

Brussels / November 18 2021

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**CESI STATEMENT ON A POSSIBLE COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON
ADDRESSING SOCIAL AND LABOUR ASPECTS OF THE JUST TRANSITION
TOWARDS CLIMATE NEUTRALITY**

**FEEDBACK TO A EUROPEAN
COMMISSION ROADMAP**

The European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI) is a confederation of more than 40 national and European trade union organisations from over 20 European countries, with a total of more than 5 million individual members. Founded in 1990, CESI advocates improved employment conditions for workers in Europe and a strong social dimension in the EU. Most of CESI's members represent workers in the fields of central, regional and local administration, education, training and research, security and justice, healthcare, postal services and telecommunications, defence and transport. CESI represents public and private sector unions and is a recognised European social partner organisation.

CESI welcomes the European Commission's initiative to address social and labour aspects of the just transition towards climate neutrality, as part of its European Green Deal.¹

In the context of green and climate change mitigation policies, social targets risk to fall victim to allegedly necessary measures to stay 'economically competitive' and not 'overburden' businesses and employers. After the post-2007 crisis, recent years have seen a shift away from the social and towards climate protection. While climate protection is undoubtedly centrally important to the long-term sustainability of European societies and economies, acute and imminent social problems persist in Europe, also due to green policies, and must not be pushed to the background.

Decarbonising the economy and achieving climate neutrality by 2050 as key aims of the European Green Deal are requiring massive changes of jobs, functions, and tasks in all sectors. It is important to bear in mind the impact on work and labour markets at stake and the magnitude of the ongoing green transformation in terms of the creation of new jobs, the phasing-out and loss of other jobs, and minor to major changes to existing jobs and occupational functions across the economy.

Indeed, social disruptions due to a badly managed transition might severely undermine the ability of the European Green Deal, especially when its adverse impacts are not shared evenly across geographies or sectors, with concentrations of people and communities advantaged and disadvantaged by the transitions with ever increasing inequalities.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13247-Council-Recommendation-on-addressing-social-and-labour-aspects-of-the-just-transition-towards-climate-neutrality_en

Therefore, as the EU agrees to set concrete targets to become climate neutral, it should set equally ambitious targets for social fairness, decent work and equal opportunities in a world which is more and more digital. In analogy to the EU's prospective 'European Green Deal' for climate neutrality, a tangible 'European Social Deal' should be placed in the centre of the EU's activities in the years to come, beyond the European Pillar of Social Rights.

CESI agrees with the dimensions of the initiative which the European Commission proposes in its roadmap to address social and labour aspects of the just transition towards climate neutrality:

1. designing comprehensive policy packages for a just and sustainable green transition, including (a) active support to quality employment; (b) ensure access to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning; (c) support Member States in designing fair tax-benefit and social protection systems; and (d) enable affordable access to essential services for all, including energy and transport, focusing on vulnerable groups and regions;
2. promoting inclusive participation of workers, their representatives, trade unions and social partners, and strengthening monitoring through consistent definitions, concepts and methodologies;
3. making optimal use of public and private funding, including the new Social Climate Fund and cohesion policy funds, and instruments at all levels, to ensure complementarity and coherence.

Beyond policy tools (1) and funding opportunities (3), the second (2) dimension is of particular importance to give workers central voice in the design, planning and implementation of the green transition. While competitiveness, employment and employability as well as skills and training opportunities must be upheld, fair working conditions, social protection, equality and non-discrimination, occupational health & safety, and, above all, trade union recognition and interest representation are of central importance. Transitions will only be successful if they benefit everyone, take adversely affected work into consideration and do not simply load the costs on more vulnerable groups. The green transition must be done 'with' the workers and not 'to' them.

In general, unfortunately, a Council Recommendation, as is envisaged by the European Commission to pursue this initiative, is insufficient to achieve socially fair and sustainable green transitions for workers. Experience has shown that Member States implement (or not) non-binding Recommendations at goodwill. CESI questions the impact that a Recommendation will have.

A more holistic approach and streamlining across EU legislation would instead be necessary, comprising, for instance:

1. further reviewing EU legislation with the aim to better enforce existing legislation and identify legislative gaps to close and make labour markets and working conditions fairer and fit for the green age. A European Pillar of Social Rights was adopted in 2017 in an attempt to mitigate adverse social effects through increasing fragmentations of employment relationships and social protection coverage in the labour markets. Overall, however, when it comes to eradicating social dumping and ensuring decent work for all in the green age, the EU's social dimension is not yet complete. The EU must pay specific attention to:

- a. a framework directive for decent work (beyond the EU directive on transparent and predictable working conditions) which sets minimum floors for high quality, secure and predictable employment all de facto dependent workers, regardless of her or his contractual situation;
 - b. a framework directive for adequate social protection for all, reflecting the EU's 2019 recommendation on access to social protection and providing all de facto dependent workers, regardless of her or his contractual situation, with effective, adequate and affordable social protection entitlements, transparent and easily transferable between jobs, sectors, employment modes and Member States;
 - c. EU legislation which ensures that, in principle, all atypical employment relationships that currently give rise to precarious work or bogus self-employment should entail the same entitlements and benefits as permanent contracts, the only exception being their temporary duration or restricted time of applicability. In this sense, CESI advocates a clearer wording and then a full and uniform application of the EU directives on fixed-term work, temporary agency work and part time work;
2. further measures for a strengthened participation of workers and their representatives in change management, concretely by, for instance:
 - a. boosting information and consultation legislation in Europe;
 - b. improving the functioning of European Works Councils;
 - c. better supporting inclusive social dialogue and trade union pluralism, so that all workers count and no one is left behind;
 - d. enhancing EU funding for strengthened capacity building for EU and national level social partners and trade unions to engage in change management, especially for smaller and independent unions without sufficient own resources to this end;
3. more emphasis in the EU macroeconomic governance system and in EU funding tools, e.g. through the Recovery and Resilience Facility, Just Transition Fund European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, to ensure that the necessary resources and infrastructure are provided to give to the at-risk jobs of today a future. The EU must enable governments to invest in pioneering zero-carbon steel plants, fabrication yards and ports, and domestic supply chains that competitive industries of tomorrow need. Governments must invest, too, in the public sector and infrastructures. As stated by the ILO, just transitions will require *"a country-specific mix of macroeconomic, industrial, sectoral and labour policies that create an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises to prosper and create decent work opportunities by mobilising and directing public and private investment towards environmentally sustainable activities"*.