



European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI)

Congress 2016 Main motion I

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The Future of Europe

Investing in people

Further information

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. After a multitude of crises over the past years, the EU stands at a crossroad. Brexit has proven that the gap between the EU and the citizens must be closed to secure the future of the European project.
- 1.2. The renationalisation of policies cannot be the answer to major current challenges (rising unemployment and inequalities, weakened welfare systems, a lack of security, the refugee crisis and increasing instability in the EU neighbourhood). The growing interconnections of national economic, financial, social and security policies require a strong signal towards greater integration.
- 1.3. High levels of inequality are detrimental to social and economic development. Inclusive societies with effective public services and social dialogue are more resilient. A genuine social market economy needs to be re-established, where high-quality services of general interest, high employment rates, equal opportunities, decent jobs, social inclusion and the security of citizens can be guaranteed.
- 1.4. Solidarity is at the heart of the European social model: among workers, between workers and those excluded from the labour market, as well as within and between member states. The aim must be to provide wealth, security and stability for the upcoming generations.
- 1.5. Regarding the European pillar of social rights, the aim should be to agree on the common principles underlying said pillar, to resolve shortfalls in legislation and especially to apply existing national, European and international regulations to protect employees. Trade unions play an important role in this context.

In view of these findings, CESI is called upon to strive towards the following:

2. Pave the way for economic and social upwards convergence

- 2.1. Investing in people at the EU level means setting the right economic and social conditions to allow societies to prosper, fully benefitting from the advantages of globalisation and the internal market, with decreasing economic and social disparities.
- 2.2. Minimum social standards throughout the EU must aim at upwards social convergence. By definition, setting minimum standards can never be synonymous with a race to the bottom, and must never serve as an argument for countries to lower their standards.
- 2.3. Social standards must set the EU foundations to ensure human dignity, non-discrimination and fundamental social rights. They must aim at adequate resources and services for all.
- 2.4. Adequate protection levels must be guaranteed for workers throughout the EU, in terms of individual and collective labour law and protection against traditional life risks. International minimum social protection and labour law standards must be recognised.

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- 2.5. Effective social dialogue in all sectors is a fundamental prerequisite for a fair and social EU. All workers count, and trade union pluralism is a core component of freedom and democracy.
 - 2.6. Fostering safe and healthy work environments must be a major commitment for all. The protection of workers' labour rights and working conditions, fewer job-related illnesses and lower absenteeism levels, as well as greater work satisfaction and identification contribute to economic growth and increased productivity.
 - 2.7. Ageing societies and work-related gender inequalities require policies that prioritise work-life balance. The EU, its member states and the social partners must make all the necessary efforts to provide guarantees for parental and carers' leave, the equal sharing of domestic responsibilities and affordable childcare facilities for everyone. Investments in these areas must be viewed as social investments and should be granted careful consideration in economic policy governance and EU budget regulations.
 - 2.8. In the frame of economic governance, social and employment policies must be considered fundamentally important. Priorities, targets, initiatives and guidelines should increasingly aim at social justice and employment. Sufficiently concrete and binding employment and social targets must be included in the EU's European Semester agenda.
 - 2.9. Enacting, implementing and applying ambitious legislation to protect workers shall be the task of the legislator and trade unions. For trade unions, linking existing national, supranational or international social and labour rights concretely to their affiliates is decisive.

3. Create employment while safeguarding decent work

- 3.1. Investing in people means fighting unemployment, especially youth unemployment. The EU, the member states and the social partners must invest in their youth. They must put all their efforts into the creation of high-quality jobs to prevent the loss of a generation.
- 3.2. Discrimination-free access to the labour market for disabled individuals must be guaranteed.
- 3.3. Given its proven positive impact on employment, vocational education and training should be strongly promoted. They must include soft skills and basic values required to become responsible citizens. Investments in these sectors are to be viewed as social investments and need to be given special consideration in the frame of the EU's economic governance and budgetary surveillance rules.
- 3.4. Labour market reforms have lowered individual and collective labour protection standards and made jobs increasingly precarious. Aiming at employability, flexibility, competitiveness and modernisation cannot simply lead to the deregulation of labour protection standards and welfare cuts. The social and labour protection standards achieved must be safeguarded.
- 3.5. The globalisation and digitalisation of the economy have created new, flexible and mobile forms of employment, challenging traditional employment patterns. Enhanced flexibility and mobility cannot be synonymous with increased working hours and permanent worker availability, threatening both the safety and health of employees as well as their work-life balance.

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- 3.6. Flexibility must always include security. Employees' protection rights (such as protection against unjustified dismissal) are undeniable principles. The right to information and the consultation of workers must be fully recognised and implemented at all levels and in all sectors.
 - 3.7. In-work poverty remains unacceptable. A minimum wage should be established in all EU member states. The EU or the social partners at the EU level should define a framework to set national minimum wage rates according to a minimum percentage of the national median wage.

4. Invest in education and health

- 4.1. Investing in people means guaranteeing effective education and healthcare systems for all. Creating more employment and recruiting and retaining more qualified staff in these sectors will be fundamental for the competitiveness of our societies. Respecting and granting value to the workforce is an indispensable step. Adequate salaries and working conditions are preconditions to make professions in education and healthcare attractive.
- 4.2. The education and healthcare sectors have suffered from significant budget and personnel cuts in the last years. Budget and personnel cuts in these sectors must stop. Investments in the sectors of education and healthcare are to be viewed as social investments and need to be given special consideration in the frame of the EU's economic governance and budgetary surveillance rules.

5. Manage migration while safeguarding inclusive societies

- 5.1 Investing in people means aiming at the fast integration of migrants with a recognised legal status on the labour markets. Their access to education and vocational training is key.
- 5.2 Sufficient personal and investment must be urgently allocated to central and local administrations, as well as to the health and education sectors, in order to deal with the additional workload resulting from the arrival and integration of numerous migrants. Investments in this regard are to be viewed as social investments and need to be given special consideration in the frame of the EU's economic governance and budgetary surveillance rules.
- 5.3 A major influx of labour force may have an impact on labour law and social protection standards. Enhancing the role and responsibility of trade unions in the integration of refugees will enable them to play a decisive role in the alleviation of potentially negative consequences of labour market integration, and to fully tap into the potential of refugees as future employees and trade union members.

6. Guarantee security

- 6.1. Investing in people means guaranteeing their security. In the light of the recent terrorist attacks and threats throughout the EU, establishing internal security must be a top priority.

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- 6.2. To fight and prevent radicalisation and terrorism, the capacities of law enforcement agencies in the fight against terrorism must be reinforced in terms of numbers, equipment and training. Mutual trust and recognition are the guiding principles of effective judicial and police cooperation in Europe. Intercultural and language skills and exchange programmes are of fundamental importance.
 - 6.3. Multi-disciplinary and complementary policies integrating social, educational and preventive security components must be implemented alongside repressive policies.
 - 6.4. Unconditional support as well as the protection of all public sector workers in charge of implementing security tasks (namely police officers, prison and probation officers, social workers, educators, teachers, healthcare workers) is a *sine qua non* condition to fight against radicalisation and terror effectively. The transmission of the EU's core values, i.e., democracy, respect and tolerance, stands at the centre of all radicalisation prevention strategies.
 - 6.5. Security and military forces, medical staff and firefighters must enjoy particular protection.
 - 6.6. Personnel in the military forces must benefit from the same rights as any citizen and worker.

7. Defend the EU and its values in the world

- 7.1. The EU must act as one in its external relations. At a time of limited resources, but also in the name of solidarity and with the aim of establishing a common European security strategy in the long term, member states should pool their resources to a greater extent and build stronger joint defence capabilities in order to act rapidly and effectively.
- 7.2. Comprehensive trade agreements are welcomed, but they must serve to set worldwide minimum standards, e.g. for decent labour, core social rights, the environment, health and consumer protection.
- 7.3. The transmission of the EU's core values and the unconditional respect of democracy and fundamental rights must be the guiding principles of the EU's external action.

8. CESI's role, contribution and responsibility

- 8.1. In its capacity as a recognised social partner with over 40 member organisations and 5 million affiliates, CESI commits itself both within and outside social dialogue to support and defend initiatives aiming to achieve the aforementioned objectives and principles.
- 8.2. In light of increasing populist and xenophobic movements throughout Europe, citizens must constantly be reminded that democracies and the respect of fundamental rights can never be taken for granted and have to be fought for continually.
- 8.3. CESI will help attain these objectives and principles by means of initiatives and agreements. CESI has a fundamental role to play as a mediator between citizens and the EU: it must help close the gap between the two to safeguard Europe's future.