

POLICY KIT

with regard
to the Bulgarian Presidency of
the Council of the EU
1 January 2018 – 30 June 2018

CEEP, the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services and Services of General Interest, represents employers and enterprises providing services of general interest since 1961. Our members are organisations active in fields such as:

- Central & local administrations,
- Healthcare,
- Education,
- Housing,
- Waste management,
- Energy,
- Transport,
- Water,
- Environment,
- Communications.

Modern public services and services of general interest (SGIs) support the fundamental goals of the EU, enabling business, cohesion, economic and social solidarity and a better quality of life for citizens. This Policy Kit, prepared considering the priorities of the Bulgarian presidency of the European Union, aims at presenting key CEEP positions on the main files to be discussed at EU level between 1 January 2018 – 31 July 2018.

GENERAL POSITION ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

- **“Doing much more together”**: in certain policy fields, since 2014, there have already been various attempts by the European Commission to do more at the EU level. We believe more policy fields should be included. **Major challenges**, such as migration, a long-lasting monetary union or environmental pollution, **can only be addressed through cross-border cooperation**. This should also be applied to fields such as the integration of refugees, fiscal policies, a limited set of social policies, cohesion policy and the EU budget.
- The main critics of the European Commission to the “Doing much more together” scenario is the lack of EU legitimacy. CEEP recalls the **key role of the principle of subsidiarity**, as defined in Article 5 of the Treaty on the EU and aimed at **ensuring that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen**.
- Whilst the legitimacy aspect needs to be improved in the EU, this scenario seems to be the only one whose disadvantages – the lack of legitimacy – can be counteracted together to ensure Europe’s future. The ideal scenario would be **“Doing much more together more efficiently”**.
- Also, **SGIs** have a key role to play in the endeavour to improve the economic performances, and they **should be better equipped to cope with the consequences of the economic and financial crises and the challenges of the changing socio-economic models**. Modernising the delivery of public services by adapting to the digitalisation and adopting new technologies, promoting innovative economic models and contributing to modernising education systems to the new labour market challenges are necessary.
- Five steps should be taken for SGI providers to face the challenges:
 - **Bring the Acquis Communautaire for Services of General Interest to life,**
 - **Put SGIs at the heart of sustainable growth,**
 - **Foster social and territorial cohesion,**
 - **Support SGIs providers in innovation,**
 - **Unleash investments.**

More: [CEEP Opinion on the White Paper on the Future of the EU](#)

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THE FUTURE OF EUROPE AND THE YOUNG PEOPLE – ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SOCIAL COHESION

MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK AND COHESION POLICY POST-2020

- CEEP agrees with the high-level group on own resources chaired by Mario Monti which suggests the introduction of **alternative revenue sources**, which are not perceived as national contributions but as resources directly linked to EU policies. **It also recommends focusing on the EU's added value.**
- **Cohesion policy should be based on shorter regulations and fewer guidelines.** Operational programming documents should be concise and strategic. To prevent new rules from piling up, every new requirement should be balanced by abolishing another one.
- CEEP also recommends:
 - To **expand the available calls of EU programmes aiming at more societal development** and to secure sustainable national and EU funds dedicated to improving the social life and job prospects of all;
 - To **facilitate EU and national social partners' process of application for EU-level funds** and ease their administrative conditions when applying to and reporting on projects granted;
 - To ensure **stronger support to reforms and greater links to euro area priorities**, we advocate the establishment of a self-supporting structural reform support programme under the future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).
 - To address the need to **reduce the administrative burden for beneficiaries**. The EU budget is pressured by the need to be more efficient, to focus on the areas where its impact is greatest and to ensure that burdensome rules and procedures do not hinder the achievement of its goals.
 - To **ensure that social investment for all is prioritised** in the review of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2017-20 and in the new programming period for 2020-2026;
 - To contribute to **sustainable support to the education and labour market integration of migrants and refugees**, in line with the political priorities of the EU.

More: [CEEP Opinion on the Reflection Paper on the Future of EU Finances](#)

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ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION

- For CEEP, the reflection paper on the future of the EMU should help to start considering the **Euro zone as a whole and not just as the sum of its individual components**. CEEP always considered public investment in key physical and social infrastructures as the main lever to foster growth for the benefit of citizens and enterprises in Europe.
- **The EMU should support a European economy that is modern, sustainable, socially just and globally competitive.** Structural improvements to the EMU should not only make the Eurozone more robust in the event of future shocks, but also support related policies such as the European Pillar for Social Rights.

- In the short term, **completing the Banking Union and the Capital Markets Union** are the most immediate priorities for the future reform. Both are needed for our economies to improve access to the financing they need for future growth.
- **CEEP calls for greater involvement of social partners in the design and monitoring of reforms**, whilst ensuring that sufficient support is provided for capacity-building activities for social partners engaged in reform programmes.
- **CEEP believes that a macroeconomic stabilisation function at euro area level could potentially complement automatic stabilisers at national level under certain conditions.** It should take the form of automatic stabilisation and not aim at fiscal fine-tuning of the economic cycle. The stabilisation function would therefore not be a tool to actively steer the euro area fiscal stance, but rather reduce the need for euro area countries to address large country-specific shocks by using discretionary policies.
- CEEP members could see added value in **further elaborating a European treasury**, particularly to ensure minimum levels of public investments across Europe. However, CEEP expresses strong doubts about whether the EU would be politically ready to move so strongly towards federalization by 2025. This roadmap seems unrealistic in the present state of the Union.

More: [CEEP Opinion on the Reflection Paper on Deepening the EMU](#)

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SUSTAINABLE, FUTURE-ORIENTED ENVIRONMENT AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

YOUNG PEOPLE, SKILLS, EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

- The European social partners (CEEP, ETUC, BusinessEurope and UEAPME) prepared a Framework of Actions, aiming at promoting solutions to **reduce youth unemployment, deliver concrete measures to improve young people's employment opportunities and contribute to this important debate.** It calls on national social partners, public authorities and other stakeholders to act together and achieve concrete progress. It builds upon existing and new practices linked with the four priorities identified:
 - Priority 1: **Learning**
 - Priority 2: **Transition**
 - Priority 3: **Employment**
 - Priority 4: **Entrepreneurship**
- As part of the EU social dialogue programme of integrated projects 2014-2016, the European social partners have undertaken separate projects on the **cost-effectiveness of apprenticeship schemes (employers) and a European quality framework for apprenticeships (trade unions).**
- **Quality apprenticeships** not only enhance a person's employability and employment prospects through the acquisition of skills and competencies that are needed on the labour market, they **also support personal development and lead to a recognised qualification.**
- To underpin the provision of a quality apprenticeship **a common understanding of the content of learning outcomes** should be developed. It requires the involvement of the social partners, training providers and national authorities. This would help to enhance transparency on learning outcomes.

- **Member States**, with the involvement of social partners, **need to develop and adapt VET systems in view of enhancing their effectiveness and quality, improving the employability of workers by notably providing them with key competences and transversal skills.**

More: [Framework of Actions on Youth Employment – Final Evaluation Report](#)

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REVIEWING THE EU DEFINITION OF SMES

- The **differentiation between public and private SMEs in the current EU SME Definition is contrary to Article 345 TFEU** which states that “The Treaties shall in no way prejudice the rules in Member States governing the system of property ownership”. The Treaty **does not impair the ability of Member States to establish businesses as they deem appropriate.**
- **Amongst the SMEs in need of targeted measures, there are many providers of public services and SGIs at local level.** They fulfil all criteria of the current SME Definition, including their number of employees and turnover, except for the last one, specified in Article 3, Paragraph 4 of the Definition’s Annex which states that SMEs with a public ownership of more than 25% are to be excluded from the Definition’s scope.
- This creates important burdens for these SMEs linked both to regulatory and financial aspects. Whilst having to increasingly cope with limited resources, **local public services’ enterprises** that are excluded from the Definition’s scope **suffer from undue regulatory burden.**
- These SMEs must also cope with **increasing challenges in accessing financing.** In several Member States, local public services’ providers that are SMEs have reported difficulties in accessing bank loans despite their public ownership and are increasingly engaged in “risky investments”.
- Therefore, CEEP continues to call for an **amendment to the European SME Definition, guaranteeing equal treatment of all SMEs which fulfil the criteria regarding their number of employees and turnover, irrespective of their ownership.**

More: [CEEP Opinion “For an Inclusive EU SME Policy”](#)

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SECURITY AND STABILITY IN A STRONG AND UNITED EUROPE

MIGRATION

- Public services act as “first responder” on the one hand and as employer able to ensure a smooth integration to the labour market on the other hand. Our members face numerous challenges on this front:
 - **Housing:** We face serious shortages of affordable housing and accommodation for the refugees, especially in cities and municipalities with already overstretched housing markets.
 - **Language:** Investing in language immersion courses and supporting voluntary language support activities is crucial.
 - **Information and training:** Across the continent, there is a perceived and a real need to train staff in local authorities and social services in dealing with refugees, including information about the asylum process.

- **Specialist services for refugees and unaccompanied children:** Many municipalities struggle to provide adequate services for asylum-seeking children and specialist services such as trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) treatment services.
- In this context, public services have already been severely affected by the economic crisis, leading to **weakened infrastructure for service provision and uneven financial resources for integration programmes.**
- **In terms of integration into the Labour Market, our members** are first and foremost impacted by demographic ageing. Many unfilled vacancies co-exist with high unemployment throughout Europe. We believe that the arrival of refugees has the potential to help recruit for our sectors which are struggling the most.
- On 20 December 2017, CEEP co-founded, together with the European Commission and the EU Social and Economic partners (ETUC, BusinessEurope, UAPME, CEEP and Eurochambers) a **‘European Partnership for Integration’**, laying down key principles and commitments to support and strengthen opportunities for refugees and migrants legally residing in the EU to integrate into the European labour market.
- We believe that the solutions will be the following:
 - **Promoting multi-stakeholder operational frameworks and structures** to assist asylum-seekers and refugees for a faster transition into the labour market and in the workplace.
 - **Setting the conditions for a more effective skills assessment and skills matching** and upgrading skills to facilitate their integration in the EU labour market (particularly through language training, VET and entrepreneurial education).
 - **Exploring innovative measures to help employment**, such as the Swedish “[fast-track](#)” [set up by SALAR](#) or advertising economic sectors with workforce shortages.

More: [European Partnership for integration offering opportunities for refugees to integrate into the labour market](#)

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TRILOGUE ON CLEAN ENERGY FOR ALL EUROPEANS PACKAGE

- On 16 June 2017, CEEP presented its [opinion on the Clean Energy Package](#) proposed in November 2016 by the European Commission. The trilogue is due to start for three of the legislative texts, the Renewable Energy Directive, the Energy Efficiency Directive and the Governance Regulation, for which the Council adopted General Approaches in December 2017 and on which the European Parliament voted in January 2018.
- CEEP warmly welcomes many positive changes made by the Council and the Parliament, such as:
 - the proposed measures to **reduce overlaps between energy and climate Policies in the Governance Regulation;**
 - that cost-efficiency is seen as the **overarching principle for many key provisions** (e.g. regarding metering and billing (EED Article 9 and 9a));
 - the **conditional access of third parties to district and heating cooling in the Renewable Directive** (RED Article 24).
- Some elements of the main CEEP recommendations for the trilogue are:
 - **Adaptation of the ETS directive** to the Energy Union (Governance Regulation);

- o Smooth **deployment of renewable energy** (RES Directive and Governance Regulation);
- o A **yearly increase rate of the share of RES** supplied for heating and cooling (RES Directive);
- o **Level playing field for renewables energy communities** (RES Directive);
- o Future **support schemes** (RES Directive);
- o Cost-efficient approach of **Energy Efficiency** (EE Directive and Governance Regulation).

More: [CEEP Recommendations for Trilogue on Clean Energy for All Europeans Package](#)

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EU AS A STRONG GLOBAL ACTOR ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

- CEEP welcomes the European Commission’s reflection paper on “Harnessing Globalisation” and **gives its support to a sustainable and innovative EU strategy to shape globalisation**, set standards and preserve the diversified European ways of living.
- Overall, CEEP believes that:
 - o Services of general economic interest (**SGEIs**) and non-economic services of general interest (**NESGIs**) **play a crucial role in providing everyone with a decent lifestyle**.
 - o **Sustainability and innovation** are the key concepts that provide the framework for thriving lives and entrepreneurial undertakings.
 - o The world of tomorrow is not only about **digitalisation**, but also very much about the fundamental question “in what kind of society and economic order do citizens want to live, and what type of social and-economic objectives do they want to pursue?”
- Therefore, CEEP presents the following recommendations on how the European Institutions and Member States can implement their strategy:
 - o **The EU should recognise the legislative provisions for services of general interest (SGI) as an Acquis+.** SGIs provide citizens with accessible and qualitative services and serve as safety nets, help build citizenship and foster communal spirit. They promote an entrepreneurship-friendly climate that fosters the development of metropolitan regions. For this reason, the EU should **invest in research** on “best practising” metropolitan regions and in transnational infrastructure networks.
 - o **The EU and the Member States need to invest more in research and human capital through education and concrete lifelong learning opportunities.** CEEP suggests that the **EU and the Member States should provide risk capital for innovation and pioneering spirit and establish dynamic administrative structures.**
 - o The EU should also better use the available resources to adapt to demographic ageing. This requires the **facilitated inclusion of ageing and disadvantaged people into the work force**. Furthermore, differences between rural and metropolitan areas must be reduced through stronger EU-wide cooperation. For a balanced lifestyle, adapting “best practices” and considering them in legislation making is recommended.

More: [CEEP Opinion on the Reflection paper ‘Harnessing globalisation’: The EU in a Globalised World](#)

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DIGITAL ECONOMY

FREE MOVEMENT OF DATA, ESSENTIAL FOR A DIGITAL SOCIETY

- CEEP has actively discussed the review of the Directive on the Re-use of Public Sector Information ('PSI Directive'), highlighting the need for a targeted revision that ensures that high-quality public services can still be provided in the future.
- CEEP supports the European Commission's overall objective to **set a European regulatory framework that fosters the development of the European data economy**.
- Public services' providers are drivers of innovation. Already today, with the objective of improving the services for citizens and customers, many of them have not only developed their **own innovative new services, but also published certain data openly**. Moreover, there are many cases in which they have already actively worked together with third parties to whom they make their data available. In many of these cases, they also receive back data allowing the provision of even wider information to citizens and customers.
- In this context, it is of utmost importance to **ensure a regulatory framework that allows public services to continue to be provided in the future with the same high quality**. This means that any review of the Directive needs to consider that public services' providers are enterprises that, as other enterprises, must **deliver their services in an economical, cost-efficient way**. This includes cost recovery when making certain data available.
- CEEP suggests a **value-based approach**, meaning that public services' providers should be able to benefit from the value their data holds. Otherwise, they would be forced to abandon their business models' basis. In addition to that, **security reasons** play a crucial role when assessing which data is made public – and which not. This is particularly true for services based on infrastructure management, such as in the water, transport and energy sectors.
- The review of the PSI Directive needs to guarantee a **level-playing-field between all market participants**. Therefore, share-alike-licences and a general requirement of reciprocity should apply to the re-use of data. Public services' providers should be given the possibility to set the rules for the re-use of their own data.

More: [CEEP Response to the European Commission "Public consultation on the review of the directive on the re-use of Public Sector Information \(PSI Directive\)"](#)

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HIGH-CONNECTIVITY FOR ALL

- All citizens and enterprises need to **enjoy access to reliable and fast broadband connections**.
- Secondly, **broadband connections need to provide citizens with easy and affordable access to content**. Internet connection is essential to attract citizens, enterprises and economic activities.
- A specific challenge in this regard are rural areas. **Public services provide broadband infrastructure and contribute to its rapid deployment**. They also require high speed broadband infrastructure to deliver the services users expect (e.g. connectivity on the whole railway network).

More: [CEEP Opinion "Harnessing the Digital Transformation of Public Services"](#)

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TRUST AND SECURITY

- **Increasing transparency, trust and security in the digital economy is a core concern for public services' providers** which have a strong expertise in dealing with sensitive data and securing essential infrastructure. The **elaboration of clear and effective guidance** following the approval of the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) requires the inclusion of all stakeholders in the discussions. Furthermore, public services' providers are committed to contributing to the discussions on data ownership and liability.

More: [CEEP Opinion "Harnessing the Digital Transformation of Public Services"](#)

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REVIEWING THE EUROVIGNETTE DIRECTIVE AND PROMOTING LOW-EMISSION MOBILITY

- CEEP welcomes the emphasis on the polluter pays and user pays principles to underpin the proposal.
- We are pleased that Member States have the flexibility to decide whether or not to introduce charges
- We are delighted to see a broad palette of cost components including noise and air pollution and congestion.
- We support in principle the phasing out of time-based vignettes particularly for Heavy Goods Vehicles. However, CEEP believes that in certain circumstances there may be a case for their continuation for other types of vehicles.
- We call not only for earmarked funds to be used for infrastructure maintenance but also for reinvestment in a wide range of sustainable transport projects.
- We are concerned by the proposal to phase out EURO emission standards as a price determinant before new CO2 criteria have proven their effectiveness.
- We support continued exemption for local schemes specifically designed to reduce traffic congestion or tackle environmental problems.

More: [CEEP Statement on the Commission Proposal to amend Directive 1999/62/EC on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures \('Eurovignette Directive'\)](#)

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