



European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI)

Portfolio of CESI's Trade Council 'Defence' *Adopted by the Trade Council 'Defence' of CESI*

Further information

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European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions

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Who does the Trade Council represent?

The Trade Council “Defence” (DEF) gathers representatives of trade unions and associations which defend the interests of both civilian and military staff in the armed forces in Europe.

The overall aim being the defence and improvement of the working and living conditions as well as of the fundamental (social) rights of the personnel in the armed forces in Europe.

How does the Trade Council operate?

To that aim, member organisations may compare framework conditions in the individual states and take positions vis-à-vis EU initiatives. These are amongst the core tasks performed within the forum of the Trade Council.

The Trade Council’s representatives are directly involved in EU level discussions and opinion-forming processes. The aim is the establishment of a common voice for the defence of the rights of the personnel employed within the European armed forces.

What tasks should the Trade Council perform?

A European Defence Strategy is sorely needed to tackle global challenges and the demands posed by modern warfare. Yet military and civilian employees in the armed forces have experienced significant detrimental changes in their working and living conditions.

Added to that, the recent crises have hit the sector of defence in terms of restructuring and budgets cuts. However, especially the defence sector requires wide encompassing strategies and coordination.

Therefore, the Trade Council demands high social and labour standards -in particular with regards to safety and health, working time and work-life balance- as well as the guarantee of fundamental social rights within the armed forces.

The Trade Council also focuses on subjects related to the attractiveness of employment within the military sector, such as training for personnel to ensure a continuously up to date and skilled work force, work-life balance, working time, and the issue of young people joining the armed forces.

In this context, the Trade Council may take political initiatives in agreement and concertation with the Secretary General of CESI.



The most important topics of the Trade Council are:

- Institutions of national defence and supranational organisations for defence and security
- EU social and labour standards within the armed forces, in particular safety and health at work, working time, work-life balance
- Respect of and access to fundamental rights and principles by and within the armed forces
- Common Security and Defence Policy
- The role of armed forces in the fight against organised crime and terrorism

The latest important issues or main focal points of the Trade Council have been:

- Managing the refugee crisis
- Labour rights and right to association within the armed forces
- Challenges of radicalisation
- Restructuring, budget cuts and shortage of staff within the defence sector
- Attractiveness of the army