



European Economic and Social Committee

EESC info

European Economic and Social Committee

A bridge between Europe and organised civil Society

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Editorial



Dear readers,

I am very pleased to open this pilot issue of our new online newsletter with a reflection on change and innovation in the world of work. I have to admit that this reflexion is made with the focus on our 2017 Civil Society Prize award ceremony in December. It seems fitting to launch this prototype by concentrating on a forward-looking exercise.

Rapid changes in the structure and organisation of today's economies are opening up new opportunities, but also presenting new risks and difficulties in the labour market. Salaried workers are increasingly being superseded by flexible forms of work and new types of worker, something that is causing concern both among the scientific community and among politicians in Europe.

As a result of technological development and digitisation the changes in the workplace and the new skills required for the workforce are a reality that needs to be faced. As a consequence, many atypical forms of work are emerging, such as part-time work, work with multiple contractors and work involving online platforms that operate as a network of specialised, highly-trained professionals.

Developments in the workplace are a key aspect of the EESC's activities. To illustrate the importance of this, the 2017 Civil Society Prize will be awarded to "innovative projects to promote quality employment and entrepreneurship for the future of work". We wish to reward innovative business ideas that provide a practical example of socially acceptable adaptation to these new forms of work but also different forms of worker inclusion. The EESC is closely monitoring the EU's employment strategy and ways of combating the types of unemployment that are most worrying: youth unemployment and long-term unemployment. Against this backdrop, the prize

encourages creativity in European enterprises and highlights examples of best practices for tackling unemployment.

Changes in the forms of employment are giving rise to a critical reflexion on social protection needs in Europe. Policies to address these, however, call for significant financial resources, and guaranteeing such funding is perhaps the greatest challenge now facing European society.

It is my belief that at this time of sweeping change in the world of work, the basic aims and principles of social dialogue are even more important in order to achieve good compromises. Europe already has some good examples of how to deal with the requirements and challenges of the workplace. We saw examples of this in the 111 applications for the award, but there are many more out there to discover and emulate. We have already selected the most outstanding candidates, and in the coming days we will reward the most interesting, innovative and inspiring among them, in the hope that our support will lead to even greater success on their part. Through this prize it is also our intention to showcase and give credit to all those who have risen to the challenge, and to encourage them to forge ahead. We encourage all civil society players to keep up the good work!

Gonçalo Lobo Xavier

EESC Vice-President for Communication

Diary Dates

13/12/2017 - 14/12/2017

Madrid

Euromed Summit 2017 of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions

In short

[EESC to engage in debate on disabled people's right and access to vote in European elections](#)



On 7 December EESC President George Dassis and members Yannis Vardakastanis and Krzysztof Pater will participate in the 4th plenary session of the European Disability Forum (EDF), to be held at the European Parliament to mark the EDF's 20th anniversary.

EDF President Yannis Vardakastanis (Various Interests, EL) will deliver a keynote address while Georges Dassis and Krzysztof Pater (Various Interests, PL), who was rapporteur for the EESC's opinion [Right of persons with disabilities to vote in EP elections](#), will participate in a session entitled "We want to vote", which aims to ensure that the 2019 European elections are fully accessible to persons with disabilities.

The EESC firmly believes that participation in public life lies at the heart of every democratic society, and thus that denying someone this right on grounds of disability constitutes a form of discrimination. For this reason, EP election procedures are being looked into ahead of the 2019 European elections, as persons with disabilities currently remain excluded or face obstacles to participation. (mrg)

[The EESC at the Gothenburg social summit](#)



EC President Jean-Claude Juncker, EESC President Georges Dassis and Sweden's Prime Minister Stefan Löfven at the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth 2017

Led by its President Georges Dassis, a delegation of EESC members took part in the high-level social summit in Gothenburg on 17 November where the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) was jointly proclaimed by the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament. In a show of support for the EPSR, the EESC has repeatedly warned in its opinions that without social rights, backed by a sound and sustainable economic basis, the future of the EU will be at stake. (ll)

[Getting ready for the Bulgarian Presidency](#)

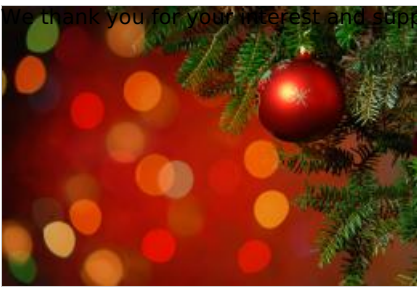


On 1 January 2018, Bulgaria will take over the rotating Presidency of the EU from Estonia. In preparation for this, the EESC has held a special meeting of its Bureau in Sophia and is drawing up a number of opinions, events and other initiatives, both in Brussels and Bulgaria. An overview of the presidency's priorities, together with a timetable of EESC-related activities, will be provided in the January issue of this newsletter.

[Season wishes](#)

We wish you all a very merry Christmas and a prosperous year 2018!

We thank you for your interest and support over the past twelve months and look forward to bringing our new digital newsletter to all our readers across Europe from the next issue!



EESC News

[2017 EESC Civil Society Prize Rewards Entrepreneurship and Quality Employment](#)



Already in its 9th edition, the 2017 Civil Society Prize will reward innovative projects working to combat employment exclusion and remove barriers to participation in the labour market for people in need, such as young people, people from migrant backgrounds, the long-term unemployed, women detached from the labour market, people with disabilities, and people living in poverty. The EESC has dedicated this year's prize to organisations that have distinguished themselves through their work in **supporting the labour market integration of groups requiring specific support.**

The 5 winners are:

- **Discovering hands**, a German project that trains blind and visually impaired women, using their superior tactile sense to enhance early breast cancer detection;
- **DUO for a JOB**, from Belgium, **Progetto Quid**, from Italy, and **REVIVE** from Greece: three programmes that help build up the skills of people at risk of exclusion, to better prepare them for integration in the labour market and in society in general;
- **Institute of Robotics for Dependency (IRD)**, a Spanish project aimed at creating jobs for people with disabilities, in a laundry service technologically redesigned and adapted to their needs.

The ranking of the winning projects will be announced at the award ceremony on 7 December during the EESC's plenary session in Brussels. EUR 50 000 will be shared among the winners in recognition for their work.

For more info: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/2017-eesc-civil-society-prize-innovative-projects-promote-quality-employment-and-entrepreneurship-future-work>

[Financing of civil society is essential for democracy](#)



The EU institutions should promote a positive image of civil society organisations, preserve their independence and ensure they are properly funded, says the EESC

In a political climate that is becoming increasingly hostile to civic action, the European Union must confirm the importance of the role played by civil society organisations (CSOs), said the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) at its October plenary session.

Presenting the own-initiative opinion on the [Financing of civil society organisations by the EU](#), rapporteur **Jean-Marc Roirant** (Various Interests, FR) said that the EESC had set out **over 25 recommendations** for strengthening relations between CSOs and the EU and for improving their access to funding.

Mr Roirant noted that this call for action was well-timed, as the EU institutions were preparing to launch discussions on the post-2020 multiannual financial framework (MFF).

"The EU institutions", he said, "must loudly say that CSOs are vital!"

The EESC recommended that discussions resume on a statute for European associations and that Article 11 of the Treaty, on civil society dialogue, must be further implemented.

The EESC called for **increased funding for CSOs** and for the Europe for Citizens programme to be given a budget of EUR 500 million under the next MFF.

The EESC also called for the establishment of an **EU Ombudsman on civic space freedoms**. (II)

[Taxation of the collaborative economy requires genuine European cooperation](#)

The EESC calls on the European Commission and the Member States to apply existing fiscal regulatory systems and tax regimes to the collaborative/digital economy.

"The legal framework must lead to a fair and balanced tax system for all economic activities and business models, without limiting the collaborative economy's potential to provide jobs and growth," says **Giuseppe Guerini** (Various interests - Italy), rapporteur for the EESC opinion on taxation of the collaborative economy.

Current tax regulations do not take new



business models and economic activities properly into account. This creates legal and tax-related uncertainty, distorts competition and leads to revenue loss. To tackle these issues, the EESC urges national authorities to step up their cooperation and adapt their regulations, although it believes that only a genuinely European approach can properly address the digital economy. Co-rapporteur **Kristen Andersson** (Employers, SE) says: "European authorities must establish channels of cooperation beyond Europe in order to lay down some ground rules for a truly digital economy".

Although new technologies facilitate and boost the collaborative economy, the EESC considers it important to assess it in its entirety, without equating it with the digital economy. The EESC believes that the introduction of a reasonable income threshold could help regulate the taxation of revenue and considers that more information about tax obligations should be communicated to the general public. EU policy-makers and legislators also have to ensure that consumers, workers and service providers – as well as privacy and personal data – are protected. (jk)

[EESC urges EC to strengthen Europe's economic foundations and social dimension](#)



In his speech at the EESC's October plenary session, European Commission Vice-President **Frans Timmermans** thanked EESC members for their contribution to the Commission's 2018 Work Programme, which was presented in July 2017. He stressed that the EESC's contribution had had an impact on the programme.

"We are pleased that you have involved us in the decision-making process but we will be even happier if you involve us even more", commented Georges Dassis, President of the EESC.

Vice-President Timmermans pointed out that even though the economic climate in Europe had improved, many people were still dissatisfied. The reasons for this were the increasing disparities within European society. *"The only way I believe that we can, with reason and not just by symbolic gestures, fulfil the promise of convergence, the only way I honestly believe we can portray the vision of a society where people regain control over their destinies individually and collectively, is if we tackle problems that are of a global nature together as Europeans on a European scale"*, said Mr Timmermans.

Gabriele Bischoff, President of the Workers' Group, welcomed the fact that the Commission had given prominence to the Social Pillar. **Jacek Krawczyk**, President of the Employers' Group, emphasised the need to focus on issues where EU action had an added value. **Luca Jahier**, President of the Various Interests Group, stressed the need to go further. (sg)

[EESC welcomes debate on social Europe and calls for political backing](#)



Gabriele Bischoff and Jukka Ahtela, rapporteurs of the EESC opinion on the European Pillar of Social Rights

In the face of challenges that may block the EU's way forward, the current debate on the social dimension of Europe and the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) could help reach a new consensus on the strategies needed to secure economic growth and well-being of EU citizens, said the EESC in its opinion [Impact of the social dimension and the European Pillar of Social Rights on the Future of EU](#), adopted in October.

The EESC called on the Council of the EU to endorse the interinstitutional proclamation of the EPSR at the November summit in Gothenburg, and send a **political signal for its implementation**.

The text was drawn up by **Gabriele Bischoff** (Workers, DE) and **Jukka Ahtela** (Employers, FI) following the Commission's request for an opinion on its [Reflection Paper](#), but the EESC decided to link it with the proposed [Proclamation on the EPSR](#).

The EESC said that more efforts should be made to define common principles and strategies for the **upwards convergence of wages, a minimum income allowing all people to live in dignity and increased social cohesion and investment**. The EESC also expressed concern over the **lack of enforcement of existing social rights** and "the different worlds of compliance" with EU law in Member States. (ll)

[European rural areas need a boost](#)

Better rural development is possible, and local people are willing to deliver, but they need support. EU and national authorities need to empower villages and small towns. With its opinion on [Villages and small towns as catalysts for rural development](#), adopted at its October plenary session, the EESC wants to contribute to a revitalisation of Europe's rural areas.

"It is the responsibility of the EU and its Members States to deliver the impetus for rural development. We must make our countryside a more attractive place to live", says rapporteur **Tom Jones** (Various interests, UK).

Economic and social development require adequate infrastructure, including fast broadband services and a modern transport



network. "This includes not just the provision of a smart transport network for road and rail, but also smart and efficient use of the transport network", Mr Jones explained. The EESC strongly supports the European Commission's Smart Villages Initiative as a first step in the right direction.

Cooperation between cities, towns and rural areas in agri-tourism and rural tourism, health-related activities, and the food supply chain, would benefit the general public.

Sustainable rural development will only succeed with the assent of local people, who must be involved in decision-making. "We need to encourage people, particularly young people, give them a voice and support their ideas", underlines Mr Jones. (sma)

Road tolls should finance the cost of trans-European transport infrastructure



Toll revenues from the trans-European road network should be reinvested in transport infrastructure and be clearly earmarked, with charges from road use going to cover the costs of developing, operating and maintaining road infrastructure, while charges linked to external costs should be used to mitigate the negative effects of road transport. This was the key message of an EESC opinion on the Commission's proposed overhaul of the so-called Eurovignette directive, adopted at the EESC's October plenary.

As the Commission proposal stands, revenues from trans-European road tolls would go into state coffers. The EESC has proposed changing this based on the "user pays" and "polluter pays" principles:

"The 'user pays' principle means the money would go back into road maintenance and new investments in road infrastructure, while the resources generated under the 'polluter pays' principle would go towards reducing pollution, rolling out innovative traffic management systems and recharging points for electric vehicles, developing alternative modes of transport, etc.", says the opinion's rapporteur **Alberto Mazzola** (Employers, IT).

Allocation should be as transparent as possible, says Mr Mazzola, who suggests putting up billboards at motorway entrances to indicate how much has been paid over the course of the year to use the motorway concerned and how much has been reinvested in it. Congestion, accident and emission reductions indicators could also be displayed, he says.

Revenues, which are estimated to stand at **between EUR 10 billion and more than EUR 20 billion**, could boost the completion of the trans-European transport network. (dm)

EESC calls for clean, competitive and connected mobility for all by 2025



In an opinion adopted at the EESC's October plenary session, the Committee backs the EU's aim of ensuring clean, competitive and connected mobility integrating all means of transport by 2025, and urges the Commission to further improve the regulatory framework in order to establish an efficient Single European Transport Area.

This was the message of an EESC opinion adopted at the plenary session on 18 October, drawn up by rapporteur **Ulrich Samm** (Employers, DE) and co-rapporteur **Brian Curtis** (Workers, UK).

The EESC supports the mobility agenda set out by the European Commission and welcomes the attempt to resolve some outstanding single market transport issues while taking account of human and labour rights as well as environmental aspects.

However, the EESC urges the European Commission to further refine the proposed legislative changes.

"Transport will be revolutionised by digitalisation, providing better quality, convenience, flexibility, affordability and safety in services for consumers and businesses," noted Mr Samm.

Electric vehicles can help to reduce air pollution locally, while a clean electricity generation policy is essential in order to reach the EU's global GHG objectives. The EESC notes the discrepancy between the anticipated emissions reduction (13%) in road transport under this package and the 18-19% that the transport sector would need to contribute towards achieving the 2030 climate targets. It therefore emphasises that the production of clean electricity is a vital precondition for successfully introducing electric vehicles into the mass market. (mp)

Europe's soils deserve better management

Maintaining or improving the health of Europe's soils is one of the most important challenges in preserving our livelihood. As a first step, the EESC proposes a joint EU reference framework with a view to laying down uniform terminology and harmonised criteria for good soil status

Every decade, Europe loses an area of arable land the size of a Member State

At its plenary session in October, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted an opinion on **Land use for sustainable food production and ecosystem services**, a request from the Estonian presidency of the EU. "We often treat our soil as if it was abundant. Within a period of only six years, from 2006 to 2012, the annual land take in the European countries was approximately 107 000 ha/year, which translates into losing an area of arable land the size of Cyprus within less than 10 years. This enormous demand for land must be stopped", says **Roomet Sõrmus** (Various interests - Estonia), rapporteur of the opinion.



A reference framework for sustainable soil management

In all Member States, the loss of agricultural land poses a serious problem. "Our soils need to be protected. A joint EU soil reference framework defining good soil status, laying down uniform terminology and harmonised criteria for monitoring purposes, and defining priority policy measures would be of decisive importance for the sustainable use and protection of agricultural soil," says Mr Sörmus. (sma)

Europeans need more and better Europe to ensure economic progress



EU governance needs a common sense of purpose that goes beyond technical approaches and measures. This is one of the main conclusions of the package of EESC opinions on the future of the European economy. The opinions on [Euro area economic policy 2017](#), [Deepening EMU by 2025](#), [EU finances by 2025](#) and [Capital Markets Union: Mid-term Review](#) address current challenges for the EU economy and make specific proposals for tackling them.

Stimulating further economic reform and investment at EU level, restructuring and increasing the EU budget and completing the economic, fiscal, financial and political pillars of our Economic and Monetary Union: these are some of the main recommendations brought forward by the EESC in its package of opinions. The EESC advocates a balanced mix of euro area economic policies with properly interlinked fiscal, monetary and structural components, and calls on the European Council to reconsider its rejection of a positive fiscal stance for the euro area. In the EESC's view, deepening the EMU is crucial in order to better support monetary policy and national economic policies, as well as to strengthen the democratic and social dimension of EU governance. The Committee also welcomes the Commission's proposal to focus on European added value as a basic principle on the spending side of the EU budget, calls for more own resources to fund the EU budget, and urges all Member States to implement the Capital Markets Union speedily in order to provide the EU economy with new impetus and dynamism.

The recently unveiled Commission Work Programme for 2018 shows the Commission's intention to make specific proposals in the areas highlighted by the EESC. (jk)

Including clauses on good tax governance in international agreements will promote sustainable development



In recent years there has been considerable interest in the international tax system. Questions have been raised about the fairness of Double Taxation Agreements (DTAs) between developed and developing countries and their impact on tax revenues in developing countries.

At its October plenary session the EESC adopted an opinion on [EU development partnerships and the challenge posed by international tax agreements](#) (rapporteur: **Alfred Gajdosik**, Various Interests, AT; co-rapporteur: **Thomas Wagnsonner**, Workers, AT). The opinion points out the need to assess the impact of international tax reform efforts on the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The EESC welcomes the steps taken by the EU and its Members States to address the weaknesses of the international tax system. **Taxation policy should, however, play a bigger role in EU development policy. Furthermore, there is a need to include clauses on good tax governance in all relevant agreements between the EU and third countries in order to promote sustainable development.**

The EESC supports the idea of private investment fostering development, when such development is in line with the SDGs. Taxation matters go hand in hand with sustainable development objectives, which is why **businesses should pay their taxes in the country where they make profits.** (sg)

The European Solidarity Corps needs fresh funding and should focus on volunteering alone



The EESC welcomes the creation of the [European Solidarity Corps](#) (ESC), but some of the elements of this Commission's new programme for youth volunteering in Europe, including its funding, need to be further clarified and improved, the Committee said in its opinion on the legislative proposal for the ESC, adopted in October (rapporteur: **Pavel Trantina**, Various Interests, CZ; co-rapporteur: **Antonello Pezzini**, Employers, IT).

The EESC said it was very concerned with the proposed merging of the ESC goals with youth employment policies and suggested that the inclusion of job and traineeship placements in the programme should be reconsidered. Such an approach risked replacing paid work with unpaid labour for Europe's young people.

The ESC was first announced by Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in his [2016 State of the Union address](#). If approved, the ESC will have a budget of EUR 341.5 million for the 2018-2020 period, by the end of which it should welcome some 100 000 participants.

Almost 58% of the total ESC budget will be reallocated from Erasmus+. The EESC expressed concern over this reallocation of funds and stressed that investment in the ESC budget must not come at the expense of Erasmus+, which is already underfunded. It asked for more "fresh money" to be invested in the ESC. (II)

LeaderSHIP 2020 needs to be strengthened



Europe's shipbuilding industry needs the EU's strategic support. LeaderSHIP 2020 is the right tool but must be beefed up and extended to 2030. Europe must become the frontrunner in R&D on climate change, energy saving and vessel complexity, since the maritime industry is crucial to its economic and social future. Clustering would boost this heterogeneous industry and make it more competitive. Streamlining education and making jobs attractive to young people, including through enhanced mobility, is essential. The EU also needs to take a strong stance on the international market in order to fight unfair competition.

This was the bottom line of an event organised by the EESC in Brussels on 24 October, where experts debated the state of the industry.

EESC member **Marian Krzaklewski** (Workers - PL) outlined the challenges facing an area where Europe was struggling to maintain its critical mass.

CCMI delegate **Patrizio Pesci** stressed the potential for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth in this sector, which was still suffering from the economic and financial crisis and unfair competition from third countries.

Reinhard Lüken from SEA Europe warned that the lack of orders from previous years would only be felt in the years to come. LeaderSHIP 2020 was the right tool, but needed to be strengthened and translated into a LeaderSHIP 2030 programme encompassing the naval sector.

Elsbeth Hathaway from IndustriAll stressed that, despite job losses ranging from 15% to 75%, the sector still accounted for 5.4 million jobs in Europe and 50% of marine supplies worldwide. The challenge would be retaining skills. Life-long learning was crucial in this high-tech sector and mobility needed to be encouraged.

Agnieszka Montoya-Iwanczuk from DG Growth presented a study showing that the European shipbuilding supply chain as a whole was bigger than China's or Japan's but far more heterogeneous, with a few big and many small companies. Clustering and dedicated European maritime research would be called for. (sma)

EESC brings EU-Japan agreement to the public



The EU-Japan Agreement is as economically important as the TTIP, yet passes almost unnoticed among EU civil society and other stakeholders.

On 26 October the EESC provided an opportunity for civil society organisations to share their views on the agreement in principle on an EU-Japan Economic Partnership.

While participants agreed on the geostrategic importance of the agreement and its positive impact on the EU and Japanese economies, some expressed concern about the lack of transparency surrounding it.

Krzysztof Pater (Various Interests, PL), President of the EESC's Japan Follow-up Committee, stressed the need to closely involve civil society in monitoring and implementing the agreement, **by setting up a civil society Domestic Advisory Group (DAG)** as soon as

possible after its entry into force. "The EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement marks a new chapter in relations between the EU and Japan," said **Kazuo Kodama**, Japanese Ambassador to the EU. "We have a firm objective of finalising the agreement by the end of the year," said EU chief negotiator **Mauro Raffaele Petriccione**, who also highlighted the role for civil society through consultative bodies and joint civil society dialogue.

Participants pointed to **investment protection and data flows** as key outstanding issues, along with the impact on the environment and consumers. The Sustainable Development chapter in the agreement was welcomed, but its enforceability challenged. (sg)

The fight against climate change cannot be won at the expense of ordinary citizens

"The fight against climate change can only succeed if all citizens are included. But it is not enough to convince people that we need to change our lifestyles: it is also important to give them the necessary support," said EESC president **Georges Dassis** at the start of a COP23 side event on **A just transition to low-carbon economy** hosted by the EESC in Bonn on 8 November.

The EESC presented its [opinion on Climate Justice](#). This concept recognises that the poorest and most vulnerable in society often have to suffer the greatest impact from climate change. Therefore the EESC proposes an EU Bill of Climate Rights in the context of the challenges of the global climate change crisis.

In order to mitigate its impact, consumers need to be provided with sustainable alternatives which do not mean poorer quality or higher prices. The EESC is also calling for subsidies on fossil fuels to be eliminated.

It believes that all citizens have the right to a clean environment, and not only in Europe. "Solidarity must be at the heart of the implementation of the Paris Agreement. This is a common and inclusive initiative which needs cooperation at all levels," Mr Dassis concluded. (sma)



News from the Groups

Advantages of a Digital Society, by the EESC's Employers' Group



A digital society is not simply a nice thing to have; it is the only thing to have – this was one of the conclusions of the conference on the **Advantages of a digital society**, organised by the Employers' Group, which took place on 25 October 2017 in Tallinn, Estonia. The participants discussed various aspects of e-society and the Digital Single Market. Cyber security, societal trust, the free flow of data, the further development of infrastructure and getting rid of barriers hindering the Digital Single Market were just a few of the issues raised.

Digitalisation is already changing the way we operate our businesses. The revolution is here and everyone can benefit from it, underlined **Jacek P. Krawczyk**, president of the Employers' Group, in his welcome speech.

New business models come with a new mindset, said **Kadri Simson**, Estonian Minister of Economic Affairs and Infrastructure, in her keynote address. It is crucial to see digitalisation as an opportunity, not as a threat. Legislation should help companies grow, rather than create new barriers.

The conference was organised jointly by the Employers' Group, the Estonian presidency of the Council of the EU, the Estonian Employers' Confederation and the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. (lj)

Le dialogue social européen: Histoire d'une innovation sociale (1985-2003), by the EESC's Workers' Group



On 7 December 2017, the Workers' Group is organising a presentation of the book **Le dialogue social européen: Histoire d'une innovation sociale (1985-2003)** [European social dialogue: history of a social innovation (1985-2003)]

The book explores the history of European social dialogue from its genesis to its independence. This exploration is achieved through documentation as well as interviews with various leading participants who conceived, took part in and developed European social dialogue – trade unionists, employers and European figures. It is not a peaceful history and contains a certain amount of conflict and failure. But it also possesses a strong, deeply rooted European philosophy. It understands what can bring tangible benefits for citizens. And it is one of the best ways to achieve European fundamental values: social progress and solidarity, cohesion and democracy, resilient development.

The presentation by author **Jean Lapeyre**, former ETUC deputy secretary-general, will be followed by a debate with numerous national trade union leaders. Contributions are expected by **Gabriele Bischoff**, President of the EESC Workers' Group, **Cándido Méndez**, former secretary-general of the UGT and former ETUC president, **Luc Triangle**, industrial secretary-general, **Marie-Hélène Ska**, CSC secretary-general, **Peter Scherrer**, ETUC deputy secretary-general, and many others. The idea is to look together at the past in order to better reflect on the future of social dialogue and collective bargaining. (mg)

Bringing culture to the heart of the EU, by the EESC's Various Interests Group

Under the chairmanship of its President Luca Jahier, the Various Interests Group organised a concert on 18 October 2017 entitled **El Sistema Belgium: ReMuA / Shake Young Orchestra and the Connect Ensemble**. This was the first cultural initiative organised at the EESC as part of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018.

El Sistema Belgium: ReMuA/Shake Young Orchestra and the Connect ensemble ReMuA, a non-profit association, has been sending its musicians into schools in Brussels and Liège since 2013 to run weekly music workshops based on the famous Venezuelan project, El Sistema, with its group approach to learning an instrument. After a number of years, the most advanced children are now playing in



the ReMuA/Shake Young Orchestra.

This vibrant, multicultural youth orchestra was accompanied by the Connect ensemble. Over a number of years, the El Sistema Belgium project has given hundreds of children the chance to start studying music and learn an instrument at school or in their local neighbourhood.

Learning to sing and/or play an instrument as part of a group becomes a regular part of these children's lives, with workshops of between 1.5 and 5 hours a week. Orchestra rehearsals are the expression of a community where listening, respect and the spirit of cooperation are paramount. In Brussels, the municipalities of Molenbeek, Laeken, Schaerbeek, Forest, Ixelles and Bruxelles-Ville are alive with budding, ReMuA-trained musicians performing in one or other of the El Sistema Belgium orchestras. (cl)

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