
60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties – A real social dimension as the key to a successful EU

Resolution of the Presidium of the European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI) on the occasion of the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties

European integration stands, again, at a crossroads. All actors must make a particular effort to make sure that the EU does not disintegrate. CESI has been voicing strong calls for a more social Europe for over 25 years.

Likely, time is now or never again for a constructive discussion on the future of European integration, based on the recent White Paper on the future of the EU, the European Commission's contribution to the Rome Summit of March 25 2017, where the EU will discuss its future orientation.

Without explicitly opting for one of the 5 scenarios laid out in the White Paper¹, scenario 2 (the de-regulation agenda) may trigger a race to the bottom for social rights and employment conditions. Moreover, scenario 4 (the neo-liberal programme), may do away with an EU social agenda altogether, despite the fact that growing interconnections of economic, financial and social affairs require a certain cooperation and integration. Recent popular disappointment with the EU and stagnation in social and employment policies may justify scepticism that scenario 1 (carrying on) can be a long-term solution.

Bearing this in mind, EU leaders, heads of state and government and national politicians in the Member States should close ranks with trade unions all over Europe in their call to put the development of a real social dimension at the heart of a successful future EU: Social and economic fairness and equality has become the most important concern of the EU's citizens. They will only accept a European integration project which responds to their needs.

Being aware that democratic legitimacy and mandating mainly occurs through traditional democratic channels at national levels, it is also time for all political actors to be ready to put Europe first – not as a goal in itself but in the very interest of the citizens.

Core components of a better social EU for European workers

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/white_paper_on_the_future_of_europe_en.pdf

- The EU shall become a stronghold against job precariousness and negative impacts of digitalisation. Making use of its legislative competences, the EU shall define ambitious **labour rights and standards for new, flexible and mobile forms of employment as well as for the digitalising world of work**.
- A more transparent and easy-to-use **coordination of social security systems shall** ensure that mobile workers do not lose out on social and employment-related benefits which they have accumulated during their work life.
- European labour law shall guarantee adequate protection levels for all workers, especially in **occupational health and safety** and when it comes to new and emerging **psychosocial risks at work**.
- The EU shall help guaranteeing **minimum wages at national level**, defined according to a minimum percentage of national median wages.
- The EU shall credibly explain why there will be no lower **social, labour, consumer and environmental protection standards via new free trade and investment agreements**.
- EU policies shall prioritise **work-life balance**, based on an equal sharing of domestic responsibilities and high-quality, affordable and accessible care facilities and responding to ageing societies and work-related gender inequalities.
- The EU shall adjust its economic policy mindset and allows significantly more national **investments especially in education and training, health and youth employment**, all vital human capital investments that make societies more just and prosperous in the long-term. Likewise, the EU shall encourage Member States to step up **investments to make public administrations and public services more accessible, better and affordable**, which benefit vulnerable persons, especially women, the young, elderly and migrants. This shall also be financed by means of a serious and successful **common fight against tax avoidance and evasion**.
- The **right to information and consultation** shall apply for all workers, including central administration employees. **Effective social dialogue** in all sectors shall help driving towards a fair and social Europe. All workers must count, and trade union pluralism must be a living principle of freedom and democracy.
- The **full implementation and enforcement of social and employment** legislation must be a reality. Trade unions' efforts to facilitate shall be fully support by authorities and institutions at all levels.