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PUBLIC SERVICES PROVIDERS AND EMPLOYERS RESTATE THEIR SUPPORT TO THE EUROPEAN PROJECT

At the very time when the European Union is at a crossroads, CEEP wants to restate its full commitment to the European project and commit to “doing its share” within the limit of its competences, declared today Hans-Joachim Reck and Valeria Ronzitti, commenting the Council Conclusions and the press conference of Jean-Claude Juncker.

CEEP President and General Secretary highlighted in particular the following points:

On the efforts towards an agreement on Greece:

“It is not for us to take a stand on the final result of negotiations and it is for Greek citizens to decide on 5 July about the future of Greece. We can only acknowledge that a great number of the reforms mentioned in the offer published by the European Commission on Sunday 28 June touch upon key public services, whether public administrations or Services of General Economic Interest. In this respect, CEEP offers the experience and knowledge of its members who are core providers of those services all over Europe. Many of them have, are, or will undergo major changes, and that is why we are constantly engaged in a process of benchmarking and sharing of best practices to support public services providers in their restructuring and change processes. We feel the duty to do the same in the Greek context, as the responsibility of increasing effectiveness and efficiency of public services lies primarily on public services providers. Reforming Greek public services, in order to make them capable of answering to the Greek people’s needs in a responsible way: We believe that it is part of the solution, and CEEP stands ready to provide its support.”

On the completion of the Digital Single Market:

“We welcome the orientations given in the Council Conclusions of 25 and 26 of June and are ready here too to do our share, as the digitalisation of public services can be a key driver for effectiveness and efficiency. A new generation of public services is about to emerge and it is not all and only about e-government. Digitalisation supports the full spectrum of Services of General Interest, ranging from energy and water to education and healthcare. But the access to those services is directly linked to the quality of the connection to networks which remains an issue in many rural areas in Europe. This is why our commitment towards modernization alone is not enough: There is a clear need to connect rural areas to broadband networks, or we might end up with citizens left on the side of the ‘digital revolution’. However, connecting rural areas does not provide a high return on investment, and is not an attractive economic prospect for services providers, hence the need to set up incentives to encourage such

investments, for instance through more flexible state aid rules that we now urge the European Commission to consider.”

On the Country Specific Recommendations and ongoing structural reforms:

We welcome the new timeline for the publication of the country-specific recommendations and euro area analysis. It is more than a technicality: this new method allowed for deeper discussion with Member States and social partners, increasing the sense of ownership of EU governance at national, regional and local levels. But it is still not enough: the direction of future country-specific recommendations should aim at improving the balance between the main goals of delivering ambitious structural reforms, pursuing responsible fiscal policies aiming at short-term stabilisation, and long-term sustainability, investments and growths. In this respect, we welcome the focus given by the five Presidents’ report on the completion of the EMU. Today, that report acquires an increased relevance and meaning. Setting up a euro area treasury accountable at the European level is a great step, not only for the completion of the EMU, but for the EU project as a whole.”

“To conclude, we sincerely hope the EU will come out stronger from the current discussions and count on the institutions to do their utmost best to strengthen the European Union and the values of the European project. This would be perfectly in line with the principles and values promoted by Jacques Delors, who was so rightly invested the title of “Honorary Citizen of Europe” by the Council of 25 and 26 June.”

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CEEP, European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services, is one of the three general cross-sectoral European Social Partners. It gathers public and private providers of services of general interest from across Europe. CEEP members contribute to more than 26% of EU GDP and employ 30% of the EU workforce.