

EESC achievements

looking back, looking forward

2018



European Economic and Social Committee

This brochure is based largely on the *Annual Activity Report 2018*, issued in June 2019, which is the European Economic and Social Committee's main annual tool for reporting to the budgetary authority. Additional source materials include the EESC Statistics 2018 publication produced by the Communication Department, its digital publication on the 60th Anniversary, website and social media content, and general events at the Committee throughout 2018.

The *full Annual Activity Report* can be viewed here: www.eesc.europa.eu/en/about

© coverpage: Shutterstock/Rawpixel.com

© page 10-11: Shutterstock

© page 16-17: Shutterstock

© page 31: Ljiljana Cumura, Association Danube – Networkers for Europe (DANET) e.V.

© page 31: Milena Popova, Association Danube – Networkers for Europe (DANET) e.V.

© page 37: Shutterstock/chones

© page 54-55: Shutterstock

© page 58-59: Shutterstock

FOREWORD

Dear readers,

I am delighted to introduce this brochure, which sets out some of the highlights of the European Economic and Social Committee's work in 2018. This time, we have focused on shining a spotlight on the Committee's unique characteristics within the European Union and its institutions. This is an opportunity to take stock of what we have achieved and of the impact our work has had across Europe, on our members, on the civil society organisations that they represent and on European lawmakers. It is also an occasion for some soul-searching on how we can improve what we do and how we work.

A number of milestone events had a major impact in 2018. Developments regarding Brexit caused our members to explore their potential impact. Issues carefully monitored by our institution included cybersecurity, migration, worrying trends in the rule of law within the EU and in international trade relations outside it, and a weak economic recovery. We also focused on various positive notes: 2018 was the EESC's 60th anniversary and the European Year of Cultural Heritage, which showcased Europe's rich and shared cultural heritage. 2018 was also a year when we did our utmost to put across our view of the EU as a global leader in sustainable development.



The issues and challenges we all face today demand a collective response – both inside the Brussels policy-making machinery and, importantly, around it, where organised civil society is taking part in the debates that affect their lives. This is where the Committee excels, thanks to its ability to achieve a consensus through ceaseless dialogue.

This annual report is one of the many tools available to us to communicate our work. Last year, we welcomed nearly 10 000 visitors, issued over 100 publications, held 15 cultural events and organised flagship events and communication campaigns. Open hearings, specialised events, conferences and seminars on specific EU policies also enabled us to reach out to our institutional partners and to EU civil society at large.

This brochure is every bit as much a statement of principles and goals as it is a snapshot of what we have achieved during the year. It illustrates our ongoing efforts to fulfil the mission we were given more than 60 years ago. It is also an opportunity to look ahead and learn the lessons that will ensure that the Committee continues to be the active and alert voice of civil society in Europe. We hope you enjoy reading about what the EESC does for you and what it means going forward in the ambitious European venture we all share.

Gianluca Brunetti
Secretary-General of the European Economic and Social Committee

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	3
FIRST THINGS FIRST	9
WHAT IS THE EESC?	10
WHAT ARE THE EESC'S OBJECTIVES?	10
WHAT IS ORGANISED CIVIL SOCIETY?	11
HOW IS CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTED?	11
HOW IS THE EESC ORGANISED?	12
THE MACHINERY BEHIND THE EESC	14
HOW THE EESC TAKES ACTION	15
EESC AT A GLANCE 2018	19
EESC AT A GLANCE 2018	20
EESC PLENARIES – WHO SAID WHAT AND WHY?	24
WORKING HAND IN HAND – TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE	28
EVENTS TO REMEMBER	30
PRIORITIES AND MAJOR THEMES IN 2018	33
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION	34
SUSTAINABLE GROWTH FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL	36
TRANSITION TO A LOW-CARBON COMPETITIVE ECONOMY AND SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AND MOBILITY	38
FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW	40
CHANGING THE WORLD OF WORK IN A STRONGER SOCIAL EUROPE	41
SWITCHING TO A JOINED-UP POLICY ON MIGRATION	43
STRONGER CIVIL SOCIETY GLOBALLY	44
SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COHESION	45
STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION	47
FOCUS ON COMMUNICATION	51
SOME HOUSEKEEPING	56



For 60 years the @EU_EESC has been the bridge between #civilsociety and the EU, promoting the development of a more participatory EU and the values on which Europe is founded.

On 24 May we celebrate the 60 years of the Committee!
Follow #EESC60 and stay tuned!





The EESC – 60 years of commitment Civil society in action for tomorrow's Europe

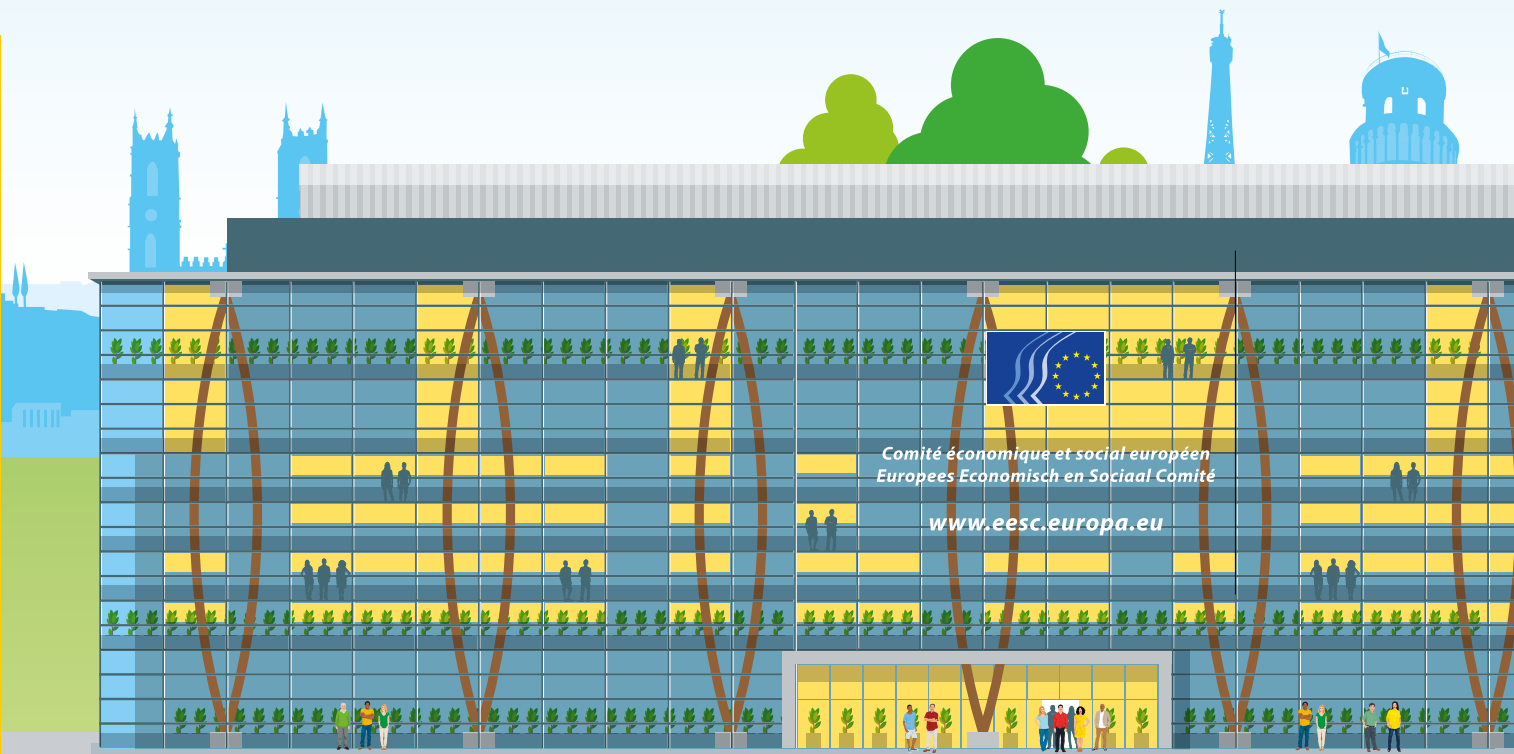
On 24 May 2018, we celebrated the EESC's 60th anniversary.

The Committee held its first session on 19 May 1958 in the Belgian Senate. In the early days, we had 'parliamentary features' and our members were seated in three groups representing employers, workers and other interests.

Six decades on and the EESC is now the bridge between civil society and the EU, promoting a more participatory society and the values on which the EU was founded.

Read our digital publication looking back over sixty years of the Committee's commitment to involving civil society, in all its diversity, **in the building of Europe, highlighting its successes, its great achievements, its added value and its vision for the future of Europe:**

www.eesc.europa.eu/CivilSocietyActionForTomorrowsEurope/





FIRST THINGS FIRST

WHAT IS THE EESC?

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is an EU advisory body. It was established just over 60 years ago to advise European decision-makers: it delivers **opinions** to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission. The EESC ensures that ordinary citizens have a say in Europe's development. A unique body, it provides a forum for consultation, dialogue and consensus among representatives from the various sectors of 'organised civil society'.

WHAT ARE THE EESC'S OBJECTIVES?

The EESC is committed to European integration. It helps strengthen the EU's democratic legitimacy and effectiveness by enabling civil society organisations from the Member States to express their views at European level.

In other words

The EESC has a mission to give organised civil society a voice in Europe.

But how do we do that?

First, we help to ensure that **European policies and legislation** tie in better with economic, social and civic situations on the ground by advising the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission. We do this by making use of EESC members' experience and stimulating dialogue and efforts to secure consensus, which serves the general interest of the EU.

Second, we promote the development of a **more participatory EU** that is more in touch with public opinion, by acting as an institutional forum representing, informing, expressing the views of and securing dialogue with organised civil society.

Third, we promote the **values** on which European integration is founded and advance the cause of democracy – particularly participatory democracy – as well as the role of civil society organisations, in Europe and around the world.



WHAT IS ORGANISED CIVIL SOCIETY?

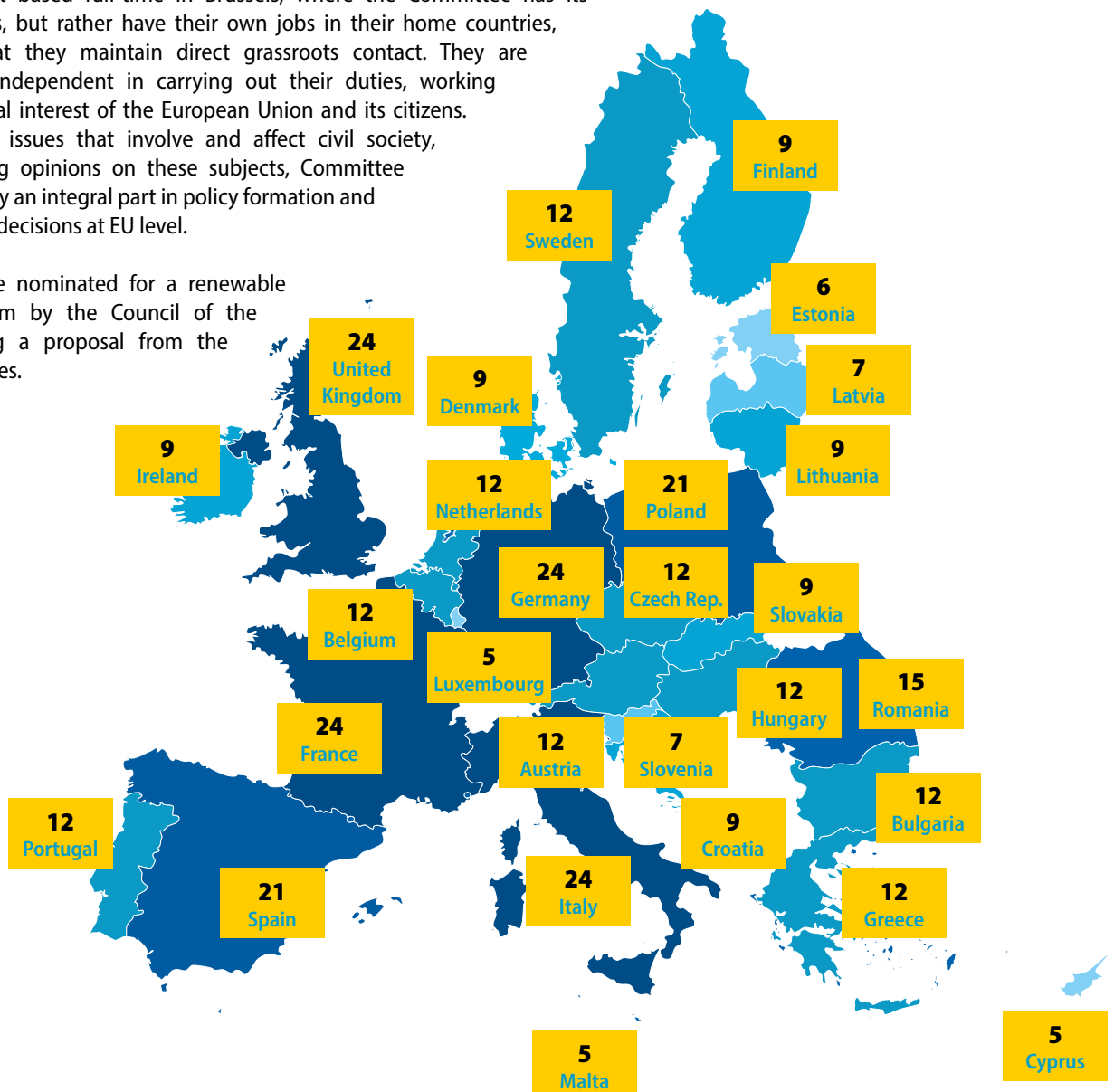
Civil society covers a wide range of organisations and the activities they undertake to improve the well-being of their members or communities. Networks, associations, non-governmental organisations, interest groups and movements come together to take forward their common interests through collective action. These groups often act as intermediaries between decision-makers and the public, offering an avenue for people to play an active role in seeking meaningful change or support good causes.

HOW IS CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTED?

The EESC is made up of **350 members** from the **28 Member States**. They are not politicians but employers, trade unionists and representatives of professional and community associations, farmers, youth organisations, women's groups, consumer associations, environmental campaigns and many more. They come from all social and professional backgrounds and have a vast range of knowledge and experience.

They are not based full-time in Brussels, where the Committee has its headquarters, but rather have their own jobs in their home countries, ensuring that they maintain direct grassroots contact. They are completely independent in carrying out their duties, working in the general interest of the European Union and its citizens. By debating issues that involve and affect civil society, and adopting opinions on these subjects, Committee members play an integral part in policy formation and in preparing decisions at EU level.

Members are nominated for a renewable five-year term by the Council of the EU following a proposal from the Member States.



HOW IS THE EESC ORGANISED?

EESC members work in three groups:

Employers' Group
Group I

Workers' Group
Group II

Diversity Europe Group
Group III

The key is building consensus between all three so that opinions reflect the economic and social interests of Europeans.

Employers' Group

This group brings together European delegates for employers and entrepreneurs, with a mandate from employer and business organisations in the EU Member States. Its members are active in the business world, putting their own experience to good use and helping to further the European venture. They advocate and work for a business environment that strengthens the competitiveness of European enterprises, encourages entrepreneurship and provides **favourable conditions for innovating, investing, operating and trading**. Accordingly, they call for a strong EU founded on cohesion and unity. The group works closely with Europe's major business organisations: BusinessEurope, CEEP, EUROCHAMBRES, EuroCommerce, SMEunited and Copa-Cogeca.

Workers' Group

This group is made up of representatives from more than 80 national trade unions, confederations and sectoral federations. It is firmly committed to the enlargement and strengthening of the EU as an area of prosperity, freedom and democracy, mutual support, solidarity and social cohesion, and aims to ensure that **workers play a real part in European policymaking**. Although the European social model is an example for much of the world, there are still too many people suffering from hardship or social exclusion because of poverty, discrimination, lack of education or other disadvantages. Group II's priorities are full employment, better living and working conditions, and the well-being of all EU citizens, as well as that of workers and their families outside the EU.

Diversity Europe Group

This group ensures that the EESC gives a voice to the concerns of various social, environmental, economic and cultural organisations that make up civil society in the EU. Its goal is to achieve **diversity in democracy, promoting consensus-building and civic engagement**. The group represent farmers' organisations, small businesses, the crafts sector, social economy actors (cooperatives, foundations and non-profit associations), consumer and environmental organisations, associations representing the family and the voluntary sector, women's and gender equality issues, youth, minority and underprivileged groups, people with disabilities, the liberal professions and the scientific and academic communities.

Presidency and political bodies

Audit Committee

Pedro ALMEIDA FREIRE (GR I)
 Jack O'CONNOR (GR II)
 Michał Grzegorz MODRZEJEWSKI (GR III)



President
Luca JAHIER
 Diversity Europe Group

Quaestors

Dimitris DIMITRIADIS (GR I)
 Laure BATUT (GR II)
 Bernardo HERNÁNDEZ BATALLER (GR III)



Vice-President
Milena ANGELOVA
 Employers' Group

Commission for financial and budgetary affairs

BUREAU
 39 members



Vice-President
Isabel CAÑO AGUILAR
 Workers' Group

Communication Commission



President
Jacek KRAWCZYK

Employers' Group
 Group I (117 members)



President
Oliver RÖPKE

Workers' Group
 Group II (120 members)

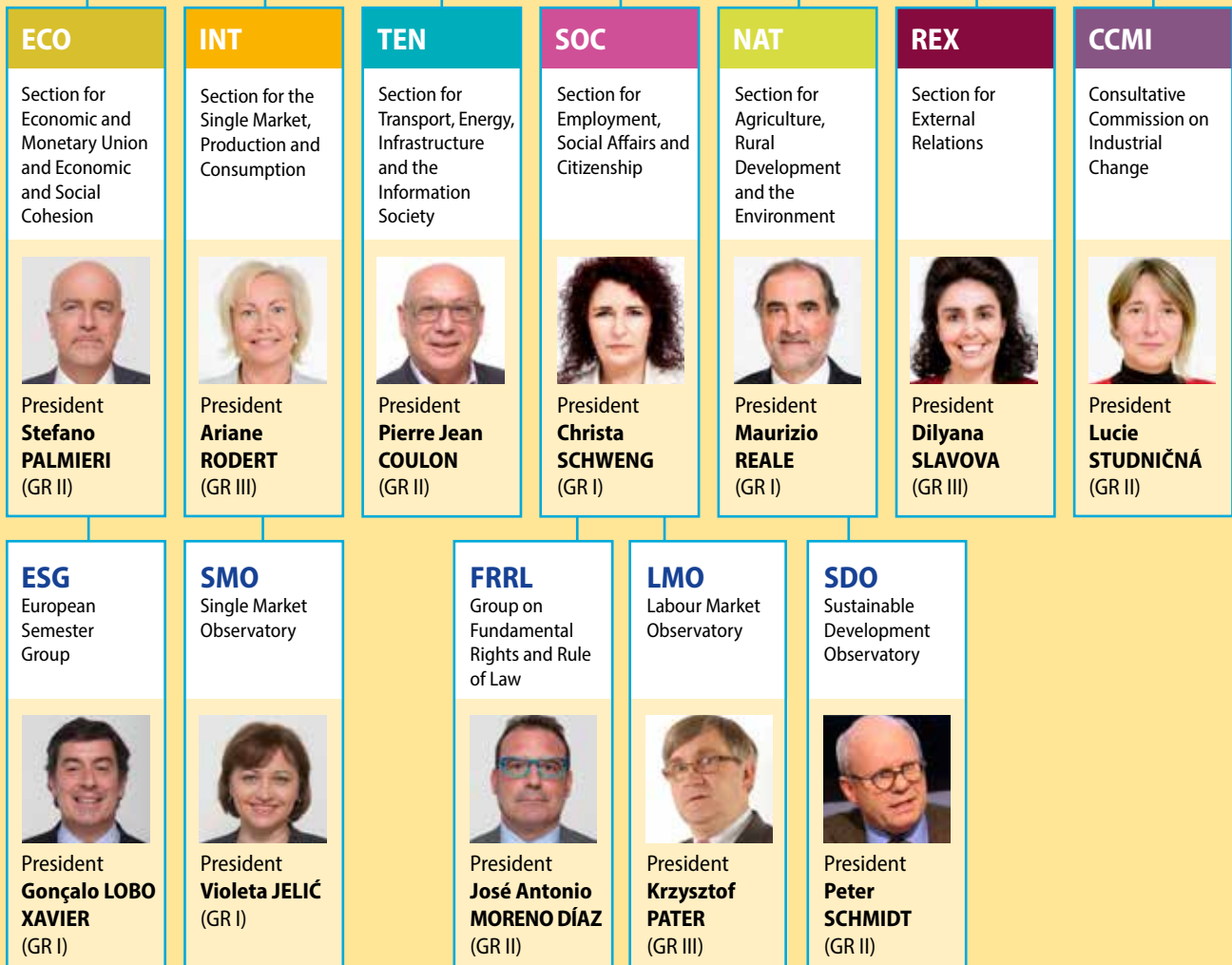


President
Arno METZLER

Diversity Europe Group
 Group III (111 members)

ASSEMBLY

350 members



PRESIDENCY

GROUPS

SECTIONS & OTHER BODIES

THE MACHINERY BEHIND THE EESC

Working bodies

The EESC has **six sections** specialising in different policies: agriculture and the environment; the single market; social issues; economic issues; energy, transport and IT infrastructure; and external policies of the EU. Members participate in one or more of these sections depending on their areas of expertise, and it is here that most of the groundwork on opinions is carried out. The Committee also has a Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI), which monitors EU industry's ability to anticipate and adapt to the impact of globalisation. The EESC has set up three specialist observatories – on the single market, the labour market and sustainable development – plus a group focusing on the European Semester which takes account of proposals from European civil society on growth and employment, and another group on fundamental rights and the rule of law.



Presidency and the Bureau

Every two and a half years, the EESC elects a **Bureau** that includes a president, two vice-presidents, the presidents of the three groups and a variable number of members. The Bureau's main task is to organise and coordinate the work of the EESC's various bodies and to lay down policy guidelines. The president directs all the work of the Committee and represents the EESC in its relations with other institutions and bodies. The two vice-presidents are responsible for the budget and communication, respectively.

The President

Taking office in April 2018, Luca Jahier (IT) launched an agenda for change based on three priorities – **sustainable development, peace and culture** – which were structured around initiatives harnessing what he described as a “*vast and powerful humanistic movement that would allow the EU to bring to fruition the new transformative revolutions of the 21st century*”.



Here are our @EESC_President's priorities for a unifying agenda for the future - to give #rEUnaissance a real chance!

- 1 Sustainable Development
- 2 Peace
- 3 Culture
- 4 Youth

Let's dare to imagine a new world - a vision for a positive EU narrative!



60 1958 2018

“Europe needs today a new renaissance! My priority is the adoption of a new agenda to dare a sustainable Europe, restoring the value of peace, untapping the potential of culture, putting young people at the forefront!”

Luca Jahier
EESC President 2018-2020

rEUnaissance
Dare a sustainable Europe



Practising what we preach in gender balance

The EESC's new leadership has many women in key roles. For the first time in its history, two EESC vice-presidents are women: Isabel Caño Aguilar (ES) and Milena Angelova (BG). Christa Schweng (AT) heads the section covering social affairs (SOC), one of the Committee's main policy areas, while Ariane Rodert (SE) is at the helm of the section dealing with internal market and consumer issues (INT). They join Dilyana Slavova (BG) and Lucie Studničná (CZ), who have been leading the external relations (REX) section and the Consultative Commission for Industrial Change (CCMI) respectively since the beginning of the current term of office (2015-2020), and Violeta Jelić (HR) is leading the Single Market Observatory.



A year before the European elections, we need to listen to the people of our continent. Half of them think there should be more women in political decision-making positions, with seven out of ten in favour of legal measures to ensure parity between men and women in politics. It is time to break the glass ceiling. Many talk about it – I have decided to do it. We must practise what we preach.

EESC President Luca Jahier, blog

Secretary-general

In November 2018, Gianluca Brunetti was appointed the EESC's new secretary-general. The chief role of the secretary-general is to implement decisions made by the Committee's Assembly, the Bureau and the president. He is also responsible for managing the administration and the budget, and assisting members in carrying out their duties.

HOW THE EESC TAKES ACTION

Under EU treaties, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission are obliged to consult the EESC on a wide range of policy issues when passing new legislation. These three institutions may also consult the Committee whenever they consider it appropriate. The EESC examines the proposals it receives and then draws up and, in the course of **nine annual plenary sessions** held in Brussels, adopts **opinions** based on an agreement reached between its members. Once adopted, its opinions are forwarded to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission and published in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

The EESC also has the option to draft **own-initiative opinions** on any question pertaining to the EU, its policies and their possible development. It also issues **exploratory opinions** in response to requests from the presidencies of the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament in spheres where these think it has the appropriate skills and expertise, and which are of concern to Europeans. The EESC may also draw up **information reports** examining any aspect relevant to EU policies, which are sent to the European institutions.

An opinion is born



OR



REFERRAL
by the European
Parliament, the Council
or the Commission

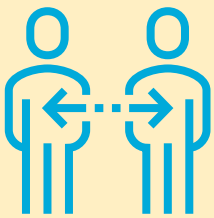
OR

OWN-INITIATIVE
by the EESC

AUTHORISED
by the Bureau

SECTIONS
confirm a rapporteur
and study group

DRAFTING
by the rapporteur with
study group input



DISCUSSION
and adoption by the
sections/CCMI

ADOPTION
by the assembly during
the plenary session

SENT
to the EU institutions

AND

PUBLISHED
in the EU's *Official
Journal* (24 languages)

Rapporteur **PRESENTS**
key findings and
PROMOTES the
opinion at EU, Member
State and local levels





EESC AT A GLANCE 2018

EESC AT A GLANCE 2018

We keep up with what civil society is following – the things that inspire, drive and sometimes frustrate you. In 2018, there was no shortage of such topics with some already on the radar while others are only just starting to gather momentum. As one of the smaller EU institutions in the heart of Brussels, but with its members living all over the continent, the EESC is able to track and respond to the issues that concern you most.

The EESC is active in areas most affecting citizens



Enough words. More action!

Where can you find the EESC's opinions?

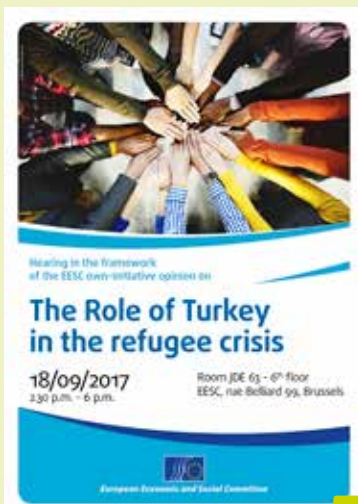
- on the Committee's website at www.eesc.europa.eu
- in the *Official Journal of the EU* at eur-lex.europa.eu

Total number of opinions and reports, five year trend

2018	▶	215
2017	▶	155
2016	▶	151
2015	▶	117
2014	▶	154

Opinions: Top four 'hot topics' in 2018

Reviewing the most consulted opinions on the website tells us what drives you...



The role of Turkey in the refugee crisis
own-initiative opinion,
rapporteur:
Dimitris Dimitriadis



Artificial intelligence: anticipating its impact on work to ensure a fair transition
own-initiative opinion,
rapporteur:
Franca Salis-Madinier



Effects of digitalisation on service industries and employment
own-initiative opinion,
rapporteur:
Wolfgang Greif,
co-rapporteur:
Hannes Leo

The situation of women with disabilities
exploratory opinion
requested by the
European Parliament,
rapporteur:
Gunta Anča



... and this knowledge helps us shape and refine how we represent organised civil society going forward



Turkey has played and continues to play a particularly crucial and decisive role in the refugee crisis, which has become one of the EU's main 'unresolved' problems ... It has endeavoured to tackle the problem using its own resources, albeit with additional help from the EU and the international community.

Dimitris Dimitriadis,
rapporteur of the opinion

The role of Turkey in the refugee crisis

(own-initiative opinion, rapporteur: Dimitris Dimitriadis)

The EESC calls for uniform protection of refugees in Turkey and for the establishment of a mechanism to monitor compliance by both sides with the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement on Refugees. Despite recognising Turkey's efforts in hosting more than three million refugees, the EESC stressed the need for Turkey to grant them the non-discriminatory protection required by international law.



It is not ethically acceptable for a human being to be controlled by AI or be seen as the underling of a machine which issues orders on how, when and what kind of tasks should be performed. However, at times it would seem that we have already crossed that particular ethical Rubicon.

Franca Salis Madinier,
rapporteur of the opinion

Artificial intelligence: anticipating its impact on work to ensure a fair transition

(own-initiative opinion, rapporteur: Franca Salis-Madinier)

The EU needs to ensure that the artificial intelligence (AI) revolution does not endanger quality of work in Europe. Interaction between workers and machines must be regulated in such a way that humans never become underlings to machines, argues the EESC. While AI can relieve workers of boring, repetitive or even dangerous tasks, the EESC feels that it is crucial to define the relationship between humans and machines, how autonomous the latter can be, and how they will complement the work performed by human beings.



Effects of digitalisation on service industries and employment

(own-initiative opinion, rapporteur: Wolfgang Greif, co-rapporteur: Hannes Leo)

Digital technologies have reached a degree of maturity that allows their use across a wide range of economic sectors, transforming how people work in manufacturing and service industries. More than 50% of the EU workforce use ICT in their daily work, with individual EU Member States reaching rates above 85%. These processes of digitalisation challenge several areas, notably in the field of employment: on the one hand, they may constitute an opportunity to increase workers' autonomy and work life balance, while on the other, they may put welfare systems and the quality of employment in Europe under strain.



Digital technology has the potential to increase wealth to unprecedented levels and can boost the quality of work and employment in Europe. However, these opportunities come with risks attached...

EESC opinion, 'Effects of digitalisation on service industries and employment'



The situation of women with disabilities

(exploratory opinion requested by the European Parliament, rapporteur: Gunta Anča)

In the EU, there are approximately 40 million women and girls with disabilities. The EESC has called on the EU institutions and the Member States to step up their efforts to protect women and girls with disabilities, who continue to face multiple forms of discrimination in EU society on the grounds of both their gender and disability, often resulting in their social exclusion. The EESC stressed how important it was for the EU and the Member States to join the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, to which women with disabilities are three to five times more likely to fall victim than their non-disabled peers.



Many decision-makers ignore this group, and there are not enough statistics or studies on it. These women's situation is not only worse than that of women without disabilities; it is also worse than that of their male peers.

Gunta Anča,
rapporteur for the opinion

EESC PLENARIES WHO SAID WHAT AND WHY?

The EESC promotes the development of a participatory EU, one that is more in touch with the public's concerns and expectations. It acts as an institutional forum representing, informing, expressing the views of, and securing dialogue with, civil society organisations. All 350 EESC members meet in plenary sessions nine times a year in order to accomplish their most important duty: **voting on the opinions**. This is a solemn occasion when compromise, **consensus-building** and internal democracy are put into action.

It is also an opportunity to invite special guests from all over Europe and beyond to take part in the debates. In the pages that follow, we give you a flavour of what went on during the plenary sessions in 2018 and some of the key guests who were present, what they talked about and what it means for the EESC and citizens around Europe.

A year in the life of EESC plenary sessions... 2018

17-18
JANUARY

Climate Finance Pact debate with

- **Miguel Arias Cañete**, Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy
- **Pierre Larrourou**, agricultural engineer and economist
- **Jean Jouzel**, climatologist and member of the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council

Presentation on the priorities of the Bulgarian presidency of the Council of the EU by the Deputy Minister for Labour and Social Policy, **Zornitsa Roussinova**

14-15
FEBRUARY

Debate on the future of Europe and the role of citizen consultations with the French Minister for European Affairs, **Nathalie Loiseau**



EESC has an essential role to play in #civilsociety consultations. We need to make them possible everywhere, in universities, the cultural world... - to hear the opinions of citizens, says @NathalieLoiseau at #EESCplenary debate on #futureofEurope



14-15
MARCH

Debate on EU digital developments and artificial intelligence with

- **Andrus Ansip**, European Commissioner for the Digital Single Market
- and supporting statement by **Marcos Peña**, President of the Spanish Economic and Social Council



@Ansip_EU: Several elements are needed for the development of #AI in EU: #skills, #data, #supercomputers, investments. We also need a broad public dialogue & respect of ethical principles: trust is a must.



18-19
APRIL

Special event marking the end of the EESC presidency headed by **Georges Dassis** and the beginning of a new presidency headed by **Luca Jahier** for 2018-2020



We said goodbye to Georges Dassis who concluded his presidency with a high level conference in Athens on the Future of Democracy in Europe

Special **commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising** – the largest Jewish armed revolt in World War II



The future of Europe is directly bound up with the future of democracy. In our united, 21st century Europe, all citizens must take part in decision-making.

We must also, above all, reduce the phenomenon of extreme poverty and invest in youth employment, infrastructure projects, research and innovation.

Then we can secure a united Europe of solidarity that guarantees peace and prosperity.

Georges Dassis



The #EESCplenary commemorated the 75th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. "Yellow daffodils symbolise not only the remembrance of the victims of the uprising, but remind us that tolerance and unity are crucial for maintaining peace and prosperity!", said @Krawczyk_EESC



24-25
MAY



Commemorative session for the 60th anniversary of the EESC with

- **Ramón Valcárcel Siso**, Vice-President of the European Parliament
- **Jean-Claude Juncker**, President of the European Commission
- **Karl-Heinz Lambertz**, President of the European Committee of the Regions
- **Roger Briesch**, former Committee president, and current head of the Association of Former Members, on behalf of former presidents and members of the EESC

11-12
JULY

Debate on how to modernise the European economy, focusing on decentralised energy provision, sustainable transport and regional economic development with **Maroš Šefčovič**, Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for the Energy Union

Presentation on the Austrian presidency's priorities by **Gernot Blümel**, Federal Minister for the EU, Arts, Culture and the Media

19-20
SEPTEMBER

Günther Oettinger, European Commissioner for the Budget and Human Resources, on the new Multiannual Financial Framework

Debate with **Violeta Bulc**, European Commissioner for Transport, about measures to be taken under the Mobility Packages to ensure safe, secure, clean, inclusive and efficient mobility in Europe

Debate on the European Citizens' Initiative 'Minority SafePack'

17-18
OCTOBER

The EESC welcomed the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, **Federica Mogherini** for a debate on external threats and challenges facing the EU

Debate with **Christos Stylianides**, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management



"Politics and diplomacy is not about strong men! Participatory diplomacy is the way forward", says @FedericaMog at #EESCplenary.



60
Foreign policy can never only be about governments. It requires NGOs, civil society, businesses and trade unions!

12-13
DECEMBER

The EESC welcomed the First Vice-President of the European Commission, **Frans Timmermans**, who presented the conclusions of the European Commission's high-level multi-stakeholder platform and took part in a debate on 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030'

Award ceremony for the **Civil Society Prize**



"Democracy is a day to day thing. Social partners and #civilsociety are necessary and must be involved in the democratic process!", @TimmermansEU says at #EESCplenary.



WORKING HAND IN HAND TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!



*Understanding and embracing change will allow Europe to move forward and shape the global order for the 21st century. There is no other alternative than being together. There is no way back. I am very happy to work together with Mr Tajani to reassert the moral foundations of our model of democracy. **ThisTimeImVoting** yes, but for us at the EESC it's also **ThisTimeImActing**.*

Luca Jahier,
President of the EESC



The EESC can play a key role in engaging the social partners and broader civil society in this election campaign that will determine the future of Europe.

Antonio Tajani,
President of the European Parliament

V-Day – this time it stands for ‘voting’

‘This time I’m voting’ campaign: the EESC and the European Parliament work together to raise awareness about the European elections and encourage people to vote



Working with the European Parliament in the run-up to the May 2019 elections, the Committee developed and delivered an awareness-raising campaign, ‘This time I’m voting’, in recognition of the low voter turnout and missed opportunities in previous European elections. The EESC and the European Parliament carried out a number of activities to raise awareness among civil society organisations and the general public about the European elections and encouraged people to vote.

Your Europe, your future

European Citizens' Panel on the future of Europe

At the request of the French Government, with the endorsement of France's president, Emmanuel Macron and in cooperation with the European Commission, the EESC organised a citizens' panel to consult the public on the 'Future of Europe'. In this unique example of participatory democracy, 100 Europeans from 27 Member States gathered in Brussels to draft the questions for the online consultation, thereby shaping the conversation on the Future of Europe with a view to the European elections in May 2019. It was the first time in the EU's history that such a wide-scale consultation has taken place. The Member States were informed of its outcome, with the final report being presented at the first EU27 Summit in Sibiu, Romania, on 9 May 2019.



Sibiu Summit and the Future of Europe

At his 2017 State of the European Union address, the Commission president, Mr Juncker unveiled a roadmap detailing the main steps towards a more united, stronger and democratic Union.

Building on this, the EESC set out its '**Roadmap from Cracow to Sibiu**', which addressed key themes raised by the European Citizens' Panel, including

- better management of migration and borders through a common strategy and approach,
- measures dealing with threats to public safety (terrorism and crime),
- focus on employment and addressing inequality in the EU,
- the impact of trade wars on Europe, and
- issues of climate change and environmental impact, tackling populist fears, disinformation and fake news, and more.



Immigration features as the top challenge that the Union is currently facing (38%), terrorism comes second (29%) ... ahead of the economic situation (18%), the state of Member States' public finances (17%) and unemployment (14%).

Spring Standard Eurobarometer, June 2018



As the house of [#civilsociety](#) we strongly believe in participatory democracy & we are proud that we hosted the 1st [#citizensconsultations](#).

Now it's your turn to have your say on [#FutureofEurope](#) and your voices heard along the [#RoadtoSibiu](#).





This incredible project called Europe belongs to everybody, is built by everybody and everybody has a voice. That is exactly why you are here.

Gonçalo Lobo Xavier,
EESC Member



For the 12th Civil Society Media Seminar in Athens we have chosen 'Reasserting Europe's values', because we believe that it is our values which unite us and make the European Union outstanding, and because we feel that these values are not upheld strongly enough and are even under threat in Europe today. It is up to all of us – politicians and civil society – to reassert our values and keep them in mind during all of our political deliberations and decisions.

Isabel Caño Aguilar, EESC Vice-President
for Communication

EVENTS TO REMEMBER



Inspiring ideas for finding unity in a diverse European culture

Young Europeans say that greater opportunities for learning languages through travel, more accessible European cultural sites and preserving our culture through national cuisine and crafts can inspire young Europeans to discover different cultures and gain a better understanding of our common cultural heritage. These recommendations to EU policymakers were suggested by 99 students from across Europe, who took part in the annual youth event 'Your Europe, Your Say!' (YEYS) 2018.



Reasserting Europe's values

The EESC's 12th Civil Society Media Seminar looked at European values as part of Europe's heritage. In the run-up to the European elections, panellists discussed the challenges and burning issues which are stirring contemporary Europe, such as multiculturalism, declining solidarity, growing nationalism and illiberalism. Together with communication professionals, they explored what civil society can do to foster a Europe which upholds its heritage of values – respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law.



German organisation Danube-Networkers for Europe crowned the winner of the EESC Civil Society Prize 2018

In 2018, the Civil Society Prize celebrated its 10th anniversary, a milestone in its efforts to reward and encourage initiatives and achievements by civil society organisations and/or individuals that have made a significant contribution to promoting European identity and integration.

First prize was awarded to the German initiative **'Tastes of Danube – Bread Connects'**, which uses the humble loaf as a symbol of intangible cultural heritage bringing European people together.



Bread has always been a symbol of community and sharing. [...] We work from the grassroots and try to involve everyone. [...] This prize is a huge recognition and honour for many organisations and people involved in this project.

Carmen Stadelhofer,
President of DANET



#CivSocPrize final ranking

- 1 BREAD CONNECTS: bread-baking activities
- 2 SWANS Initiative: career seminars for high-potential women
- 3 Eco-Museum: cultural heritage for disability
- 4 Safe Passage: legal routes for child refugees
- 5 Balkans Beyond Borders: short film festival

The EESC
Civil Society Prize
2018







PRIORITIES AND MAJOR THEMES IN 2018

The EESC has been carrying out its duties for six decades, driven by one powerful overarching remit: *“The EESC helps strengthen the European Union’s democratic legitimacy and effectiveness by enabling civil society organisations from the Member States to express their views at European level.”*

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Fair transition to a digital economy and society



Maurizio Reale @EESC_NAT with @PhilHoganEU at #AgriOutlook today. Digitization helps farmers on CAP sustainability objectives. Knowledge exchange is key 4 uptake of innovations&new tech to improve competitiveness&sustainability #FutureofCAP

EESC opinion: <http://europa.eu/!KN74CY>



The digital revolution is having a significant impact on almost every aspect of our daily lives. It affects all sectors of the economy and every part of society, and has extraordinary potential to stimulate economic growth, create jobs, generate innovation and improve Europeans' quality of life. But not everyone is benefiting equally from these developments. Remote and rural communities often have low and sometimes no broadband access (broadband gap), and generations of non-digital natives still struggle with basic computer skills (digital gap). The growing power of data and offshoots like artificial intelligence create opportunities but also come with safety and job security risks. With more and more activities now taking place online, from filing taxes to sharing personal stories on social media, there are also increasing concerns about privacy, security and the threat of cyber terrorism to critical services and infrastructure. It's a lot to take in – and the EESC has been at the forefront of the debate concerning these developments in Europe.



The human factor is one of the most important causes of cyber accidents. For the EESC, there is a need to build a strong cyber skills base and improve cyber hygiene, partly through awareness campaigns among individuals and businesses.

EESC opinion on 'Cybersecurity Act'

Cybersecurity

In January 2018, the EESC held a public hearing to sound out civil society's views on the proposal to strengthen cybersecurity (the Cybersecurity Act). The conclusions of the hearing fed into the opinion adopted by the Committee in February 2018. While supporting the series of measures set out in the Commission's proposal, the EESC stressed the need for a European cybersecurity model.



Artificial intelligence – a high priority for the EU

The EESC's May 2017 opinion on the societal impact of artificial intelligence (AI) helped to steer much-needed debate during 2018 on the main societal challenges, including ethics, safety, privacy, transparency, work, education and skills, (in)equality and inclusiveness. The Commission's recently presented strategy on artificial intelligence mirrors, to a considerable extent, the proposals put forward by the EESC in that first opinion. The first **Stakeholder Summit on Artificial Intelligence**, organised on 18 June by the EESC and the European Commission, also stressed that the EU must ensure that AI is safe, unbiased and in line with European values. *"Artificial intelligence is a technology which does not have to overcome and overwhelm us,"* said Catelijne Muller, president of the EESC's Study Group on Artificial Intelligence, adding that humans should stay in command of artificial intelligence and be able to determine *"if, when and how we want to use these technologies in our daily lives."*

The European Consumer Day... The digital economy: what deal for consumers?

The EESC joined forces with the Bulgarian Economic and Social Council to host the 20th European Consumer Day in Sofia on 20 March 2018. This annual event brings together experts, consumers and policymakers to debate issues affecting consumers at European level, from food quality to consumer rights, product safety, sustainable consumption, better consumer regulation, etc. With more and more economic activity taking place online, the theme for the 2018 event – ‘The digital economy: what deal for consumers?’ – was a natural choice.

“For the 20th anniversary of European Consumer Day, as is our tradition, we have chosen a theme reflecting one of the top consumer issues today,” noted the EESC.



Civil Society Days 2018

Citizenship, Democracy and Culture in Digitalised Europe

Civil Society Days (CivSocDays), which took place on 24-25 May, is an annual event organised by the EESC and the EESC Liaison Group with European civil society organisations and networks. Its main purpose is to enhance political dialogue between the Committee and European civil society organisations, and to establish a genuine structured civil dialogue with the European institutions. Participants discussed living together in a digital Europe of the future and concluded with the adoption of seven key recommendations.

- Build synergies between culture and citizenship in all educational settings
- Help civil society promote equality, inclusivity and participation in civic life, including online
- Control and oversight by civil society of ‘surveillance mechanisms’
- Encourage co-creation/crowdsourcing e-tools to boost citizen engagement
- Like security or data protection, accessibility should be central to ICT products and services
- Artificial intelligence can – and should – increase job opportunities and not replace workers
- Support and promote an EU-wide charter of digital fundamental rights



SUSTAINABLE GROWTH FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL

Steady, long-term growth cannot be achieved without a fully functional Single Market able to defend its four freedoms – free movement of people, goods, services and capital – while combating protectionism and safeguarding Europeans more effectively. Economic progress also hinges on encouraging entrepreneurship, attracting investment and reinforcing innovation capacity. What's more, all of this must be carried out in the context of fair and dynamic trade and budget policies ensuring that the benefits are distributed evenly.

This is a big task, but one that the EESC has pursued with vigour through its recent opinions tackling the social, economic and environmental impact of sustainable, functional, circular and collaborative economic models. The goal: a just transition to a more sustainable, circular economy – striking a balance between prosperity and efficiency, social inclusion and environmental responsibility. The EESC has also brought forward policy recommendations on how to finance sustainable growth.

Functional economy

The functional economy is based on *using* products and related services rather than *owning* them. This economic model is more resource-efficient and also has the advantage of encouraging high-quality, long-lasting products and thus promoting sustainable and responsible consumption that also leads to jobs and growth. The Committee is a pioneer in this area. Big industry, SMEs, trade unions and environmental NGOs are all in favour of this economic model being built into European policies.

Circular economy

A policymaker with foresight

The EESC champions sustainable economic models for growth ...
respect for quality of both **life** and the **environment**

2013

opinion tackled planned obsolescence

2016

action plan for the transition to a circular economy ...

- **foresight-based** policymaking
- **enables recycling** and uptake of secondary raw materials
- **promotes** reduction/substitution and better tracking of substances

2017

'circular movement' sweeps across Europe ...

- **culminates** in the EESC's European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform with a three-year mandate and the start of a series of flagship annual conferences
- and an **inter-institutional website**: circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/

2018

communication endorses streamlined chemicals, products and waste legislation

public hearing on the Plastics Action in the circular economy

Tackling plastic in the circular economy

Every year, Europeans consume 25 million tonnes of disposable plastic that is mostly discarded – less than 30% is recycled. A significant amount finds its way into our oceans through littered waterways, flood plains and coastlines. The 2015 Circular Economy Action Plan and the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy adopted by the Commission in 2018 identified ways to transform how plastic products are designed, produced, used and recycled in the EU. The EESC held a public hearing to take stock of the measures and learn how to build upon the experience and views of relevant stakeholders and players in this domain. The discussion drew on the EESC's 2018 Plastic Strategy opinion, which supported the Commission's policy on the circular economy but called for much closer collaboration with the social partners and civil society organisations through forward planning exercises and more R&D on bioplastics going forward.

The conclusions of the hearing comprised civil society's input into the preparation of the EESC opinion on the proposed strategy and later directive, which came into full force in 2019, making headlines and prompting calls for similar initiatives worldwide.



The transition to a circular economy is a great opportunity for civil society. It is already happening on the ground. We can feel it from the commitment and involvement of our businesses; the many initiatives taking place at local and regional level; and the interest of workers' associations, NGOs, the scientific community, consumers and citizens. However, we need to ensure that the transition is widely accepted. Leaving no one behind is one of the objectives of the Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, which is a crucial space to forge this kind of shared vision of the transition to a circular and sustainable European economy.

Outgoing EESC President Georges Dassis, Circular Economy Stakeholder Conference, February 2018



TRANSITION TO A LOW-CARBON COMPETITIVE ECONOMY AND SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AND MOBILITY

The agenda for massive change in the very near future

Sustainable and affordable energy and mobility policies, designed and implemented in line with the Paris Agreement on climate change and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are at the heart of the current economic and social revolution. The completion of the European Energy Union will need to benefit all European stakeholders and citizens. As one of the basic enablers of activities for the whole of society, transport also deserves a high profile.

For the EESC, the implementation and joint realisation of the SDGs, 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement, together with well-managed transitions towards a low-carbon economy and the digital economy, will address the major issues facing Europe. The EESC proposed a finance-climate pact that aims to redirect both public and private funds towards the fight against climate change and the real economy. The EESC tabled the most ambitious proposal among the EU institutions, that 40% of the EU budget should be devoted to the fight against climate change and its consequences.

“There will be no jobs and no entrepreneurship on a dead planet” stressed the EESC in its own-initiative opinion on the European Finance-Climate Pact adopted on 17 October 2018. It is up to everyone to avoid this nightmare scenario and it urged everyone to act now.



The EESC warmly welcomes the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which represent a breakthrough in multilateral cooperation in that they put social and human development on a par with economic progress and see these three dimensions as a whole [...] The EESC calls on the EU to approach the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as an obligation and opportunity to shape future EU policies and programmes.

EESC opinion, ‘The 2030 Agenda – a European Union committed to sustainable development globally’



We call for an overarching EU Sustainable Development Strategy with concrete objectives, targets & actions in order to mainstream #SDGs across all EU policies and programmes.



Sustainable mobility by 2025

The EESC strongly supported the Commission's 'Europe on the Move' initiatives calling for a clean, competitive and connected mobility system using all modes of transport and covering the entire Union by 2025. It issued an opinion in 2018 on the need for an efficient Single European Transport Area, and stressed that while electric vehicles can help to reduce air pollution locally, policies in favour of the production of clean electricity as laid out in the Clean Energy for all Europeans Package need ambition and support in order to achieve the EU's Energy Union and carbon emissions targets, both regionally and globally. So as to effectively develop sustainable and safe mobility, the EESC also notes that a more ambitious project needs to be developed with a particular focus on intermodality in freight and passenger transport.

Opinion maps internal and external sustainable development policies

Call for an overarching and integrated strategy for a 'Sustainable Europe' in 2030 and beyond

5 key policy areas for transformational change towards sustainable development:

- Fair transition to a low-carbon, circular and collaborative economy
- Transition towards a socially inclusive society and economy; decent work and human rights
- Transition to sustainable food production and consumption
- Investing in innovation and long-term infrastructure modernisation, encouraging sustainable businesses
- Making trade work for global sustainable development



Up to 50% of food is wasted in EU households, supermarkets, restaurants and along the food supply chain each year, while 79 million EU citizens live below the poverty line and 16 million depend on food aid from charitable institutions.

EESC opinion, 'Prevention and reduction of food waste'

The EESC and the environment

By choosing to operate as sustainably as possible, the EESC, together with the Committee of the Regions, has made significant energy and material savings in 2018 in power, gas, water, paper and waste. Efforts like this yield not only environmental benefits but also financial savings and improvements to management processes.

In a programme started in 2018 – the first in the EU institutions – the EESC donates leftover food to recognised charities in Belgium. It is an example of the Committee living up to its promises with regard to a major concern which has been on its radar for many years and was the subject of a 2012-13 opinion on preventing and reducing food waste. The EESC's own-initiative opinion pushed for a coordinated strategy combining EU-wide and national measures to improve food supply and consumption chains and to tackle food waste as a matter of urgency.

Energy and waste savings at the EESC in 2018

2018 vs 2009	
Electricity	-30 % ↓
Gas	-49 % ↓
Water	-29 % ↓
Paper	-54 % ↓
Waste	-55 % ↓



The EESC expresses its concern that in various Member States legislation is being adopted and policies implemented that suggest a serious deterioration in the quality of democracy: violation of human rights; lack of independence of the judiciary and constitutional courts; restrictions on the separation of powers; limitations on the freedom of the press and limitations on other fundamental civil and social rights.

EESC digital publication 2018, 'Civil Society in action for tomorrow's Europe'



The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is a welcome instrument for participatory democracy at European level. Having been introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, it entered into force in 2012 and allows Europeans to make legislative proposals and participate in decision-making by connecting directly with EU institutions. It is a chance for them to discuss and influence key policies and it sheds further light on the public's view of the EU's agenda and priorities.

EC website, 2018

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW

Consulting civil society, the source of 'common values'

A Union of common values shapes European identity. These universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity, laid down in the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, must be respected by all Member States and guarantee a fair balance between economic freedoms and fundamental rights in order to better promote European democratic values at home and abroad.

Group on Fundamental Rights and the Rule of Law

Inspired by these principles, in January 2018 the EESC set up the Group on Fundamental Rights and the Rule of Law as a forum for European civil society organisations in this vital area. In its work – evaluations, hearings, opinion-drafting, etc. – the group focuses on cross-policy and holistic topics and not individual countries. It promotes respect for the European values enshrined in the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and included in the checklist on the rule of law drawn up by the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe. It addresses collective and individual rights within the economic and social sphere, and regards them as *"indivisible from civil and political rights"*.

European Citizens' Initiative Day 2018

Working together for more participatory democracy

Consulting civil society organisations is the EESC's bread and butter, and the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is a visible example of this work. The Committee hosted a dedicated ECI Day 2018 to encourage greater Member State involvement and reinforce the initiative as a tool for building trust and dialogue between institutions and citizens. As in previous years, delegates debated the best ways to promote greater participation in democracy, always underlining the importance of inclusiveness and accessibility. To this end, delegates discussed and recommended reforms of the ECI to encourage greater democratic participation.



CHANGING THE WORLD OF WORK IN A STRONGER SOCIAL EUROPE

Working towards a more social Europe

Globalisation, technological innovation, demographic shifts, migration and climate change are profoundly altering the social environment and working life. Faced with these far-reaching changes, the EESC firmly believes that the future of work is a key priority within the debates on the European Pillar of Social Rights. A coherent and integrated European employment strategy is clearly needed – one that involves all stakeholders, in particular the social partners.

Through its opinions, the Committee has helped to shape the European Pillar of Social Rights, preserve and build on the 'Social Europe' enshrined in the EU Treaties, and deliver new and more effective rights for citizens. Its engagement with civil society contributed to the pillar's final **20 principles and rights**, ensuring fair labour markets and welfare systems in 21st century Europe under three main chapter headings: 1) equal opportunities and access to the labour market; 2) fair working conditions and 3) social protection and inclusion.

Caring for the carers

EESC opinion on live-in carers goes local in 2018

In 2018, the EESC held a series of meetings in several Member States on the live-in care sector in the EU. The country visits were a follow-up to the EESC's 2016 own-initiative opinion on the rights of live-in care workers, the first policy document at EU level to deal with this 'invisible' sector. Carers are among the most mobile groups in the EU workforce, with Eastern Europe a major source region. The meetings shone a spotlight on the precarious situation of these workers in Europe's labour market.

Entrepreneurship and social economy enterprises

The social economy is a crucial economic model for the future of Europe and for our next generations. As a catalyst of social innovation, the regionally anchored social economy contributes to the cohesion and resilience of cities and regions. It creates jobs and responds to social needs. Europe's social economy provides over 13.6 million paid jobs, accounting for 6.3% of the total EU-28 working population. The EESC has been very active in this important area, providing insight and guiding opinions. This work culminated in an important study – *Recent evolutions of the social economy* (2017) – which contributed to the debate in 2018 focusing on emerging concepts and movements related to the social economy, EU and Member State policymaking in this area, and the size and strength of the social economy in each Member State.

Since June 2016, the EESC has organised an annual 'European Day of Social Economy Enterprises' to give the floor to representatives of the sector. The 2018 event focused on the creation of an ecosystem enabling Social Economy Enterprises to scale up, in order to allow this enterprise model to fully unleash its potential.



Despite its size, the social economy remains invisible in national accounts and statistics around Europe, a hurdle that constitutes another major challenge, although efforts have been made over the last two decades.

EESC study, 'Recent evolutions of the social economy'



The European Semester Group (ESG) coordinates, strengthens and supports the work carried out in the EESC sections and CCMI in relation to the European Semester.

The European Semester is at its origin an annual cycle of economic policy coordination and since 2018 has been complemented by actions building on the European Pillar of Social Rights.

EESC webpage, European Semester Group

The European Semester

The European Semester, the framework for coordinating economic policies across the EU, is constantly changing. In 2018, the process was reinforced by the inclusion of a far-reaching social policy coinciding with Member States' implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights' principles (agreed during the 2017 Social Summit of European leaders in Gothenburg). The involvement of organised civil society in the European Semester is fundamental since stakeholders' co-ownership of reforms improves their implementation and helps to achieve positive outcomes. The EESC also kicked off preparations for a landmark high-level conference for policymakers and organised civil society, at both EU and national levels, to explore the way forward "towards a more inclusive European Semester", including discussion on the current state of the European economy and policy challenges within the European Semester process. The event, which was planned and prepared in 2018, took place in February 2019.



SWITCHING TO A JOINED-UP POLICY ON MIGRATION

Overcoming the challenges of the refugee and migration crises implies applying asylum and legal migration policies which comply fully with human rights in order to better integrate them into European society. In light of this challenge, the Committee plays a vital role in shaping the strategy for immigration and migrant integration.

The Committee has been working on the issue of migration since the early 1980s. In 2009, the EESC set up a permanent study group on immigration and integration (IMI) with the main aim of promoting a common European immigration and integration policy with broad civil society involvement. The IMI has drawn up opinions on various topics relating to integration, such as inclusive citizenship for immigrants, the contribution of migrant entrepreneurs to the economy, and the inclusion of migrant women in the labour market.

Group on Immigration and Integration

Three-tiered ambition ...

- Promote the development of a common European immigration and integration policy based on the principles of fundamental rights and solidarity, with strong civil society involvement
- Prepare the EESC's contribution to the European Migration Forum (EMF)
- Give tangible form to the EESC's role as a facilitator between organised civil society and the EU institutions in the area of migration policy and migrant integration

Migration policy

The EESC argued during 2018 that refugees need safe, legal routes to come to the EU. A more coordinated approach at national and European levels – based on shared responsibility, fair allocation, convergence and respect for fundamental rights – is needed, including more options for family reunification, relocation and resettlement. In recent years and coming to a head in 2018, the EESC also supported the idea of reforming the Common European Asylum System to ensure a more efficient, fair and humane asylum policy. Cooperation with third countries of origin and transit is vital in order to tackle the root causes of involuntary migration.

European Migration Forum

A platform for dialogue with stakeholders

EU policy-making benefits from structured contact with those active on the ground. This is why the EESC was instrumental in setting up the European Migration Forum, which focused its fourth event in 2018 on 'Towards a more inclusive labour market for migrants: Seizing the potential by addressing the challenges'. The Forum attracted around 200 participants, including organisations and representatives of the EU institutions, Member States and NGOs, as well as stakeholders from local and regional authorities working on the ground.



STRONGER CIVIL SOCIETY GLOBALLY

The EESC's priorities regarding EU external relations focus on issues such as strengthening civil society organisations in neighbouring and third countries, promoting social and civil dialogue, involving civil society effectively in international agreements and supporting common causes, such as sustainable development, the fight against climate change, good governance, human rights and decent employment. Initiatives are guided by a firm commitment to the idea that local action has much wider, global implications.

Strong engagement with civil society across borders is fundamental to peace and prosperity in Europe and beyond. The EESC recognises the key importance of EU action in the southern neighbourhood (Euromed region) and eastern neighbourhood (Eastern Partnership). Democratic, economic and social stability has been reinforced through cooperation with civil society, most recently in eastern European countries including Georgia, Moldova, Armenia and Ukraine, and this has now become standard practice. The EESC has provided civil society with an institutional channel and a working method for exchanging views on key issues, and has encouraged the political authorities to recognise civil society organisations as key partners on the path towards economic and social reforms.



The [#EUenlargement](#) will spread democratic values & legal standards to [#WesternBalkans](#) in both parties interest. WE call the Heads of State at the summit in Sofia in May for a clear commitment to direct support for [#civilsociety](#) [#EESCplenary](#)



During 2018, the EESC's outreach and empowerment work with civil society in the Western Balkans has been credited by the European Commission. Much-needed progress in areas such as freedom of the press, the role of young people, the fight against corruption, the rights of vulnerable people, economic and social cohesion and European integration.

It also worked on cross-cutting issues such as SDGs and global value chains.

2018 has seen a consolidation of the EESC's role in facilitating the participation of civil society in international trade agreements signed by the EU. With the launching of the civil society Domestic Advisory Group within the EU-Canada free trade agreement, the EESC once again provides the expertise, the working method and the networks that are needed for European civil society to take up its place in the EU's relations with other countries around the world. Other such groups (first among them, with Japan in 2019) will be set up in incoming years, thus pursuing our successful cooperation with the European Commission.

Euromed Summit 2018

Boosting Euromed labour market investment in human capital

With limited job creation, low employment intensity – especially among women (25% below average) and young people – and a high number of people not in school, employment or training (NEETS), the risk of poverty and exclusion in the Euromed region is high. The December 2018 Euro-Mediterranean Summit of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions, co-hosted by the EESC in Italy, helped to promote greater understanding of the main issues affecting organised civil society in the Euromed region by discussing and devising solutions to many of the common challenges. The summit brought together some 120 participants from economic and social councils and representatives of employers, trade unions, other economic and social interest groups and NGOs from countries that are members of the Union for the Mediterranean. The discussions focused on education and training, as well as the social economy and entrepreneurship in the Euromed region.



SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COHESION

Regional development – a new cohesion policy for the period 2021-2027

Cohesion policy is one of the most important tools for bringing Europeans closer to the vision of European integration. It has a clear added value in creating jobs, sustainable growth and modern infrastructure, overcoming structural barriers, boosting human capital and improving people's quality of life. This is why the EESC is very pleased that all regions are eligible for funding. EU cohesion policy must be an integral part of a European investment strategy, with a strong territorial approach aimed at empowering each region with the necessary tools to enhance their competitiveness. It must lead to economic and structural transformation, securing a resilient base in each region based on their own strengths.

Together in unexpected but important ways

Putting in place coherent rural and urban development policies promoting inclusion and best practice in infrastructure, mobility and the smart organisation of territorial bodies is key to strengthening social and territorial cohesion, as is the transition to a sustainable food policy linked to a reformed agricultural policy.

In fact, agricultural production and sectors upstream and downstream of agriculture play a vital part in meeting society's demand for sustainable food and are key players in rural development. Recognising in 2018 that the agri-food sector requires particular support in coping with the transition to a low-carbon society and adapting to climate change, the EESC maintained strong contact with rural and farming communities through its civil society networks, so as to monitor needs and address major concerns regarding future European policymaking and the European Semester negotiations.

Food, agriculture, rural development

Nearly a quarter of the EU's population lives in rural areas. These provide a secure supply of food, wood, minerals and water and have multi-skilled residents from diverse backgrounds and cultures. From food production to processing and transportation, the current agri-food model, particularly dependent on fossil fuels, needs a push in the direction of a sustainable, environmentally-friendly future. The Committee's opinion, 'A possible reshaping of the Common Agricultural Policy', issued in late 2017, had an impact for many months and well into 2018 with the organisation of a dedicated event 'Implementing the SDGs, civil society in action'.

The event, which took place in September 2018 and coincided with the third anniversary of the adoption of the UN 2030 Agenda, explored how the SDGs can be used to promote transparency in food governance. Crucial issues covered included environmental protection, climate change mitigation, resource efficiency and the preservation of biodiversity.



We cannot possibly ask for more Europe whilst at the same time reducing the budget available. A meaningful European Union requires policies that make a difference to people's everyday lives.

Stefano Mallia, rapporteur for the EESC opinion on the Common Provisions Regulation 2021-2027



A re-shaped Common Agricultural Policy which retains the European agricultural model and family farming must be able to maintain farmers' incomes, cope with market volatility and preserve European agricultural production, all the while meeting the commitments made by the Union as part of the Sustainable Development Goals.

EESC digital publication 2018, 'Civil Society in action for tomorrow's Europe'

Integrated and comprehensive food policy

We're not there yet but signs are improving

In recent years, the EESC has been at the forefront of efforts to promote a more integrated approach to food policy, ensuring not only an adequate supply of healthy food but also wider moves towards a sustainable, healthy and fair system. This involves tackling both production and consumption and bringing together all related sectors – agriculture, food production, environment, health, education, trade, the economy and technology. It is a huge and complex challenge but one in which the Committee is well placed to

provide sensible insight and direction. The EESC's opinions and events aimed at developing a comprehensive EU-wide food policy have galvanised institutions and civil society around the interwoven impacts of food production and consumption, as well as food waste along the value chain.



What future for #EUfood and farming?
#EESCplenary is calling for:

- a two-pillar CAP model
- strengthening of farmers' position
- well-funded CAP through #EUBudget

Read: <http://europa.eu/!Gv87yW>



STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION

Towards a more resilient and sustainable European economy

Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)

Given the current economic juncture in the EU and the euro area, the EESC called for a balanced mix of economic policies, linking the fiscal, monetary and structural components. The Committee welcomed the emphasis on sustainable and inclusive growth, resilience and convergence. Structural reforms underway should not only increase productivity, improve the business environment and support investment, but also boost job creation and reduce inequality. At the same time, the EESC cautioned that positive signs of economic recovery in the euro area during 2018 were fragile, incomplete and atypical in nature. On that basis, it called for all necessary steps to be taken to deepen the EMU based on a common strategic vision shared by all Member States.

The EESC is strongly convinced that, despite extensive initial reforms, the Economic and Monetary Union is currently still not resilient and stable enough to face future economic and financial crises. It therefore continued to insist throughout 2018 that the relevant decision-makers reach a broader and swifter political agreement on how to approach the final objective of a deep and genuine EMU. In a set of opinions, the Committee stressed that further EMU reforms need to strike the right balance between responsibility and solidarity. In that respect, the Committee endorsed the European Commission's proposals to establish a Reform Support Programme and a European Investment Stabilisation Function, provided they are fine-tuned and further developed into a union-wide insurance mechanism that acts as an automatic stabiliser against macroeconomic shocks.

The completion of the Banking Union and the Capital Markets Union is, in the Committee's view, another major aspect of building a stable and prosperous EMU. Sustainable and healthy financial markets are the lifeblood of economic stability in Europe. While the Investment Plan for Europe gave a considerable boost to investment activities in Europe, investments have still not reached pre-crisis levels. Further work is therefore needed on the Investment Plan for Europe and its new incarnation, the InvestEU programme. Furthermore, the urgent completion of the Banking Union and Capital Markets Union is vital for a more integrated and stable EU financial system that furthermore should encourage investments that take account of environmental, social and governance considerations.

Multiannual Financial Framework

The EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) is a seven-year framework regulating its annual budgets. It is laid down in a unanimously adopted Council regulation with the consent of the European Parliament. In an opinion 'The MFF after 2020', adopted in September 2018, the Committee recognised the importance of those EU spending programmes for which the Commission proposed increases in expenditure, but questioned the proposed slashes to Cohesion Policy (-10%) and the Common Agricultural Policy (-15%). Europeans need more – and better – Europe, it stressed. The powers and financial resources currently allocated to the EU have been increasingly misaligned with Europeans' concerns and expectations. The EESC therefore proposes to increase the current ceiling for EU expenditure to 1.3% of EU Gross National Income (GNI).



The Council recommendation on the euro area should be part of a general economic strategy and an advanced reform project of EMU. The economic policy of the euro area should promote public and private investment, facilitate business financing and innovation, create jobs, improve wages, and reduce job insecurity, poverty and inequality.

Javier Doz Orrit, rapporteur for the EESC opinion on Euro area economic policy 2018



Europe needs a European Union that delivers added value. This is why the EESC urges European leaders, in line with the European Parliament and despite the financial consequences of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, to increase the current ceiling for EU expenditure to 1.3% of GNI.

Stefano Palmieri, President of the EESC's ECO section

Towards more 'European added value'

The EESC welcomed greater focus on what it termed "*European added value as a basic principle underpinning EU spending*", achieving better outcomes than would be possible with uncoordinated national budgets acting individually. The EU has to move away from the *juste retour* attitude, that focuses on net balances and reduces the EU budget to a bookkeeping exercise.

Conference on 'The Multiannual Financial Framework post 2020: Challenges and opportunities' – 15 May 2018

An EESC conference on the future long-term budget of the European Union calls for a swift agreement on an adequate and properly reformed financial framework that strengthens the European Union. The proposal for the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework post 2020 does not go far enough and lacks political ambition. As a consequence, it can only be considered a starting point for negotiations on a financial framework capable of providing the necessary means to deliver on citizens' expectations and new needs and challenges. The proposed ceiling for EU expenditure and its distribution should be reviewed so as to strengthen the EU's position as a global player.





EUROACTIV | 14 décembre 2019

Accueil | International | Politique | Affaires publiques | Luca Jahier | + de 1000 articles | Commentaires | Une photo | Commentaires

Luca Jahier : « les gilets jaunes montrent une élite politique déconnectée »

Par **Étienne Schar** | EUROACTIV.fr | Photographié par **Stéphane Gaud** | 14 déc. 2019



LAVANGUARDIA | VMa

Modelo económico y social europeo en peligro sin inmigrantes, según comité UE

Bruselas, 11 de diciembre - El modelo económico y social europeo está "en riesgo" si se reducen los inmigrantes a los inmigrantes, concluyó hoy el Comité Económico y Social Europeo (CESE) en una opinión emitida con relación al impacto de la inmigración y la integración de estas personas en la Unión Europea (UE).

"Las directrices políticas que se han adoptado en materia de inmigración y asilo en los últimos años han contribuido a aumentar el número de inmigrantes, lo que ha permitido mantener el modelo económico y social europeo en riesgo", según un comunicado emitido por este órgano consultivo de la UE.

Desde el CESE alertan de que un "aumento europeo de inmigrantes"...

eu news | Europe 2019

2018 ESC CIVIL SOCIETY PRIZE

Identities, European Values and Cultural Heritage in Europe

eu.gallery

QUAND TU METS LA TÊTE DANS LE SABLE, T'OUBLIES PAS QUE TON CUL RESTE DEDANS!

FORUM | MEDIACEFTA, MEDICE G. DOMAGALSKY

Europa: il Cese lancia il suo avviso

dobrénoviny

Nový šéf EHSV Luca Jahier sa vyslovil za opätovnú renesanciu Európy

Jahier v rámci diskusie približoval výhľad vývoju európskeho...

ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΣΙΑΚΟ ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ

Ενοπλοποιώντας τις όψεις της Ευρώπης... ενόψει ευρωεκλογών

Ολοκληρώθηκε η διαδικασία έγκρισης του προγράμματος για την ενίσχυση της ανάπτυξης, της απασχόλησης και της κοινωνικής αλληλεγγύης στην Ευρώπη. Το πρόγραμμα αποτελεί τον κεντρικό πυλώνα της πολιτικής της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης για την ανάπτυξη, την απασχόληση και την κοινωνική αλληλεγγύη στην Ευρώπη.

Komiteti Ekonomik dhe Social European mbështet hapjen e negociatave

Shqipëria i vendosi të Ballkani Perëndimor dhe të jashtë përkatës (Lumi) BE-në



HINA#EU

Glavna Nagrada za razvoj civilnog društva EGSO-a pripala projektu "Okusi Dunava – kruh povezuje"



EUROACTIV

Europe needs a new government

DISCLAIMER: All opinions in this column


Commission européenne est en obsolescence

Le Comité économique et social européen (CESE) a constaté que l'actuelle Commission européenne est en obsolescence et qu'elle doit être remplacée par une Commission nouvelle.



wyborcza.pl

Katastrofy naturalne zagrażają nam i naszej planecie. Jak się przed tym bronić?



wyborcza.pl

Narasta konflikt zarządu LOT-u i związkowców. "Przed firmą stoją poważne wyzwania"

zero emissions are possible and let's do it now



Parliament

FROM SPACE, EUROPE LOOKS LIKE ONE, AT AROUND 17 WORKS AS ONE.

Europe

La ville de référence sur les questions européennes

A l'aube des élections européennes, le CESE appelle à une grande "transformation" de l'Europe

Assemblée | 14.12.2019 | Marie Dumortier (La Voix du Nord)

Le Comité économique et social européen s'est réuni en session plénière les 12 et 13 décembre. L'occasion d'appeler les dirigeants européens à "écouter la société civile", invitée à renouveler les députés du Parlement européen en mai prochain. L'organe souhaite notamment que le développement durable soit inscrit en tête de l'agenda politique, que les discours changent radicalement sur l'immigration, ou encore qu'un revenu minimum européen soit instauré pour réduire les inégalités en Europe.



Parliament

Considerable shortcomings remain on structure and markets



CETA

Trade agreement between Canada and the EU

Gese Danube Networkers

Luca Jahier, Président du CESE





FOCUS ON COMMUNICATION



THE EESC ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Facebook:
www.eesc.europa.eu/facebook



Twitter:
www.eesc.europa.eu/twitter



You Tube:
www.eesc.europa.eu/youtube



LinkedIn:
www.linkedin.com/company/european-economic-and-social-committee

Follow us!

To make the most of all possible opportunities for dialogue with the European public, the EESC is also present on social media, concentrating mostly on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn. Plenary debates, for example, can be followed on social media via @EU_EESC or by using the hashtags #EESC and #Plenary. The EESC's Facebook page is also a rich source of information and civil society exchanges.



Facebook followers



Twitter followers



LinkedIn followers

	Facebook followers	Twitter followers	LinkedIn followers
2018	24 486	36 634	9 407
2017	20 674	31 053	7 829
2016	16 352	25 303	6 728
2015	10 659	21 190	–
2014	7 770	14 454	–

Top 5 events on EESC social media in 2018

The year-long 60th anniversary generated the most buzz, but the top-performing one-off moments were ...

- 60th anniversary – 24 May 2018
- European Citizens' Initiative Day – 10 April 2018
- Civil Society Prize – 13 December 2018
- Civil Society Days – 24-25 May 2018
- Citizens' Consultations – 5-6 May 2018

Pressing engagements

In 2018, the EESC increased the use of social media and other platforms and tools (i.e. web stories) to reach journalists, including targeted national and specialised reporters across Europe.

Around 50 journalists were invited by the EESC to events in Brussels, including a major information seminar in December for journalists with some 30 media representatives from 20 countries on the topic 'The EESC as the voice of civil society in the EU and its 2018 Civil Society Prize'. Three press meetings with EESC members were organised to help journalists become familiar with EESC opinions on topics such as the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), artificial intelligence and climate change.

Wider public engagement, from visiting schools to hosting visitors

As well as travelling to meet Europeans, the EESC actively encourages people from all over Europe to come to Brussels and see for themselves how it represents their interests. In 2018, the EESC received 9 419 visitors as part of over 400 group tours. In addition, the annual Open Day on 5 May attracted some 2 888 visitors.



Visitors



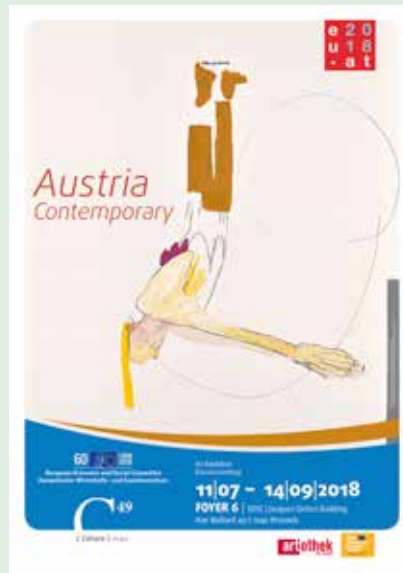
Groups

	Visitors	Groups
2018	9 419	424
2017	7 847	342
2016	7 371	312
2015	9 230	355
2014	9 534	424

Cultural explorations














Europe is a place of extraordinary cultural and artistic richness and vibrancy, as well as remarkable cultural heritage and linguistic and cultural diversity. However, surprisingly, culture has so far been absent from the dominant political discourse. Culture has enormous untapped potential to become a unifying and mobilising force for Europe and drive a new European narrative. The EESC organised around 15 cultural events in 2018, some of which linked to the European Year of Cultural Heritage and to the Bulgarian and Austrian presidencies. Activities ranged from photo and painting exhibitions to music performances, film screenings and study presentations, attended by 400 people in some cases.










SOME HOUSEKEEPING

For the European Economic and Social Committee, 2018 was an anniversary year, a busy year, a rewarding year.

<p>60 years and going strong</p> 	<p>The EESC celebrated this milestone anniversary in 2018; the inaugural plenary session took place on 19 May 1958</p>	<p>24 486</p> 	<p>Followers on Facebook</p>
<p>5 years</p> 	<p>Members are nominated by national governments and appointed by the Council of the European Union for a renewable 5-year term of office</p>	<p>9 512</p> 	<p>Followers on LinkedIn</p>
<p>215</p> 	<p>The number of opinions and reports adopted in 2018</p>	<p>24</p> 	<p>The official EU languages that the EESC works in</p>
<p>6 out of 13</p> 	<p>Promoting gender equality: there are six women in key leadership positions at political level; at administrative level, women represent 54% of middle managers and 50% of senior managers, making the EESC one of the leading institutions as regards gender balance in management positions</p>	<p>9 419</p> 	<p>The number of visitors welcomed in 2018, mostly members of civil society organisations and students specialising in European affairs; Open Doors Day on 5 May attracted 2 888 visitors</p>
<p>706</p> 	<p>Total staff in the EESC's administration, managed by the secretary-general</p>	<p>60</p> 	<p>Press releases issued in 2018 to over 1 300 journalists in Brussels and targeted national and specialised journalists throughout Europe</p>
<p>36 634</p> 	<p>Followers on Twitter</p> <p>Top Twitter moments: EESC 60th anniversary, European Citizens Initiative Day, Your Europe Your Say, Civil Society Prize</p>	<p>15</p> 	<p>Cultural events in 2018 as part of the EESC's drive to forge a positive narrative for Europe</p>
<p>2.3 million</p> 			<p>The number of page views of the EESC's website; new features in 2018 included automated opinion timeline, user interactivity, platforms and event sites</p>

<p>51</p> 	<p>Number of trainees; twice a year the EESC offers long-term paid internships to give young graduates valuable work experience</p>
<p>EU 2018/1725</p> 	<p>The EESC complies fully with the EU's GDPR (EU data protection rules) protecting the data of members, staff, visitors and guests</p>
<p>N°1/58A</p> 	<p>The Council's first regulation in 1958 was about setting the languages to be used by the European Economic Community; a roaming exhibition organised by the EESC in 2018, 'The EU speaks your language', marked this 60-year milestone</p>
<p>↘ 54%</p> 	<p>How much the EESC has reduced its paper consumption since 2009</p>
<p>69%</p> 	<p>The percentage of EESC staff using eco-friendly forms of transport</p>

<p>2 167</p> 	<p>Sandwiches donated to charity in an effort to promote sustainable and healthy food, while reducing food waste</p> <p>The Committee is leading by example with its move in 2018 to become the first EU institution to implement a food waste policy and donate excess food from its canteen to charitable organisations to be redistributed to those in need</p>
<p>770</p> 	<p>Kilos of food left over from events and donated to the charity 'La Source'</p>
<p>€ 136.5 million</p> 	<p>The EESC's total budget; accuracy, efficiency and accountability are key to a balanced budget, validated by the Commission and finalised by the Council and Parliament</p>

USEFUL LINKS

EESC Annual Activity Report 2018:
www.eesc.europa.eu/en/about

EESC website:
www.eesc.europa.eu



Facebook:
www.eesc.europa.eu/facebook



Twitter:
www.eesc.europa.eu/twitter



You Tube:
www.eesc.europa.eu/youtube



LinkedIn:
www.linkedin.com/company/european-economic-and-social-committee

EESC President's website:
www.eesc.europa.eu/president

EESC President on Twitter:
https://twitter.com/EESC_President



European Economic and Social Committee

Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 99
1040 Bruxelles/Brussel
BELGIQUE/BELGIË

Published by: "Visits and Publications" Unit
EESC-2019-30-EN

© European Union, 2019

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

For any use or reproduction of the photos / illustrations, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holder(s).



Print:
QE-AL-19-001-EN-C
ISBN 978-92-830-4470-3
ISSN 2599-7688
doi:10.2864/7522

Online:
QE-AL-19-001-EN-N
ISBN 978-92-830-4467-3
ISSN 2599-7742
doi:10.2864/26528

EN