

POLICY KIT

with regard
to the Netherlands
Presidency of
the Council of the EU
1 January 2016 – 31 July 2016

TABLE OF CONTENT

Introduction.....	3
Refugees & asylum-seekers.....	3
EU Semester and Deepening the EMU.....	4
Establishing National Competitiveness Boards	4
New Skills Agenda	5
Labour Mobility	6
Interinstitutional Agreement on better regulation	6
International Trade Agreements	7
Digital Single Market	8
Strengthening the Single Market	8
Action Plan for a more effective VAT regime	9
Outcomes of COP21 & Climate Change	9
Implementing the Energy Union	10
Fourth Railway Package.....	10
Circular Economy Strategy	11
EU Urban Agenda	11
Projects.....	13

INTRODUCTION

The **European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services** (CEEP) gathers enterprises and organisations from across Europe, either public or private, at national, regional and local level, which are providers of Services of General Interest (SGIs) or representing them as employers. CEEP is one of the three cross-sectoral social partners in the European social dialogue.

Public services have been seriously brought into question during the economic and financial crisis, and massive cuts have been made during these difficult times. **Public services' providers now need to deliver the same level of services as previously, with a high level of efficiency, but with fewer resources.**

Even if endangered, public services are vital for the economy, as they include sectors such as water, energy, health, education, public transport, telecommunications, waste management, public administration and local and regional authorities.¹

CEEP is the main public services' representative in Brussels, and it will be working side by side with the Netherlands Presidency to support it in the fulfilment of its major goals. Either gained by our many research projects or by our membership expertise, CEEP can provide information on topics related to public services, and help the Presidency to achieve its goals.

REFUGEES & ASYLUM-SEEKERS

WHAT CEEP SAYS:

- The approach based primarily on the implementation of an emergency mechanism to relocate 160.000 refugees and a European Agenda on Migration, should now be implemented, as all Member States need to take their share of responsibility to bring a joint European answer.
- Representatives of employers and providers of public services are aware of their own responsibility, as public services infrastructures can play a substantial role to support the integration of the refugees in the EU.
- Efficient and effective public administration, housing, healthcare and education infrastructures, among others, are essential assets to ensure a genuine integration within the EU Social Model.
- Whatever their sector of activities, public services are key to support the consolidation of the European Social Model, which EU decision-makers should keep in sight at all times.

MORE ON CEEP POSITION:

9 September 2015: [CEEP supports Juncker's recipe for a genuine EU answer to the refugee crisis](#)

CONTACT:

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

¹ Cfr Mapping of Public Services, Appendix A, pp. 119-120.

EU SEMESTER AND DEEPENING THE EMU

WHAT CEEP SAYS:

- The 2016 Annual Growth Survey announced a new process for developing benchmarks and the exchange of best practices across policy areas, building on existing thematic analysis developed with the Member States in various fora.
- Labour market reforms should have an important place in this exchange of practices together with competitiveness, business environment and public administrations, as well as certain aspects of tax policy.
- Many EU providers and employers of public services have, are, or will undergo major changes, and that is why CEEP members are constantly engaged in a process of benchmarking and sharing best practices to support restructuring and change processes.

MORE ON CEEP POSITION:

[Political report of the CEEP Exchange of practices between Providers of Public Services](#)

30 November 2015: [The 2016 European Semester package – AGS 2016](#)

30 October 2015: [Completing Economic and Monetary Union: process and content](#)

31 July 2015: [The Five Presidents' Report: the next 10 years of the European macroeconomic governance](#)

30 June 2015: [Public services providers and employers restate their support to the European project](#)

CONTACT:

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

ESTABLISHING NATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS BOARDS

WHAT CEEP SAYS:

- The introduction of national Competitiveness Boards in each Member States, as proposed by the European Commission, is a welcome initiative. However, we call for a truly comprehensive definition of competitiveness, including high performing public services.
- Such a comprehensive definition, coupled with the full guarantee that those Boards will truly respect social partners' autonomy when it comes to wage negotiations, will render the Competitiveness Boards an effective instrument to support the creation of jobs and growth. Public services are an integral part of the equation and this should be fully acknowledged in the process of completing the Economic and Monetary Union.

MORE ON CEEP POSITION:

15 December 2015: [CEEP Letter to the EU Council](#)

CONTACT:

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

NEW SKILLS AGENDA

WHAT CEEP SAYS:

The EU skills Agenda, priorities for Employers

- The New Skills Agenda for Europe is set to be oriented around the overarching goal of skills for employability to increase productivity and competitiveness. Specifically, it will aim at promoting skills development, including the mutual recognition of qualifications, supporting vocational training and higher education and reaping the full potential of digital jobs.
- The better alignment of the needs of labour markets and education and training systems should be the guiding principle for EU skills policies. There needs to be a focus on learning outcomes, employability in education and training systems at all levels. This would facilitate the transparency and recognition of qualifications, enhance quality and foster mobility in Europe.

Dual learning systems

- Putting in place the systems and structures that allow for the cost-effective engagement of employers and which give them greater ownership over apprenticeship schemes should be the main policy focus in this area.
- The EU cross-industry employers' organisations are currently undertaking a project on the cost-effectiveness of apprenticeship schemes. The national seminars that have taken place as part of the project have highlighted the important role that apprenticeship training, particularly schemes with dual-learning elements, plays in helping to meet enterprises skills needs.

Digital Skills

- 40% of EU citizens are currently considered to have only a basic level of digital skills. The need for digital skills will become more pronounced by 2025 when it is projected that 90% of jobs will require some level of digital skill.
- A coherent EU strategy for digital learning and open educational resources should be mainstreamed across all education and training sectors. This would favour a more efficient use of resources, both public and private, and could make a significant contribution to broadening participation in education and training.
- The EU social partners have a point in their autonomous work programme about skills needs in digital economies and a first exchange will take place during the social dialogue committee on 17 February.

CONTACT:

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

LABOUR MOBILITY

WHAT CEEP SAYS:

- CEEP stresses the need to promote free movement by overcoming barriers to worker mobility, fostering mobile workers' employment participation and encouraging circular mobility to maximise the benefits of mobility for countries of origin and destination.
- In this regard, CEEP deems important to fully take into consideration the positive and the adverse effects of mobility. But for an individual to truly benefit from it, he needs to enjoy a certain level of protection in order to have secured career paths through better transitions in the labour market. EU mobile citizens need to be fully informed, in line with the directive on the enforcement of existing rights for mobile workers.
- CEEP welcomes the focus on youth mobility, notably through the ERASMUS+ and "your first EURES job" programmes. CEEP supports these programmes which can effectively improve students' mobility as well as to ease young workers' geographical and occupational mobility.
- Any modernising process for improving the coordination of national social security systems to reflect legal and societal changes and in view of facilitating mobility needs to fully respect national social law and working conditions, in accordance with the diversity of social protection and industrial relations systems throughout Europe.
- Mobility brings into consideration the important issue of "brain drain", with potential severe social consequences such as, for instance in the healthcare sector, a phenomenon of "care drain", meaning shortages of specialist and health professionals in rural areas, and which worsens asymmetries among the different Member States.
- The Commission work programme for 2016 includes the proposal for "a targeted revision" of the Posting of Workers Directive, as part of the Labour Mobility Package. We believe that any changes to the Posting of Workers Directive should be discussed thoroughly with the social partners before the Commission adopts a proposal.

CONTACT:

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

INTERINSTITUTIONAL AGREEMENT ON BETTER REGULATION

WHAT CEEP SAYS:

- CEEP welcomed the provisional interinstitutional agreement negotiated by the Council, the Parliament and the Commission. A balanced implementation will create the right regulatory environment for the modernisation of public services across Europe.
- The Better regulation agenda needs to be a collective effort in order to be effective and legitimate.
- The Interinstitutional Agreement should strengthen the equal footing of co-legislators and strikes the right balance between democratic and evidence-based decision-making.
- CEEP however regrets the lack of concrete commitments on transparency. We call the institutions to follow up on this issue.

MORE ON CEEP POSITION:

14 January 2016: [CEEP Comments on Draft Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Regulation](#)

8 July 2015: [CEEP Opinion on the European Commission Package “Better regulation”](#)

19 May 2015: [CEEP committed to support EU better regulation](#)

18 December 2015: [Key steps on better regulation agenda: REFIT platform & draft interinstitutional agreement](#)

9 July 2015: [CEEP Opinion on Better Regulation](#)

CONTACT:

Maika Föhrenbach, Policy Officer Public Services: Maika.foehrenbach@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 43

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS

WHAT CEEP SAYS:

- In order to support the creation of sustainable growth and jobs in Europe, free trade agreements should not put the provision of high-quality and affordable services of general interest under pressure.
- CEEP restated on a regular basis its support for the overall objective of concluding an ambitious TTIP. However, it should not put at risk the provision of high-quality SG(E)Is, now and in the future. In this regard, supporting the exclusion of SG(E)Is from the scope of application international trade agreement is welcome, as emphasised by the European Parliament’s reports on TTIP and TiSA negotiations.
- Trade agreements EU should preserve the essential role played by SG(E)Is in the social market economy and should therefore guarantee the freedom of choice of European, national, regional and local public authorities in organising, providing and funding those services.
- As proposed in the INTA report, a ‘golden standard’ clause in TiSA would significantly increase legal certainty and predictability, key factors to foster investments in physical and social infrastructures.

MORE ON CEEP POSITION:

19 January 2016: [CEEP welcomes the INTA report on TiSA](#)

29 October 2015: [Public services employers and providers welcome the draft report on TiSA](#)

29 September 2015: [CEEP Position Paper on CETA](#)

28 May 2015: [CEEP welcomes the report of the INTA Committee on TTIP](#)

12 June 2014: [CEEP Opinion on TTIP](#)

CONTACT:

Maika Föhrenbach, Policy Officer Public Services: Maika.foehrenbach@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 43

DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET

WHAT CEEP SAYS:

- The Digital Single Market Strategy by the European Commission is a key step towards a fair regulatory environment, crucial to boost the European digital economy and a more inclusive society, to ensure a level-playing field for all, to encourage future investments in digital infrastructures and to sustain investment in original digital content.
- Specific emphasis should be given to the importance of an inclusive e-society in the Strategy, including digital skills and expertise or the access to e-services.
- In order to reach the full potential of e-services, there is a need for citizens and businesses to have access to efficient and reliable networks. In that context, additional investments are needed in digital infrastructures.
- New technologies change expectations and comportments, pushing public services' providers to evolve rapidly as technology is developing. Citizens and companies have a legitimate expectation that digital access to public services, whatever the sector of activity, should be simple and efficient. Online services are crucial to reducing costs and increasing the efficiency and the quality of the services provided.

MORE ON CEEP POSITION:

6 May 2015: [The Digital Single Market, support of the modernisation of public services](#)

CONTACT:

Maika Föhrenbach, Policy Officer Public Services: Maika.foehrenbach@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 43

Johannes Imminger, Policy Officer Sustainability: Johannes.imminger@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 50

STRENGTHENING THE SINGLE MARKET

WHAT CEEP SAYS:

- CEEP expects the Single Market Strategy to underpin the creation of a more investment-friendly environment by focusing on the implementation and application of existing legislation.
- A priority should be to ensure the adequate transposition and strategic application of the new rules on public procurement and concessions. The Commission intends to put in place several actions in 2017 and 2018 to support more efficient public procurement procedures, notably through technical assistance and better monitoring. The effectiveness of the Remedies Directive currently under evaluation could also be improved.

MORE ON CEEP POSITION:

30 October 2015: [CEEP reacts to the publication of the Single Market Strategy](#)

28 October 2015: [Internal market strategy and the implementation of the public procurement package](#)

CONTACT:

Maika Föhrenbach, Policy Officer Public Services: Maika.foehrenbach@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 43

ACTION PLAN FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE VAT REGIME:

WHAT CEEP SAYS:

- The current VAT system ensures that public services are often excluded when VAT is imposed, under the assumption that they satisfy certain conditions. In line with Article 14 TFEU and Protocol 26 TFEU, it recognises the unique character of public services as requiring specific treatment due to their importance in the EU Social model. Therefore, the current exemptions for public bodies and activities in public interest suit the specific needs and conditions of provision of public services in Member States, and there is no need to revise it.

MORE ON CEEP POSITION:

24 April 2014: [CEEP Answer to the consultation on the review of existing VAT legislation on public bodies and tax exemptions in the public interest](#)

CONTACT:

Maika Föhrenbach, Policy Officer Public Services: Maika.foehrenbach@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 43

OUTCOMES OF COP21 & CLIMATE CHANGE

WHAT CEEP SAYS:

Following the signature of the Paris Agreement, Jean-Eudes Moncomble, chair of CEEP's Sustainability Board, published the following editorial for CEEP monthly newsletter:

“For CEEP, which is pleased to see in the Paris Agreement many of its opinion's ([available here](#)) strong ideas, such as ensuring that adaptation measures or the importance of financing and international cooperation are better taken into account, the Paris Agreement is historic and undeniably goes in the right direction. However, everything remains to be done to give life to this Agreement, which means its implementation, not only through policies and regulations, but also through investment choices or management choices, which will transform it into success. Being at the heart of the mitigation and adaptation policies, CEEP and the members it represents are already engaged in this fight against climate change and are decided to intensify their efforts.”

MORE ON CEEP POSITION:

18 December 2015: <http://www.ceep.eu/cop21-the-paris-agreement/>

21 October 2015: [CEEP Opinion on COP21: contribution of public services providers to climate action for a successful and ambitious COP21](#)

CONTACT:

Johannes Imminger, Policy Officer Sustainability: Johannes.imminger@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 50

IMPLEMENTING THE ENERGY UNION

WHAT CEEP SAYS:

During the second consultation of the cross-sectoral social partners on the Energy Union by Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, CEEP highlighted five points, with a particular focus on the implementation of the Energy Union and the framework condition needed for public services providers and employers to operate effectively and efficiently:

- Anticipation of change and development of skills;
- Inclusion of Social Partners in drafting national energy plans;
- Heating and Cooling strategy, as a key steps towards the 2030 climate and energy targets;
- Decarbonisation of transport and promotion of public transport systems;
- The Energy Union as a push for an ambitious COP21 agreement.

MORE ON CEEP POSITION:

26 November 2015: [CEEP priorities on the implementation of the energy union presented to vice-president Šefčovič](#)

CONTACT:

Johannes Imminger, Policy Officer Sustainability: Johannes.imminger@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 50

FOURTH RAILWAY PACKAGE

WHAT CEEP SAYS:

- The Fourth Railway Package should not impact urban or local public transport (bus, tram, metro services), and key definitions should remain equally unambiguous on this regard.
- CEEP underlines the general spirit of regulated competition in providing transport services. Nevertheless, it is important to keep direct awarding as one of the options of competent authorities, in those cases in which general economic and social reasons advise to do so. No “one size fits it all”. Therefore flexibility should guide the public service contract awarding process with as first target to make the right choices to enable a qualitative development and organisation of services of general economic interest, in particular railway services.
- CEEP welcomes that the Council – as the European Parliament – agree on equally maintaining both options for the competent authorities, tendering and direct award. CEEP is convinced that flexibility and equal footing in the awarding process as well as introducing quality and efficiency criteria into the PSO contracts are the optimal way forward. During the trilogue, the debate on direct awarding needs to be closely monitored to make sure the possibilities for direct awarding remain on an equal footing with tenders.
- As cross-sectoral social partner, CEEP deems crucial to also take into account social aspects. In a competitive environment, it is crucial to enable a social level playing field. The same social conditions for all market participants at the best level possible must be guaranteed.

MORE ON CEEP POSITION:

30 November 2015: [CEEP input to trilogue negotiations on Fourth Railway Package](#)

CONTACT:

Johannes Imminger, Policy Officer Sustainability: Johannes.imminger@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 50

CIRCULAR ECONOMY STRATEGY

WHAT CEEP SAYS:

- CEEP welcomed the European Commission's Circular Economy Strategy. It is in line with the Commission's principle of better regulation and sets the right direction for a more effective implementation through all Member States.
- While being more realistic in the definition of its goals, the Strategy brings important improvements, in particular the minimum requirements for Extended Producer Responsibility and the proposals for new waste legislation with a clear definition of municipal waste and measures to further boost recycling.
- CEEP also welcomed the holistic and wider approach of the Strategy compared to the proposal of July 2014. It now takes into account all parts of the value chain, among others through tackling better EcoDesign as well as markets for secondary raw materials.
- However, it remains to be clarified how in particular EcoDesign can be strengthened in practice without introducing additional legally binding measures. European institutions should also now considerably improve the Commission's lack of ambition on landfilling.
- CEEP now calls for a swift implementation of the Strategy and no further delay in implementing legislative proposals in order to quickly advance towards a real circular economy. CEEP will continue its dialogue with the EU institutions as the expertise of public services' providers is key to ensure the feasibility of the proposals and their effective implementation.

MORE ON CEEP POSITION:

2 December 2015: [CEEP Calls for Swift Implementation of Circular Economy Strategy](#)

CONTACT:

Johannes Imminger, Policy Officer Sustainability: Johannes.imminger@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 50

EU URBAN AGENDA

WHAT CEEP SAYS:

- CEEP welcomes that the Dutch Council Presidency emphasises the importance of cities and urban areas in the EU, recognising that a substantial amount of economic growth, creativity and development occurs in urban areas. CEEP will fully support the Presidency's work towards the development of partnerships between stakeholders in order to develop the EU Urban Agenda further and to consolidate the Council Conclusions on the 'Amsterdam Pact'.

- The great importance of cities to cope with the challenges Europe faces today indeed needs to be highlighted more than before. With poor air quality, CO2 emissions and congestion, the need for a secure, sustainable and competitive energy system as well as for modern waste and water management systems are just some of the numerous challenges facing. Acting on all those challenges requires a truly cross-sectoral approach.
- While the challenges cities face are similar, such as poor air quality, noise, congestion, a lack of funds for investment, the policy responses will be different for historical, cultural and topographic reasons among others. The implementation of any urban agenda should integrate sufficient flexibility and freedom for communities and cities in order to adapt policy options to their individual context.

CONTACT:

Johannes Imminger, Policy Officer Sustainability: Johannes.imminger@ceep.eu | +32 2 229 21 50

PROJECTS

Over the past few years, CEEP has managed several projects on the issue of management and anticipation of change in public services. Experience earned in this field now has a very specific value in the context of the management of the crisis in several Member States. CEEP is fully ready to provide 'technical assistance' to enterprises and governments currently facing the need to reform public services at high pace.

CEEP is currently carrying out two main projects as lead applicant:

Training and Promotion of Social dialogue measures for Public services

With the support of CRA UZS, ETUC and in close cooperation with EPSU, CEEP will intake social dialogue activities in countries and sectors with less experience in European social dialogue. This project aims at supporting people in the 12 Countries that have joined the EU since 2004 in two senses: raising their knowledge of EU Labour policy and their ability to be involved at EU level; helping them understand the effects of the cross-industry social partners' agreements, looking at how the implementation of these agreements affect public services in their countries.

Social services in European cross-industry Social dialogue: towards a strong and deeper involvement

This project, dedicated to the analysis of the social services sector at European level, started in 2014, and has a clear objective: it aims at exploring the involvement of social services in cross-industry social dialogue. To reach this goal, partners in the project will deliver a report about the results, main findings and recommendations from the survey that is currently being conducted in 14 EU Member States to map the structure of the potential social dialogue players in social services, in the branches of social services enumerated in the NACE codes.

CEEP is also managing several long-running projects:

- CEEP and its members are strong **promoters of Corporate Social Responsibility in public services** via the CEEP-CSR Label which awards enterprises complying best with CSR. Since 2008, more than 100 enterprises have been awarded the CEEP-CSR Label, the only European CSR label for public services. The procedure for the CEEP CSR Label awarding has been relaunched in December 2015, and will be ongoing until the ceremony, to be held at the end of the year 2016
- CEEP also helps all applying enterprises to **improve their CSR commitments thanks to tailor-made** reports indicating strengths and weaknesses.
- CEEP is also the **founder of the Public Services Employers' Forum (PSEF)**, an informal platform which gathers public services' employers in European sectoral and cross-sectoral social dialogue. Partners of the PSEF are the sectoral employers organisations involved in education, electricity, hospitals and healthcare, local and regional administration, public transport and railways. Partners of the PSEF are CEEP, UITP, CER, EFEE, HOSPEEM, EURELECTRIC, EBU and CEMR.

Contact:

Carlotta Astori, Project Assistant: carlotta.astori@ceep.eu