

Brussels / December 13 2022

EN

## SET-UP AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A EUROPEAN YEAR OF SKILLS 2023

## WRITTEN REACTION TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL ON A EUROPEAN YEAR OF SKILLS 2023 (COM/2022/526 FINAL)

*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 is a recognised European sectoral social partner and advocates improved employment conditions for workers in Europe and a strong social dimension in the EU. Most of CESI's affiliates are employed in the different fields of the European, national, regional and local public services, as well as in privatised services of general interest, but CESI also represent private sector unions.*

CESI welcomes the proposal of the European Commission for a decision by the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament to declare 2023 as the European Year of Skills.<sup>1</sup>

For long, CESI has stressed that a more tailored skilled/re-skilled/upskilled European workforce would help address increasing sectoral shortages of skilled labour as well as inevitable structural economic transitions between sectors as a result of green and digital transformations, and thus secure overall sustainable employment levels in European labour markets and industrial competitiveness in European economies.

In view of the European Commission's proposal for a forthcoming European Year of Skills 2023, CESI:

- welcomes, in Article 2, the “the overall objective of the European Year shall be to further promote a mindset of reskilling and upskilling”, but regrets an exclusive focus on “boosting competitiveness of European companies, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises”. Next to the private sector, the public sector, in particular public services and administrations, also face serious and increasing staff and skills shortages and often find themselves unable to compete for skills and talent with the private sector. **Before adopting the proposal the European Parliament and Council should amend it to bring in a clear skills perspective for the public sector.**
- approves of the horizontal approach, in Article 2, that nobody must be left behind in green-digital transitions and benefit from more effective and inclusive investment into training and upskilling, job-to-job transitions and active ageing. CESI particularly welcomes a focus, in recital 12, on active labour market policies – which skills policy are a core component of – and an emphasis on a comprehensive implementation of the recent Council Recommendation on Effective Active Support to Employment (EASE).<sup>2</sup> However, CESI disapproves of singling out, in Article 2(3) an

<sup>1</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022PC0526>

<sup>2</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021H0402>

incomplete set of selected vulnerable groups that need a specific focus, namely NEETs and women. In line with the description of the proposal preceding the articles, **before adopting the proposal the European Parliament and Council should amend it to ensure that the European Year of Skills should feature equally and not discriminate between groups of vulnerable persons**, spanning, most importantly, not only to women and NEETs but also to the disabled, migrant workers, older workers and workers from ethnic minorities that often find themselves less able to access and remain in labour markets.

- agrees with the commitment of policy makers, in Article 2(2), to involve social partners in the shaping, design, roll-out and implementation of the Year of Skills, but regrets that the process leading to the European Commission's proposal has been ad-hoc, untransparent, unannounced and of top-down nature from policy making. Skills shortages has been a long-standing challenge in Europe, and it is disappointing that the Year was announced by European Commission President von der Leyen unexpectedly in September, to be followed by a legislative proposal for the Year by the European Commission only four weeks after. Social partners and other interested stakeholders had no opportunity to prepare for input, ideas and suggestions before the announcement earlier during the year, and in late September and early October time was short to engage meaningfully. Moreover, there was no formal ex-ante consultation process. **CESI suggests that future Years should be set in a more timely, inclusive and transparent manner and urges the EU institutions to ensure meaningful and level-playing-field engagement of social partners and other stakeholders in the roll-out of the Year in 2023.**
- concurs with the wide range of awareness-raising activities that could and should be pursued during the Year, as laid out in Article 3. As a recognised sectoral European social partner organisation and interest group representing the voice of more than five million workers across Europe, CESI pledges to contribute to the European Year of Skills in 2023 in joint social partner activities as well as through own actions that aim to raise awareness about the Year among members and affiliates as well as bring their related interests and issues to the attention of the public and policy makers in particular. CESI's activities will:
  1. cover horizontal matters related to skills.
  2. address the needs of specific groups of workers including among the youth, women, disabled persons, migrants, older persons, and people from ethnic minorities.
  3. focus on sectoral issues the interests of member unions and affiliates in sectors where CESI is most active: public administrations, health and care services, defence, education, and telecoms and postal services.

**CESI suggests that the European Commission, as initiator and coordinator of the Year, should make dedicated funding available for European social partners to carry out actions under the Year, with transparent and equal access for all recognised social partners, sectoral and horizontal ones alike.**