

POLICY KIT

with regard
to the Finnish Presidency of
the Council of the EU
1 July 2019 – 31 December 2019

CEEP, the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services and Services of General Interest, represents employers and enterprises providing public services and 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 Romanian presidency of the European Union, aims at presenting key CEEP positions on the main files to be discussed at EU level in the next 6 months.

COMMON VALUES AND THE RULE OF LAW

- The European Social Partners (CEEP, ETUC, BusinessEurope, SMEUnited) fully agree that our democracies must be safeguarded and call on EU leaders to include the upholding of the rule of law in the Strategic Agenda 2019-2024. They also **stress their full commitment to supporting the rule of law as one of the foundations on which the European project and the democratic values it stands for are built.**
- The **Rule of Law is essential for the proper functioning of the European Union**, its institutions, its Single Market, labour market and society. It is an important guarantee for European citizens, employers and workers, being paramount to social inclusion, economic competitiveness and protection of the environment alike.
- The rule of law also requires effective, independent and impartial institutions (e.g. courts, inspection services and bodies) and redress mechanisms so that these rights are justiciable and their legal protection can be ensured. The **longstanding role of social partners in setting, applying and enforcing these rights, particularly through social dialogue and collective bargaining, should be fully recognised.**
- The European Social Partners therefore fully agree that **the rule of law must be respected, better explained, promoted and enforced across Europe.** We remain fully committed to defending our common European rules and values and to speaking up for their protection across the continent through an enhanced dialogue with social partners and civil society at large.

More: [European Social Partner's Statement on the Rule of Law](#)

COMPETITIVENESS AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

A COMPREHENSIVE, FUTURE-ORIENTED SINGLE MARKET

- The path towards restoring trust in the European project among European citizens goes through **ensuring inclusive and environment-friendly economic growth**. There are lots of work to be done in this purpose, such as improving the **effectiveness and the daily functioning of the Single Market**, strengthening the **enforcement of subsidiarity and proportionality** alongside other EU core values such as the rule of law, democratic accountability and better regulation, **ensure a level-playing field between private and public-sector stakeholders**, binding public spending to further criteria and increased conditionalities, amongst others.
- CEEP joins the Finnish Presidency in **advocating an over-arching agenda**. Blending the different dimensions of policy-making relevant to the Single market's success is a necessary step in this direction: Competition Policy, Cohesion Policy, Trade Policy, the European Pillar of Social Rights, Industrial Policy... **All these fields are both intertwined and instrumental in making the Single Market in its current shape** but also in improving its effectiveness, deepening it further and, thus, preparing the future.
- A strategy aiming at developing the EU Digital Single Market (DSM) shall play a particularly crucial role in this respect. Digitalisation poses threats and opportunities alike to European societies and economies, the EU can and must prove itself up to it.

Contact: Alexis LE COUTOUR, Policy Officer Public Services – alexis.lecoutour@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 43

WELLBEING AND SKILLS: THE FOUNDATION OF INCLUSIVE GROWTH

- **Education is one of the key solutions** to get more people into decent jobs, respond better to the labour shortages and skills needs and strengthen Europe's resilience in the context of the rapid and profound changes induced by the technological revolution, climate change and decarbonisation.
- 20% of the EU working age population have low literacy and low numeracy skills. 44% of the EU population have low digital competences. As skills demand continues to rise, this problem will not go away.
- Member States need to **implement skills policies that support re-training and upskilling aim to align the supply of skills with the needs of the labour market** and hence to alleviate qualitative labour shortages.
- CEEP calls for a **general improvement of and increased investment in education systems and supports a reinforced access to lifelong learning** that enables people to acquire skills and to reskill and upskill; stepping up investments in the institutions, policies and strategies that will support people through future of work transitions; and implementing a transformative and measurable agenda for gender equality are all elements that should receive wide support.
- Another key aspect is to make sure that the **education systems, including vocational ones, provide all the knowledge, skills and competences that are deemed essential** in today's world.
- All Member States now need to harness the full potential of education and culture as drivers for jobs, social fairness, active citizenship.
- There is an urgent need to **enhance access to the labour markets through a correlation between quality job creation and an enhanced education system** to create adequate skillsets, for example by means of the dual system.

More: [CEEP Opinion on the Mid-term review of the EU2020 Strategy](#)

Contact: Guillaume Afellat, Policy Advisor Social Affairs – Guillaume.afellat@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 54

AN AMBITIOUS, OPEN AND RULES-BASED TRADE POLICY

- The EU has the **potential of a worldwide standard-setter in trade policy** by combining the necessary economic weight with a long tradition of values necessary to fostering a rules-based international order. For CEEP, the EU must and can commit to promoting a **balanced, multilateral and sustainable Globalisation**.
- CEEP therefore endorses pursuing international trade agreement negotiations currently under way or opening new ones in the future, but this is subject to certain conditions in terms of international trade's social, public health-related or environmental impact. In this respect, the Finnish Presidency's call to root more firmly the legally binding character of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a step in the right direction.
- Simultaneously, it is important to recognise that **Globalisation is a double-edged sword**. External trade can either stimulate the needed inclusive and environment-friendly economic growth and help levelling the playing field with other regions of the world or play against the legitimate interests of entire societies and foster a global environment where might is right. The contribution of **public services, services of general interest (SGIs) and services of general economic interest (SGEIs) in providing citizens with a decent lifestyle and thus in countering anxieties regarding the negative sides of Globalisation cannot be over-stressed**.
- CEEP presents the following recommendations:
 - On that front just like on many others, the EU should avoid any sense of naivety and follow a strategic and harmonised approach combining trade policy with other relevant policies: environmental, competition, economic...
 - **The EU should recognise legislative provisions for services of general interest (SGI) as an Acquis+.** SGIs provide citizens with accessible and qualitative services, serve as safety nets and strengthen social cohesion. Simultaneously, they contribute to an entrepreneurship-friendly climate, necessary to any policy of economic development. welcomes the principle of an EU trade political agenda pushing forward **ambitious social and environmental criteria**, through including **Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapters** in current and future trade agreements.
 - Considering that trade and domestic economic power are two sides of a same coin, the EU should also make better use of available resources to **adapt to demographic ageing. Facilitating inclusion of ageing and disadvantaged people into the workforce** could be a first step in this direction. Furthermore, differences between rural and metropolitan areas must be reduced through stronger **EU-wide cooperation**. For a balanced lifestyle, adapting **"best practices" and considering turning them into binding legislation is recommended**.

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

Contact: Alexis LE COUTOUR, Policy Officer Public Services – alexis.lecoutour@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 43

TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC UNION

- **The EMU should support a European economy that is modern, sustainable, socially just and globally competitive.** Structural improvements to the EMU should make the Eurozone more robust in the event of future shocks and support related policies such as the Pillar for Social Rights.
- Following the financial and economic crisis, **progress on the EMU architecture should be our first common objective**. The Banking Union must be completed if it is to deliver its full potential in making the EMU more stable and resilient to shocks, whilst limiting the need for public risk sharing.
- 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 to reduce the need for euro area countries to address large country-specific shocks by using discretionary policies.

- **Social Partners involvement allows for legitimacy, fairness and democratic accountability** of reforms. However, this involvement cannot happen without ensuring that enough support is provided for capacity building of social partners' organisations.
- **Long-term social investment is needed**, especially in regions at the lower end of the diverging economies, and it **should benefit people on lower incomes in the interests of promoting upward convergence**.

More: [CEEP Opinion on the Reflection paper on the future the EMU](#)

Contact: Guillaume Afellat, Policy Advisor Social Affairs – Guillaume.afellat@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 54

THE EU AS A GLOBAL LEADER IN CLIMATE ACTION

- Climate change is a major challenge with dramatic consequences both globally and for Europe. CEEP **welcomes the European Commission's initiatives to mobilise all European stakeholders to limit global warming.** We now call on EU leaders to respond to that appeal and **put sustainable climate policies on top of the agenda.** Global warming is a major risk and climate policies must be developed as part of a sustainable approach.
- The Finnish Presidency is correct in putting **sustainability as a “common denominator to all EU action”.** Sustainability is namely not a mere cost for societies to bear but also an investment in the economic sense and induces a whole paradigm shift for our current lifestyle. It isn't simply about preserving our planet's environment but also about preparing new jobs and another way of living. Including the notion of sustainability in the design, implementation and assessment of every public policy is a push in the right direction. This will also imply the active involvement of all stakeholders: citizens, social partners, economic actors, scientific and academic world, NGOs...
- Sustainability, however, is a pluralist concept. Assessing a given policy field or a single measure in the light of sustainability should therefore **include the dimension of social acceptability and democratic accountability and not restrict itself to aspects related to the environment** and climate-change. Consequently, CEEP maintains that Europe's climate strategy can only be part of a sustainable development strategy based on three pillars that lie at the heart of CEEP members' action:
 - **The economic dimension:** Public Services and SGIs promote economic growth and employment in Europe by providing essential services whose contribution to the fight against climate change is crucial and whose quality contributes to the competitiveness of European industry.
 - **The environmental dimension:** The outcome of mitigation policies has been insufficient despite Europe's vigorous efforts. It is therefore essential, while pursuing mitigation policies, to think about the adaptation of our economies and the resilience of infrastructure. Moving forward on the European circular economy is of primary importance. Moreover, while climate change is a major issue, action must simultaneously handle other environmental challenges.
 - **The social dimension:** The involvement of all Europeans is a sine qua non condition for the success of climate policies because it is based on changes in consumer behaviour that will prove essential. In this sense, the implementation of effective and efficient climate policies and a fair sharing of the financial effort are essential to increase citizens' support. Finally, these transitions are inclusive and do not leave anyone out of these developments.
- CEEP members **manage essential infrastructure and provide SGIs** that contribute to well-being and competitiveness; their proximity to economic actors makes them key players in climate policies.
- The EU needs to **recognise that role and put “enablers” of sustainable climate policies at its centre.**

More: [CEEP Opinion “A Sustainable Climate Strategy for Europe: Acting Now! – Statement on Climate “For Sibiu and Beyond””](#)

Contact: Alexis LE COUTOUR, Policy Officer Public Services – alexis.lecoutour@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 43

PROTECTING THE SECURITY OF CITIZENS COMPREHENSIVELY BUILDING RESILIENCE IN A DIGITAL WORLD

- The Finnish Presidency's programme mentions the need to address cyberthreats. This, however, must be done in a way that **takes all relevant aspects of digitalisation into account**. More than anything, digitalisation impacts all sectors and fields of activities; labour markets, public administrations, enterprises, social interactions of any kind have to adapt to its rapid pace. Therefore, addressing the challenges calls for an **all-encompassing approach**.
- **The Digital Single Market (DSM) is already a decisive asset for Europe**. It is becoming more and more important to its external competitiveness, both impacting all economic actors, including public services and SGI providers and employers. **Providers of public services and of services of general interest are instrumental in this strategy**: private-sector businesses and companies can only fully reap the benefits of digitalisation if public services are supporting them.
- CEEP calls EU policy-makers to remain aware that the entire process is not only about enabling Europe to play its part on a global stage. It is also and foremost about **shaping the digital world ahead in a way consistent with EU values**. Digitalisation brings major challenges and opportunities to all Europeans and the digital economy must not only be inclusive but also respect privacy and remain human-driven.
- Amongst other things, European decision-makers need to recognise **digitalisation's tremendous potential in terms of tackling environmental change and curbing CO² emissions**. The Finnish Presidency's programme refers to public transport services in this respect, exemplifying the potential of public services in addressing this challenge. Many other areas exist in which the role of public services and SGIs can support the EU in reaping the benefit of digitalisation in a similar way.
- CEEP supports the Finnish Presidency's medium-term goal of making the EU a leader of the global digital economy and calls for EU leaders to provide the means of this ambition. As of today, Europe clearly lags behind in terms of investment in Artificial Intelligence (AI) development, production of digital equipment and devices or R&D. **Massive investments are needed swiftly in physical infrastructures, in inclusive digital skills development in all parts of the population, in supporting effective research, development and innovation, and in protecting data**.
- Financial investment alone won't suffice. Legal capacities are necessary as well and the EU should work on **upgrading and stepping up its domestic legislative and regulatory framework**. Just as necessary would be for EU authorities to remain active at international level, for example in international standardisation bodies.
- **Cybersecurity is now paramount to protect our democracy and economy**. CEEP welcomes that the EU has already started to look into this, but more will be required, notably through the definition of cybersecurity certification schemes, or by defining the security criteria that digital network components should comply with. Harmonisation is here again essential.

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

Contact: Guillaume Afellat, Policy Advisor Social Affairs – Guillaume.afellat@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 54

OTHER KEY ISSUES DURING FINLAND'S PRESIDENCY COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT OF MIGRATION

- European Citizens have expressed strong concerns regarding how we manage migration. Despite the enormous benefits refugees can bring to European economies and societies, **their integration remains a long and arduous process that requires improvement.**
- The European Social Partners signed with the European Commission a *“European Partnership for integration offering opportunities for refugees to integrate into the Labour Market”*.
- The lack of consensus between Member states on how to make the CEAS more efficient or on the implementation of solidarity mechanisms **reveals the discrepancy of views on migration in the member states.**
- The successful integration of migrants could make the host country population more accepting of newcomers, allowing for a fairer distribution of refugees across member states and ensuring the overall sustainability of the asylum system.
- **Employers will be instrumental in integration strategies** however they suffer from the **lengthy and cumbersome process of qualification recognition; the insufficient number of language and job-specific training opportunities; and the lack of coordination with public authorities.**
- The EU still has the possibility to enhance its added value in this area. The most viable option is to **engage in a serious dialogue with European employers.** In fact, designing policies that address their concerns, and enhancing their positive perception of how the EU can help in this field is crucial.
- By addressing the needs of employers, the EU would be in the position to become part of the solution, act as **a legitimate interface between employers and national authorities** and offer a **credible counter-narrative to the anti-migration discourse.**
- In any case integration strategies should be an integral part of our narrative on managing migration next to the protection and management of our external borders.

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

Contact: Guillaume Afellat, Policy Advisor Social Affairs – Guillaume.afellat@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 54

MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK FOR 2021-2027: IMPLEMENTING THE EU PRIORITIES

- CEEP is convinced of the added value of a sound Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 (MFF 2021-2027) budget and believes that there are clear margins of manoeuvre to make it **more efficient and relevant.** Ongoing discussions for the MFF 2021-2027 should be linked with the debates on the Future of the EU. It is **important to agree on the Europe we want for the future and attach corresponding resources to the well-defined priorities.** The so-called EU Own Resources are an integral part of this crucial debate.
- The freshly initiated Finnish Presidency opens a window of opportunity to **push forward this urgent item.** Time is pressing and the European Parliament has defined its own [official negotiating position](#) already in November 2018. Therefore, the Finnish presidency's aim to finalise negotiations so that the Council's “Negotiating Box” be ready by autumn 2019 deserves full support.
- On the structure of the MFF 2021-2027, CEEP highlights the following **transversal principles**:
 - **The EU Added Value** should become one of the key criteria for the successful use of EU funds and the success of Cohesion Policy.

- **Flexibility:** Funding committed should remain available in the budget and be easily re-allocated to other programmes. This rule should be flexible enough to adapt to evolving circumstances.
- **Simplification and Administrative Barriers:** CEEP calls for reducing the burden of EU funds management. The EU budget is pressured by the need to be more efficient, to focus where its impact is greatest and to ensure that burdensome rules do not hinder its achievements.
- **Going beyond GDP:** The distribution principles of the EU structural funding should not be exclusively based on the GDP criterion but cover alternative indicators – such as poverty rate, youth and long-term unemployment or the activity rate of vulnerable groups – in line with the principles proclaimed in the EU Pillar of Social Rights.
- On the next MFF's content, the following **key priorities** should be enforced:
 - **A strong Cohesion Policy:** financial means should at least remain at the current funding level. Cohesion Policy has proved to be the EU's most successful and efficient policy in fostering economic growth while enhancing Europe's social cohesion. Whereas modifications in its functioning might be called for, it should by no means undergo budget cuts but instead be strengthened and developed further.
 - **Strategic Infrastructure:** Public investment in key physical and social infrastructures are the main levers to foster growth. The MFF provides a key opportunity for reinforcing their financing.
 - **Circular economy** should be a key feature in future funds because of its transversal aspects and multiple effects for citizens. Fostering innovation through circular economic solutions could enable to build a new way to make business, to promote research and to create new jobs.
 - **Economic and Social Governance:** CEEP favours greater technical assistance to Member States in improving institutional and administrative capacities for implementing structural reforms.
 - **Investing in Social Dialogue:** It is urgent to develop a mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Code of Conduct on Partnership by the Member States and make respect of its principles an ex-ante conditionality in the preparation and implementation of operational programmes.

More: [CEEP Opinion on the EU Multi-annual Financial Framework 2021-2027](#)

Contact: Alexis LE COUTOUR, Policy Officer Public Services – alexis.lecoutour@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 43

CEEP – European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services and SGI

Rue des Deux Eglises, 26 bte 5

1000 Brussels

Belgium

www.ceep.eu

ceep@ceep.eu

+32 2 219 27 98