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Strong voices, shared priorities – reflecting on a demanding October

Editorial by Secretary General Klaus Heeger



Dear members, partners and friends,

The tragic train accident near Urda, Spain, on 28 October has brought sorrow to the close of this month. Our thoughts are with the victims, their families and everyone affected.

We stand alongside our train drivers affiliates represented in Spain by our member union SEMAF and all over Europe by our member federation ALE, and express our solidarity with train drivers, railway staff, emergency responders and the health workforce. Those affected deserve support and a thorough investigation, without speculation or premature blame.

Solidarity is our DNA, and my participation in the ALE Congress in Warsaw, the Valorian Congress in Madrid, and the celebration of SATSE's 40th anniversary, also in Madrid, impressively showcased the determination of our colleagues to give their workforce a stronger voice.

I visited our French public sector union FP CFE-CGC in Paris, following the much-noted demonstrations in the country of 17 October. The social grievances behind these protests deserve serious answers, and peaceful protest must remain protected. But legitimate anger cannot justify violence, intimidation or destruction. We stand with those affected, including public servants carrying out their duties. The response must be dialogue and concrete solutions – not escalation.

Our PillACT project events in Romania and Serbia brought the European Pillar of Social Rights closer to workplace realities, focusing on education with our Romanian colleagues and healthcare with our Serbian members. Alongside our DIALOGUE+ project conference with SATSE in Madrid, these exchanges demonstrate how European commitments and social dialogue can support better working conditions and stronger worker representation.

Our CESI Youth and our CESI Seniors also met this month. Their engagement reminds us that solidarity must span every generation: A stronger social Europe must support people throughout their working lives and into retirement.

October's World Teachers' Day, World Post Day and International Day of Care and Support recognise the people whose work sustains our societies. To our members in education, postal services and care: Your contribution remains central to our agenda. Recognition must mean fair pay, sustainable workloads and properly resourced services – not mere appreciation.

The coming weeks will provide opportunities to put these priorities into practice. On the occasion of the European Civil Protection Forum, a delegation of more than 20 firefighters from CESI's member unions is expected in Brussels with a clear message: protecting the public starts with protecting those who respond to emergencies. Adequate staffing, equipment, training and occupational health protection must be central to preparedness.

At the Reshaping Work conference in Amsterdam on 12-13 November, I will make the case for AI shaped through social dialogue. Our message is clear: Workers must help shape change before it is imposed.

Technology should support professional judgement and improve working lives – not justify understaffing or intrusive surveillance. Our current joint workshops series with Reshaping Work on the implementation of the Platform Work Directive (to be transposed into national laws in December) focus on how to turn European rules on employment status and algorithmic management into effective protection.

Education will also feature prominently at CESI during the next weeks. Alongside a meeting our statutory Expert Commission on Education in mid-November, a public CESI@noon discussion will examine findings from the OECD TALIS survey, which asked teachers and school leaders about working conditions and learning environments, and the recent PISA study. What do these results tell us and what are our teachers' demands? Our purpose is not simply to compare rankings, but to understand what teachers and learners need to succeed.

Meanwhile, our Commissions on Employment and on Women's Rights will advance our work on key EU policies touching gender equality, employment and social affairs, while my participation in the European Movement International's upcoming General Assembly will reinforce our commitment to a democratic and socially ambitious Europe.

These are representative examples of our work in the last and the coming weeks, not an exhaustive calendar. And I thank everyone and all our member unions for their commitment, participation and support.

Highlights

Dialogue+ conference in Madrid organised by CESI and SATSE

In Madrid, on 14 October 2026, the European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI), together with its Spanish member organisation SATSE, brought together trade union representatives and European stakeholders, including member of the European Parliament Alicia Homs and Eurofound, for a regional conference organised in the framework of the EU co-funded DIALOGUE+ project.



Read the article

CESI welcomes strengthened Carcinogens Directive

The revised EU directive strengthens worker protections against carcinogenic substances, by introducing new exposure limits and explicitly recognising the risks faced by firefighters and emergency services personnel. CESI calls for practical guidance and effective implementation to ensure these improvements translate into safer working conditions.



Read our analysis

Positions

Ambitious EU Quality Jobs Act needed

In its contribution to the European Commission’s second-phase consultation, CESI calls for a Quality Jobs Act that strengthens workers’ rights, workplace safety, enforcement and social dialogue.



Read the position

CESI calls for rights-based measures to remove barriers to employment

In its response to a European Commission consultation on the activation of people facing barriers to employment, CESI calls for measures that prioritise quality jobs, adequate social protection and performing public services to help people access jobs.



Read the position

Other news

CESI welcomes European Parliament's push for new rules on psychosocial risks at work

Earlier this month, the European Parliament adopted a report calling for strong protection to prevent and reduce psychosocial risks at work, including stress, burnout, and associated physical and mental health disorders. The resolution reflects substantial priorities that CESI advocated during negotiations on the text.



Read the article

CESI Youth demands reflected in new Council recommendation on housing

On October 19, the Council adopted a Recommendation on addressing housing exclusion and homelessness, marking another step towards a stronger European response to the housing crisis - a concern especially of young persons and workers across Europe.



Read the article

CESI supports European Parliament's call for greater recognition of Vocational Education and Training

CESI welcomes a new report by the European Parliament to strengthen the status of VET and VET teachers. The own-initiative report calls to for increased investment and support across the EU, ahead of the European Commission's forthcoming European VET Strategy.



Read the article

Events

Strengthening health workers rights in Serbia

In the lead up to the Serbian elections, CESI and its Sebian member union SLFS held an event on employment in the health care sector in Serbia and the Balkan region.The conference explored how the European Pillar of Social Rights and social dialogue tools can support improvements in working conditions, collective bargaining and trade union freedoms, particularly in the context of Serbia’s EU accession process.



Read the article

CESI Seniors meet to debate EU intergenerational polices

At its annual meeting on October 14-15, the CESI Seniors discussed EU intergenerational policies and a draft resolution calling for greater attention to older workers and retired persons in the implementation of the EU Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness.



Read the article

Placing the Pillar of Social Rights in the Romanian education sector

Earlier this month, CESI and it's Romanian member 'Union of Free Trade Unions in Pre-University Education of Iași' (USLIP Iași) brought together trade union representatives, policymakers, social partners and European experts to discuss the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in the Romanian education sector.



Read the article

Empowering the next generation of trade unionists

Young workers' representatives from across Europe gathered in Brussels on 29 September for the EU co-funded PillACT CESI Youth Training, strengthening their knowledge, networks and capacity to turn European social rights into meaningful action at national level.



Read the article

Online Workshops on the Platform Work Directive

In October, CESI and Reshaping Work held the first two online workshops in our joint series on the transposition of the Platform Work Directive, covering the employment status of platform workers and algorithmic management. The next workshop, on 20 November, will explore social protection, enforcement and the role of social partners in turning the Directive's provisions into effective protection for platform workers.



Projects

DIALOGUE+: Empowering Trade Unions

DIALOGUE+

EMPOWERING TRADE UNIONS

Discover DIALOGUE+

News from CESI Members

EPAYPS Advocates for Firefighters in Greece

Last week, CESI's Greek member union EPAYPS reported of a high level meeting between a delegation of EPAYPS leadership and the Greek Minister for Climate Crisis and Civil Protection. The meeting provided an opportunity for direct dialogue between Fire Service personnel representatives and Greece’s political leadership, following a wildfire season that placed significant demands on the workforce.



Read more

Celebrating 40 years of SATSE

Following our joint Dialogue+ conference in Madrid, CESI joined SATSE in celebrating its 40th anniversary. We congratulate our Spanish member union on this milestone and its four decades of commitment to defending the rights and interests of healthcare professionals.



ALE Congress in Warsaw

In late September, ALE, the European Train Drivers' Union, held its 10th Congress, electing Diego Martín Fernández as President and Daniel Biernacik and Vincenzo Multari as Vice-Presidents.

CESI congratulates the newly elected leadership and looks forward to continued cooperation to strengthen the voice of train drivers in European policymaking and promote safe, fair working conditions across the railway sector.



First Congress of Valorian

Valorian held its first Congress, bringing together more than 800 attendees and re-electing Miguel Venegas as President. CESI congratulates Miguel Venegas on his re-election and Valorian on this important milestone, and looks forward to continued cooperation in defending workers' rights and strengthening trade union representation.



About CESI

The European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI) is a confederation of independent trade union organisations from more than 20 European countries and 4 European trade union organisations, with a total of more than 6 million individual members.

Founded in 1990, CESI is a recognised EU-level social partner and advocates improved employment conditions for workers in Europe as well as a strong social dimension in the EU. CESI's particular strength lies in the public sector but CESI also represents private-sector workers.

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