Independence, Unity, Progress: Empowering Today's Workforce for Tomorrow

EN

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9TH ORDINARY CONGRESS

25.1 MAIN MOTION

Independence, unity & progress

Empowering today's workforce for tomorrow

I. CESI and its members

In 2024, CESI stands tall as a thriving and firmly established organisation, independent and united under the development of its membership, staunchly dedicated to building on its commitment to its membership.

CESI reaffirms:

1. to maintain both political and financial **independence** as the core value of the organisation's identity. CESI will continue to advocate for non-discriminatory support of trade unions by the EU. It will defend trade union pluralism and inclusive social dialogue as core values of the EU as a response to monolithic and monopolistic industrial relations. CESI and its members stand for independent trade unionism that promotes critical but constructive pro-European stances in EU policies and social dialogue.
2. to continue its successful track record of **unity** among its membership, thus strengthening the voice of independent unions in Europe.
3. to strive for concrete social **progress** in Europe, to the benefit of all workers and their families. CESI stands for trade unionism that focuses on the willingness of workers to embrace change as progress and to play their part in shaping it.

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CESI stands as an **independent**, **united** and **progress**-oriented organisation in its dealings with external partners, in its EU policy advocacy, and in its contribution to social dialogue.

CESI places particular emphasis trade union pluralism and inclusive social dialogue and demands that:

4. all Member States and candidate countries take the **EU's 2023 Recommendation on strengthening social dialogue** as a basis to bolster trade union pluralism as well as inclusive social dialogue and collective bargaining. This would represent an important step towards non-discriminatory trade unionism and the achievement of effective worker rights for all.

5. the EU specifically supports **independent trade unionism at the political level**. It must pledge proportionate institutional support to trade union pluralism and inclusive social dialogue. All are central ingredients for non-discriminatory industrial relations. They are vital for quality social policy output to shape just and equitable societies, labour markets and worker representation.
6. the EU further supports **independent trade unionism at the regulatory level**. Concretely, the European Commission should update Commission Decision 98/500/EC on the establishment of European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees. This should guarantee that all organisations represented in Eurofound representativeness studies are acknowledged as EU social partners and can effectively join relevant EU social dialogue committee. The existing practice, where established social partners determine the admission of new representative organisations is unjust and creates a discriminatory barrier to full participation of representative unions in social dialogue.
7. the EU institutions enhance support for **independent trade unionism at the financial level**. This should include non-discriminatory and proportionate access to funding for all European social partner organisations at the EU and national levels. Allocating disproportionately unbalanced levels of funding to different social partner organisations is arbitrary, discriminatory, and is in breach of EU Treaties.

II. EU employment policy

From 2019 to 2024, the EU institutions stood **united** to achieve important **progress** in EU social legislation to improve employment in Europe. They did this **independent** of domestic political developments. Examples of this include new laws on minimum wages, fair work in platforms, a ban of products made from forced labour, gender quotas for women on boards, and stepped-up pay transparency rules.

Economic and environmental policies continue to develop further. Labour markets and working environments continue to face the rapid transformation of the green-digital twin transition. New modes of employment continue to emerge, these often tend to lead to more precarious work. In many cases, information and consultation frameworks cannot keep up with these developments. Too many workers across Europe still face gender-based violence and third-party violence at work.

In the light of this, the EU must achieve further important progress in employment and social policies during the coming years, taking into consideration the specificities of national public services.

CESI demands that the EU:

8. establishes a **New Social Deal** to achieve the goals of the European Pillar of Social Rights, similar to the New Green Deal. Such a New Social Deal must implement effective measures to combat poverty and promote decent employment and fair wages. It must eliminate precarious work in both traditional and new forms of employment. It must also ensure that digitalisation and green policies do not negatively impact on workers and their families. In doing so, the EU must continue to act within the scope of its competences.
9. reviews the **directive on fixed-term work** to better prevent abusive uses of successive fixed-term chain contracts. Such use represents unfair discrimination when successive fixed-term chain contracts effectively replace permanent contracts.
10. revises the **EU laws on public procurement, concessions and State Aid** to mandate the inclusion of decent work criteria in public procurement and subsidising processes. Public funds should not be allocated to companies that fail to respect workers' rights to join trade unions and do not pay minimum wages. They should not be attributed to actors that do not stick to collective agreements and uphold core social and labour rights, including occupational safety and health standards.
11. adopts **directives on the digitalisation of working environments and artificial intelligence (AI) at work**, to complement the EU's new horizontal AI Act. This directive should ensure that digitalisation processes are done *with* workers and not *to* workers. The directives need to ensure minimum standards on mobile working and home office, a right to disconnect and the use of worker-friendly AI on the job. They must also regulate the protection of privacy from undue digital surveillance.

12. enhances workers' information and consultation rights through a **revision of the European Works Council (EWC) Directive** to strengthen their role. EWCs must be empowered to significantly contribute to fair restructuring processes in cross-border companies.

13. further facilitates effective education-to-work transitions by introducing a **new directive to ban precarious traineeships**. All curriculum-based traineeships should ensure adequate working conditions, occupational safety & health, regulated working hours, and defined mentoring and learning outcomes. Allowances for expenses should be granted to enable young people to participate in traineeship opportunities where families have insufficient capacities to support them. Furthermore, all post-curriculum traineeships should be paid at least at minimum wage level.

14. intensifies its efforts to assist Member States, authorities, and social partners in eradicating **violence at work**. This includes addressing violence and harassment in the workplace perpetrated by colleagues, management as well as third parties. To this end, the new EU directive on gender-based violence should be fully implemented and in due time be assessed to see if it requires revision to tighten it. Moreover, the EU social partners' multisectoral guidelines for tackling third-party violence and harassment at work should be more widely implemented. This concerns particularly the fields of public administrations, education, healthcare, security, and justice. These guidelines should also serve as a model for employees in the private sector.

III. The EU and EU integration

In 2024, the nature of an **independent**, **united** and **progress-oriented** EU is being tested in unprecedented ways.

It finds itself at a critical juncture, grappling with a panoply of overlapping and persistent crises and challenges.

They require a robust and coordinated response to ensure stability, security, and prosperity and wellbeing for all its citizens, its workers and their families.

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The Russian **war in Ukraine** represents an acute and lasting challenge which has profound implications for European military security and socioeconomic stability.

We need a strong EU that can defend itself. Without military security, economic and social security are not possible.

Russia's war of aggression has triggered a humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Millions of displaced refugees have sought shelter in neighbouring EU countries. Russian aggression has put the integrity of Ukraine in immediate danger and poses a security risk for the EU and further countries in Europe.

The support shown by the EU and its Member States towards Ukraine has been unprecedented and vital – and it has also been costly.

CESI demands that:

15. the EU and its Member States, in close cooperation and coordination with NATO, step up their military capabilities and increase their efforts to establish a genuine European Defence Union.

16. the military, economic, financial and humanitarian support to Ukraine must remain adequate, swift and unified until the aggressor has been properly fended off. We must continue to support incoming refugees and strive towards their optimised integration into our societies, into our education systems and our labour markets.

17. policies to support social cohesion and employment in the EU must not fall victim to financial help for Ukraine. Where needed, additional public revenues should be generated by a more effective fight against tax evasion and unethical tax avoidance. Social cuts should be avoided.

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The EU's **enlargement** agenda is central to its future independence and unity. Russia increases its influence in Eastern non-EU countries. It does so either through direct force as in the case of Ukraine or through more subtle economic, political, and cyber tactics to undermine economies and societies in strategic ways. For the EU, this increases the pressure to offer these countries seamless and credible EU accession opportunities as a liberal democratic alternative to mere submission to Russia.

However, the EU's internal decision-making procedures, institutional set-up and budgetary composition is not ready for such enlargement. Already today, a combination of many political actors and a focus on unanimous decision-making in key policies areas renders EU decision making cumbersome. Moreover, the EU budget's focus on social cohesion and agrarian subsidies would cause a major financial shift towards acceding countries which tend to be less prosperous and more agricultural than much of the rest of the EU.

CESI demands that:

18. the EU focuses on a timely perspective of EU accession for countries in Eastern Europe, including the Western Balkan countries.
19. the EU revises its decision-making and budgetary composition. This does not necessarily require a fully-fledged revision of the Treaties through a Convention but could be achieved by a series of other incremental steps. This could include a reduction of the number of Commissioners and a cap on seat number in the European Parliament to avoid disproportionate inflation following new country accessions. It could also refer to more qualified majority voting in the Council using *passerelle* clauses and a re-oriented Multiannual Financial Framework post-2027 towards enlargement.

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The **rule of law and liberal democratic values** have been a cornerstone of the EU since its inception. However, the increasing neglect thereof in some Member States has come to pose a major threat to the internal unity of the EU's democratic nature and political cohesion.

In recent years, there have been alarming signs of democratic backsliding in some Member States. Examples include attacks on citizens' civil liberties and the freedom of the press and on organised civil society. They threaten the foundational values and the democratic credibility of the EU as a whole.

The EU must stand united against Member States that attempt to erode these principles.

Attacks on civil liberties are often even more prevalent and direct in EU accession candidate countries. This is incompatible with the necessary adaptation to EU social rights acquis under the Treaties. It undermines the very accession process in itself.

CESI demands that:

20. the EU stands united to reaffirm its commitment to democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law, as laid out in the Treaties and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Uniting to sanction a country under the so-called Article 7 procedure must be a credible policy tool.
21. the payment of EU funds to Member States should be strictly tied to the respect of liberal democratic values and the respect of civil liberties.

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Public services and administrations resilience are vital to face and manage major crises that can pop up unpredictably at any given time and in many different ways. Such resilience concerns adequate resources in terms of staff, equipment and facilities.

The heyday of the Covid crisis between 2019 and 2022 made the need of public sector resilience across the board clear in dramatic ways. The migration challenges post-2015 and the war in Ukraine are further examples of which prove that public services and administrations need to be ready to perform in exceptional circumstances.

In all three contexts, it became clear that *ex-ante* investments in public services come cheaper than *ex-post* spending to repair damage.

However, liberalisation, privatisation, and budget cuts have weakened public services across Europe. Despite being essential and despite past experiences, many public services still lack the resources, staff, and training needed to master severe crises. This is especially true for remote and low-populated regions that rely heavily on quality public services for their economic development and environmental preservation.

Efforts should be made to better protect the public sector against budget cuts than it has been the case in the past.

CESI demands that the EU:

22. with due respect to the competence of the Member States to organise their own public services, facilitates a further enabling environment for public services in the Member States, using policy tools like the European Semester and EU funding programmes like NextGenerationEU. Such an enabling environment should help ensure public service resilience in terms of adequate staff, equipment and facilities. A special focus should be put on adequate staff levels and employment conditions. These include decent pay and pensions and better work-life balance, promotion procedures and professional mobility opportunities.

23. scrutinises the European economic governance framework for its fitness to meet public infrastructure investment needs while safeguarding sustainable public finances.

    Deficits of no more than 3% of the national GDP and public debt levels below 60% of national GDP should remain the target for all Member States in EU economic governance.

    At the same time, the possibility for Member States to engage in additional public sector expenditures when they promise to yield – as investments – higher returns in the future should be assessed. Consideration should be given to a possible Golden Rule to exempt from deficit calculations certain investments in public services that are required for their continued performance. Those expenditures in public services are not merely costs, they are investments which will pay off in the future.

    Moreover, the EU should encourage sufficient funding for public sector resilience even in times of unexpected crises which demand unforeseen large-scale public spending.

    Required spending under the Golden Rule and in unexpected crises could be financed by new public revenues liberated by a more effective fight against tax evasion and tax avoidance.

24. with due respect to the competence of the Member States to organise their own public services, encourages more re-communalisations, emphasising the importance of public services in ensuring the well-being of people and enhancing societal resilience to crises. Rather than pursuing an agenda of further market openings in services of general economic interest, the focus should be on strengthening public services. Recent crises in Europe have highlighted the negative impacts of strict market liberalisation and privatisation on both service quality and employment conditions within the public sector.