
Congress 2016 Main motion II – Adopted by the CESI Congress of December 2016

Public services – Delivering results

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Services of general economic interest or public services are essential to guarantee citizens' fundamental rights. They set the frame for democracy, non-discrimination and the rule of law. They represent the values of the EU, and play a crucial role in promoting social and territorial cohesion.¹
- 1.2. Public services guarantee the well-being of people. They stand for wealth by guaranteeing education, health, labour and social protection. They are the corner stones of our societies.
- 1.3. Since 2008, public services have been hit hard by the financial and economic crisis. With significant budget and personnel cuts, the capacity of public services to fulfil their general interest mission has been profoundly affected. The acute refugee crisis has added additional pressure to local, regional and central administrations that were already understaffed and underfinanced.
- 1.4. The responses of the EU and member states to the crisis have not been efficient. Austerity measures have not taken sufficient account of the key role of public services in the short and long term for economic recovery and in building an economically and socially strong and just Europe.
- 1.5. CESI, which represents over five million workers - especially in the public sector - is therefore particularly concerned about current European policies and the future of public services in the EU.

¹ Article 14 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

Hence, CESI will aim to:

2. Guarantee accessible, high-quality and affordable public services

- 2.1. Access to public services is a fundamental right guaranteed to all citizens in EU law.² This includes “a high level of quality, safety and accessibility, equal treatment, the promotion of universal access and of user rights”.³
- 2.2. CESI demands that the EU urgently strengthens the response to the fundamental right of each citizen to have access to high-quality services in establishing a clearly-defined framework for public services.
- 2.3. With regard to rising inequalities, public services must be inclusive. Particular emphasis must therefore be put on the inclusion of vulnerable persons, especially women, the young, the elderly, refugees and migrants.

3. Reinforce the role of public authorities in catering to public interest

- 3.1. States must provide the necessary framework to enable their citizens to pursue their personal development goals and guarantee social security. Not only are states the best placed to guarantee the continuity and quality of public services, this is also one of their core responsibilities.
- 3.2. Private actors will not always fulfil missions of general interest in full impartiality and respect of the rule of law. Many public services have been privatised, especially in the energy, water, public transport, postal and telecommunications sectors – and in some cases, even prisons. Both users and workers suffer from the marketization of public services.
- 3.3. Guaranteeing the cohesion of societies and catering to public interest are of fundamental importance. Safeguarding the proper functioning of public administrations must be an objective priority that cannot be subordinate to any other principle, especially not to purely economic considerations.
- 3.4. CESI calls for the enhancement of the role of states and public administrations in fulfilling tasks, guaranteeing that they are efficiently supplied without any discrimination. In the case of a delegation of tasks, CESI demands that clear quality criteria be established in order to closely monitor the services provided and ensure that economic returns are reinvested in public services.

4. Value public service workers and improve their representatives’ rights

² Article 36 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

³ Article 1 of Protocol n°26 on Services of General Interest.

- 4.1. The employees of public services are the ones who guarantee the citizens' right to good administration. Their work should be held in better regard and granted more value.
- 4.2. In order to guarantee the efficient execution of tasks, public services must take into account the employees' needs, maintain adequate working conditions, ensure employees are in possession of up-to-date skills through the provision of life-long learning opportunities,⁴ guarantee health and safety at work, as well as adequate wages. Changes to the employees' professional environment - especially in case of restructuring - should therefore be organised with their participation and involvement.
- 4.3. CESI strives towards more transparency, information and consultation of workers, especially when changes to the organisation of the services can have an impact on the conditions of employment or when jobs are threatened. Trade unions have an essential role to play in defending and strengthening public services. Hence, CESI will continue to promote the role of public services and their employees, and strongly support the relaunch and extension of national and European social dialogue.

5. Increase investment in public administrations in the aftermath of the crisis

- 5.1. Efficient and high-quality public administrations require competent, equipped, well-resourced and motivated staff. According to the EU Treaty, European institutions shall set the conditions to provide, commission and fund services of general economic interest.⁵ One-sided austerity measures, dictated by the EU's economic governance among other factors, have deprived public services in many member states from essential resources over the past years. Now, it is crucial to drive a political change of paradigm, in order to finally view public services as an investment in people rather than as a cost to society.
- 5.2. Spending on "human capital" brings lasting positive macroeconomic and fiscal returns over time. Social investment contributes to the fight against high unemployment rates, the integration of refugees and of the most vulnerable individuals in our societies. It addresses demographic challenges by leading to an increase in birth rates, internal security, and meeting the Europe 2020 goals. All these elements are vital for greater social cohesion and social justice. Moreover, economies with higher social investments have proven to be more resilient to macroeconomic shocks and perform better in crises.
- 5.3. CESI therefore demands that states start to invest in publicly-owned public services again, and that they engage more in public-public partnerships rather than public-private ones (PPP) and outsourcing. Serious doubts persist regarding the cost-efficiency in the long-term, real interests, and accountability due to a lack of democratic control of PPPs. The financing of

⁴ See Motion 3 on digitalisation.

⁵ Article 14 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

public services must be transparent and accompanied by an active communication strategy promoting high-quality services.

- 5.4. The EU and member states must recognise that in public balances there cannot be spending cuts which may put at risk the proper performance of public administrations. Member states must supply sufficient resources for public services to guarantee they can perform their duties properly; the member states must make the necessary investments in public services.

6. Fight tax fraud and tax evasion to ensure public finances and the respect of the social contract

- 6.1. Tax fraud and tax evasion are detrimental to basic public services. These tax offences contribute to a lack of financial resources in public administrations, undermine fair burden-sharing among tax-payers and prevent the necessary redistributive function of taxation.
- 6.2. The public sector must be based on fair, progressive and efficient taxation. CESI advocates for more political efforts both on the level of the EU and of member states to tackle tax evasion, tax fraud, corruption and to eliminate tax havens.
- 6.3. More investment in tax administrations both in terms of human and material resources and, by extension, in the working conditions of tax workers is urgently needed in order to improve their capacity to effectively collect what is due.
- 6.4. It is also indispensable that member states and EU institutions put an end to the current race to the bottom due to unfair tax competition and make sure that corporations pay their fair share of tax to finance high-quality public services (e.g. by establishing a public country-by-country reporting obligation, a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base and a Financial Transaction Tax).

7. Protect public services from trade agreements

- 7.1. While representing potential tools to support growth and wealth, trade agreements can also represent a risk for decent labour, core social rights, the environment, and health and consumer protection as guaranteed by EU and national laws. Free trade-induced liberalisation pressures can have negative effects on the provision of public services, especially on their extent and quality. They can lead to a drop in customs duties and fees for the states, which has often had as a consequence a negative impact on public services.
- 7.2. CESI recalls the crucial role played by high-quality public services for Europe's position in a world of globalised competition and calls for the explicit exclusion and effective protection of public services from the scope of free trade agreements.