



# EESC info

## European Economic and Social Committee

A bridge between Europe and organised civil Society

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### Available Languages:

bg cs da de el en es et fi fr hr hu it lt lv mt nl pl pt ro sk sl sv

### Editorial



Dear readers,

This will be my last editorial as EESC Vice-President responsible for Communication.

The last two and a half years have been full of challenges, joy, responsibility and a number of concerns.

It is not up to me to take stock of this term of office in charge of Communication at the Committee. Rather, I should like to take the opportunity to say a few words of gratitude to everyone.

I take work at the Committee very seriously. Being a member of this European Union advisory body provides a real opportunity to make a positive contribution to the European process and venture.

Today, as was the case 60 years ago, the role of the EESC is a necessary one. Today, as was the case 60 years ago, Europe provides the path to peace and growth, and civil society organisations must continue to play an active part in this unique project.

In my capacity as EESC member, I understand that I - like all the members - have an extra responsibility here.

Of course, the responsibility of representing my industrial confederation, the Confederation of Portuguese Business, which was the body that recommended me for this EU advisory body, is an honour, and I am most proud to be doing so. However, I feel I must mention my personal sense of responsibility as a citizen of Europe. This sense of responsibility pushes me every day to become a better worker, better

member, better citizen and a better person. It has without doubt become greatly heightened since I have taken part in the EESC's work and has been further strengthened since I have headed up Communication at our Committee over the last two and a half years.

Therefore I have placed a major focus on creating the best conditions so that all members can communicate and raise the profile of their work at the EESC and assume their responsibilities of representing civil society in all the Member States.

As I said, there have been many challenges and many things to be pleased about. However, there have also been many matters about which to be concerned. Europe has been called into question a great deal over the last few years. There has been mounting concern over each election and some of the results have been perplexing.

But instead of being just perplexed, we must listen to the messages being sent out. Since we are witnessing extremist movements throughout Europe, we must not remain outside the debate. And because we strongly believe in the European project, we have to assume that everything, but everything that we can do, may have an impact on what we want for the future of Europe.

It is for this reason that I am going to reiterate the point: more than communicating with people about the EESC as an institution, it has been our concern to communicate to people the EESC's work as a pillar of the European construction process. This work is carried out by our members, with help from all the EESC's staff, whom I should like here to salute and thank for their incredible support during this term of office. The Committee's members, like myself, have to accept their role in building Europe - precisely because it is our responsibility to do so!

And they should not be prevented from doing this by a lack of communication tools.

A thank you to everyone for a fantastic terms of office. I will still be here and will always be available to take on my responsibilities in contributing to a Europe of peace, growth, responsibility, strengthened by the role that the EESC and civil society organisations play in this. Let us not lose any time here!

Gonçalo Lobo Xavier

## Diary Dates

15/03/2018 - 16/03/2018

Brussels

**Your Europe, Your Say!**

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20/03/2018

Sofia

**European Consumer Day**

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10/04/2018

Brussels

**ECI DAY 2018: Working Together**

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18/04/2018 - 19/04/2018

Brussels

**EESC's plenary session**

## In short

### [United in diversity: a younger future for European culture](#)



The motto of the European Union is incorporated in the title of the ninth annual *Your Europe, Your Say!* event (YEYS), which will be held on 15 and 16 March. The EESC's youth event will be devoted to the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

The EESC has invited 99 pupils aged between 16 and 18 to come to Brussels and draw up recommendations to the EU with regard to Europe's cultural heritage. The participants, who will come from schools across all 28 Member States and the five candidate countries, will be asked to propose measures that would help better protect and promote Europe's cultural heritage, which accounts for 300 000 direct jobs and 7.8 million indirect jobs.

In the run-up to the event in Brussels, each of the selected schools has been visited by an EESC member, who informed the young people and their class about the EU, the EESC and the event. In Brussels, the proceedings will be opened by the EESC president, Georges Dassis, followed by the secretary-general of Europa Nostra, Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, and the young Belgian-Greek actress Daphne Patakia. The pupils will then get down to discussing their ideas and coming up with ten recommendations, and ultimately selecting the best three using the Committee members' voting system. EESC vice-president Gonçalo Lobo Xavier will chair the proceedings.

[Your Europe, Your Say! 2018](#) will give the participants a unique opportunity to debate with other young people, while learning more about the EU and the EESC's role. (dv)

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### [The future of democracy in Europe is directly linked to a peaceful and federal Europe](#)

The future of democracy in Europe was debated at a two-day European-level conference organised by EESC president **Georges Dassis** at the Acropolis museum in Athens on 1-2 March. In a room full of actively engaged participants from EU institutions, the Greek government, civil society organisations and universities, Georges Dassis clearly made the case for a federal, peaceful Europe which champions solidarity and the well-being of its citizens.

**"Populism, which is rising dangerously in European countries, cannot be fought with words** . The European Union must provide tangible answers to citizens' need for security and for work for themselves and a future for their children", said EESC president Georges Dassis. "We want a Union that can deliver equal opportunities for all. To tackle populism, to counter the frustration felt by the most vulnerable people in our countries, we must now bring social aspects to the fore, without of course letting the EU economy fall apart."



Georges Dassis called for a **European finance minister, who will be accountable and elected**. He mentioned the upcoming European elections and expressed support for transnational lists that could ensure that the views of citizens would be heeded, "otherwise elections will be about national, not European issues", he stressed.

As a side event to the conference, Georges Dassis received an award from the Greek Economic and Social Committee (ESC) for his commitment to, and support for, social dialogue in Europe. (ks)

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## [EU legislation should include more measures to ensure rights of women with disabilities](#)



Women with disabilities should be able to take decisions on matters that concern them and be fairly represented in public institutions, disability organisations said at a conference on "Women with disabilities in the EU: the situation and the way forward" at the European Economic and Social Committee.

Most of the speakers agreed that women with disabilities were more disadvantaged than their male counterparts, and despite progress being made, they still faced double discrimination in the EU. It was stressed that women with disabilities were not specifically addressed by the policies. Speakers emphasised the need to promote legislation at EU level to protect the rights of women with disabilities specifically. It was asserted that particular attention should be paid to violence against women with disabilities, as they were more likely to become victims of domestic violence. Participants in the conference included

representatives of various disability organisations, as well as of the European Commission and the European Parliament. (mb/ia)

## **EESC News**

### [Turkey's role in the refugee crisis is crucial, but there is room for improvement](#)



In an [opinion](#) adopted at the February plenary, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) said it recognised Turkey's efforts in hosting more than three million refugees, but stressed the need for it to grant them the non-discriminatory protection required by international law.

The EESC criticised the fact that refugees in Turkey faced "serious obstacles, shortcomings and problems as regards access to work and basic services, such as health and welfare, education and, more generally, integration into society."

On the other hand, EU Member States' performance in terms of resettlement and relocation of refugees continues to be disappointing, stressed rapporteur **Dimitris Dimitriadis**, adding that the EESC strongly condemned the xenophobic attitude of some Member States to the

refugee crisis.

He said that the EESC was calling for the establishment of a mechanism which would monitor whether both sides were complying with the EU-Turkey Statement on Refugees, reached in 2016 to curb irregular migration.

The EESC also expressed concern about the state of human rights in Turkey, as well as the obstacles increasingly encountered by Turkish civil society organisations, given their important contribution to the humanitarian situation of refugees.

"It is a big challenge for a country to host so many migrants, but it does not take away the responsibility to receive them in a dignified manner," EESC members concluded during the discussion on the opinion. (ll)

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### [EESC invited to take part in Emmanuel Macron's European citizen consultations project](#)



**The EESC has a vital role to play in the public consultations proposed by the French President, since the initiatives taken daily by the EESC, enabling civil society to have a say in shaping Europe at the highest level, are fundamentally in line with the idea behind the consultations. This was the message conveyed by Nathalie Loiseau, French minister for European affairs, in her address to the EESC plenary in Brussels on 15 February.**

The minister outlined the project of French President Emmanuel Macron to launch a series of public consultations across the Member States to rebuild Europe on the basis of the aspirations and proposals, but also the criticisms and concerns, voiced by the people of Europe during the consultations.

"The aim is to give Europeans a fresh chance to speak out so that ...we can identify those areas where Europe's presence is too weak, those where people would like Europe to take action of a different kind, and those where people may even feel that Europe is too intrusive", the minister explained.

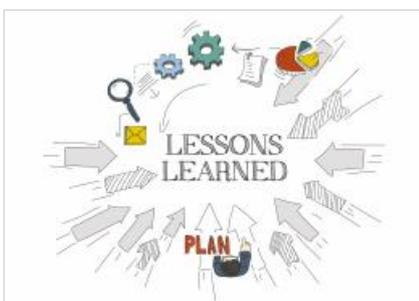
The idea is to mobilise a very substantial number of people by holding classic debates, online consultations and democratic participatory events.

The president of the EESC, **Georges Dassis**, welcomed the initiative, referring to the two sets of large-scale consultations – inspired by the same philosophy – held by the EESC over the past two years in the EU Member States, one on the situation of migrants and the other on the White Paper on the future of Europe.

The minister announced that 24 EU countries had already signed up to take part in the consultations, scheduled to take place between April and October 2018. The findings would feed into a study by Heads of States and Governments, who would examine the recommendations at the December 2018 European Council. (dm)

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## [Lessons learned from austerity make a change of policy mandatory](#)



**Future crisis management should strive for a better balance between fiscal and social objectives to avoid adverse effects on the economic capacity, labour markets and social protection systems of the countries concerned. Instead of restrictive austerity, the EU institutions should implement policies in pursuit of economic cooperation, growth and solidarity, urges the EESC in its own-initiative opinion on [Lessons learned for avoiding the severity of austerity policies](#).**

"The EU institutions should be solely responsible for developing and implementing adjustment programmes, even if partnerships with external institutions are established," said rapporteur **José Leirião** (Various Interests, PT). "This is of the utmost importance as they have to be in line with our common values and objectives and must avoid the inconsistencies and shortcomings that have arisen in the past."

Based on the experience of the most recent crisis, the EU institutions should ensure that the social partners and representatives of civil society are involved on an equal footing with other bodies in the establishment, periodic monitoring and assessment of these programmes.

The Committee welcomes the aims of the Commission to reform the euro by abandoning austerity policies and deepening the EMU, as it considers that a reformed and completed EMU will make the EU more resistant to asymmetric shocks and help prevent future crises.

Nevertheless, the EESC urges the Commission to design supplementary programmes for the economic and social recovery of countries which were/are subject to austerity and believes that the Commission should propose measures to tackle, at EU level, the increase in poverty and to preserve social protection. (jk)

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## [EESC puts forward proposals to make cybersecurity a reality](#)



**The EU should strengthen ENISA's mandate as the EU cybersecurity agency, create a certification framework at European level, and focus on the education and protection of internet users.**

In an [opinion](#) adopted at the February plenary session and drafted by **Alberto Mazzola** and **Antonio Longo**, the EESC broadly supports the [cybersecurity package](#) submitted by the European Commission.

According to a special Eurobarometer survey on "Europeans' attitudes towards cybersecurity", 73% of internet users are concerned that their online personal information may not be kept secure by websites and 65% that it may not be kept secure by public authorities. Most respondents are concerned about being the victims of various forms of cybercrime, and especially about malicious software on their device (69%), identity theft (69%) and bank card and online banking fraud (66%).

In order to enhance the European cybersecurity framework, the Committee proposes a number of practical measures.

- **Strengthening ENISA as the EU cybersecurity agency**

The EESC agrees with the Commission that the mandate of the **European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA)** should be made permanent. However, the EESC is also of the view that ENISA should be given more financial resources and focus its action on supporting e-government and digital identity for persons and organisations.

- **A European cybersecurity certification**

The Committee believes that an **EU cybersecurity certification framework** should be put in place, with different requirements according to the different sectors. Certification schemes would help to increase security according to present needs and threat knowledge and should be based on commonly defined European cybersecurity and ICT standards at international level.

- **The human factor: education and protection**

The EESC thinks that the Commission's proposal should focus on **improving cyber skills** among individuals and businesses and recommends three lines of action: lifelong learning and training programmes, awareness campaigns, and the creation of an EU-certified curriculum for high schools and professionals. (mp)

*In the photo: Alberto Mazzola, EESC rapporteur and Antonio Longo, EESC co-rapporteur of the opinion on the Cybersecurity Act.*

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## [Reforming the ESFS is an important step towards completing the CMU](#)



**Advocating swift establishment of the Capital Markets Union (CMU), the EESC endorses the Commission's proposals aimed at reforming the bodies of the European System of Financial Supervision (ESFS) by increasing their competences and improving their governance and funding.**

"The proposed reforms are an important step towards more integration and convergence," said **Daniel Mareels** (Employers, BE), rapporteur for the [opinion on ESFS - Reforms](#). "They provide new building blocks for completing the CMU and ensure that financial markets are well-regulated, strong and stable".

In the Committee's view, a smoothly operating CMU with integrated supervision would contribute to more cross-border market transactions, and private, cross-border risk-sharing would make Member States more resilient to asymmetric shocks and contribute to economic recovery in the euro area.

The EESC believes that the ESFS reforms must contribute to achieving a single European capital markets supervisor, but that further steps towards integration require dialogue and consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

Regarding the establishment of the competences of national and European supervisory authorities, it urges applying the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality where possible and ensuring clarity and legal certainty. In addition, shortcomings in supervision that impede the realisation of the CMU should be tackled.

Looking to the future, the EESC considers that new developments and technologies – such as FinTech – as well as more sustainable financing should be reflected in the system of supervision. Finally, the Committee calls for ensuring transparency of any alterations in the distribution of costs and appropriate control of overall resources. (jk)

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## [EESC is calling for more public investment to promote economic growth in the EU](#)



**In its recent opinion on the Commission's Annual Growth Survey (AGS) for 2018, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) pointed to the strategic importance of the European Semester, but said that it advocated expanding it with a purpose, in order to ensure not only the economic and social, but also the environmental sustainability of the EU's macroeconomic policies.**

The Committee praised the inclusion of social indicators - the Social Scoreboard - in the 2018 AGS, maintaining that it has boosted the European Semester's social dimension.

"The EESC is in favour of making the Semester support the European Social Pillar so that it becomes a tool for better living and working conditions for Europeans. We would like to see the Pillar's objectives mainstreamed into the policies and decisions taken," said the

rapporteur for the opinion, **Dimitris Dimitriadis**.

The Committee vowed that it would continue contributing to the Semester, but it also flagged the need to **increase the involvement of civil society and to foster public investment**.

Public investment should include boosting social investment in measures fostering education and training and improving public services, care infrastructure and social cohesion across the EU, with a view to boosting human capital development and ensuring a skilled labour force as well as a strong social dimension.

The EESC also said it was stressing the need for a non-systemic approach to structural reforms, which should be carried out only when necessary. (ll)

*In the photo: Dimitris Dimitriadis, EESC rapporteur*

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## [The EU must take action as regards the medical technology sector](#)



**The European institutions must spearhead the optimising of Europe's medical technology industry, as its performance is currently plagued by excessive fragmentation and growing competition pressures, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) said at its plenary session on 14 February.**

In its opinion on "[Industrial change in the health sector](#)", the EESC warned that competitors are already at Europe's doorstep. Trade negotiations must therefore secure up-to-date European production in providing universal health care.

"It is the EU's responsibility to streamline the medical technology sector, bundle initiatives inside the countries and regions and make it world-fit. Europe's governments, insurance companies, regulators, patient and medical staff representatives, and the industry must come together to cooperate and develop a common strategy," said rapporteur **Joost van Iersel**.

"Also, the human factor is paramount", added co-rapporteur **Enrico Gibellieri**. "The transition to a new health and care sector requires an open mind, new forms of professionalism and a redesign of health and care related work. The European social dialogue in health and social services should be reinforced, with a focus on education and training programmes and the quality of working conditions."

While the medical technology sector is a buoyant sector and still in a leading position, the challenges the industry is currently facing - including unfair trade practices and high fragmentation - must be tackled now in order to quickly adapt to an ever-changing environment. (sma)

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## [Climate action: we need to send a strong signal to non-state actors](#)



In its opinion on [Boosting climate actions by non-state actors](#), the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) proposes a European Dialogue, the main goal of which would be to make engagement in climate change more attractive to the various non-state stakeholders so that it becomes the new *business as usual*.

"We already have a lot of small projects in energy, transport, agriculture, forestry, etc. and we have to make them more visible and give them greater support, be it through better regulation or easier access to finance. It is important to send a strong and positive message to small businesses and civil society", said rapporteur [Mindaugas Maciulevičius](#).

According to an EESC survey among non-state actors, their most pressing needs are:

- supportive policy/legislative environment;
- access to public funds and fiscal incentives;
- exchange of knowledge and good practices/examples to follow, capacity building;
- improved cooperation among the various players in the private and public spheres.

"Despite its strong global leadership, the EU lacks an internal framework that creates an enabling environment for non-state climate actions", added co-rapporteur [Josep Puxeu Rocamora](#), "and it is our task to remind the Commission of its responsibility".

The European Dialogue (ED) should respond to the needs of non-state actors, prioritise the strategic linking of existing programmes, initiatives and institutions and provide an overview of climate actions. A first step towards the ED should be an event in 2018, bringing together stakeholder networks, representatives from EU institutions and Member States. (sma)

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## [EESC says Commission's proposal on free flow of non-personal data in the EU lacks ambition](#)



The European Commission's [proposal](#) is overdue, and lacks ambition, consistency, and convincing mechanisms for its effective implementation.

In its [opinion](#) on the free flow of non-personal data in the EU, drafted by **Jorge Pegado Liz** and adopted at the February plenary session, the EESC takes a stand against the approach adopted by the European Commission.

The Committee points out that a legislative initiative in the field of the free flow of non-personal data is essential in order to achieve the objectives of the Digital Agenda and complete the Digital Single Market.

However, the EESC is of the view that the Commission does not really address the three most important objectives, and it therefore cannot endorse the current text. "This proposal will not contribute towards achieving the basic objectives", noted **Mr Pegado Liz**. "It needs to be part of a more global approach; it must be the first step in the future development of a more ambitious way of genuinely securing free movement of non-personal data in the European Union's digital market."

- **Data localisation requirements**

Objective 1: Improve the cross-border mobility of non-personal data in the single market.

- **Data availability for competent authorities**

Objective 2: Ensure that the powers of competent authorities to request and receive access to data for regulatory control purposes, such as for inspection and audit, remain unaffected.

- **Data porting for professional users**

Objective 3: Make it easier for professional users of data storage or other processing services to switch service providers and to port data. (mp)

In the photo: [Jorge Pegado Liz](#), EESC rapporteur of the opinion on the free flow of non-personal data in the EU

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## [Leaving no one behind: EESC committed to making circular economy "business as usual"](#)



Opening the Circular Economy Stakeholder Conference at the European Commission on February 20, EESC president **Georges Dassis** said: "the transition to a circular economy is a great opportunity for civil society. It is already happening on the ground.... However, we need to ensure that it is widely accepted. Leaving no one behind is one of the objectives of the Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, a crucial space in which to forge this kind of shared vision of the transition to a circular and sustainable European economy".

The second day of the conference, which was hosted by the EESC, focused on the ideas and actions emerging across Europe, where the social economy, companies, workers, farmers, manufacturers and consumers are implementing the circular economy on the ground.

The EESC welcomed over **300 participants** to take part in **16 parallel workshops** where they could actively **share knowledge and best practices** and **flag up obstacles** to the development of the circular economy.

Topics for discussion included **repairability** and **ecodesign**, the role of **waste**, **extended producer responsibility**, the circular approach in the **agri-food and forestry sector**, **the circular economy globally**, its **job dimension**, **green financing**, creating a **problem-solving community** and **SMEs vis-à-vis the circular economy**.

What emerged from discussions was that **time was pressing** and **all players had to be involved**. The circular economy community needed to be as inclusive as possible and **practical experiences shared to the maximum to produce a multiplier effect**.

Raising the tempo and mobilising the broadest possible forces are the main tasks to be achieved by the EESC, through its management of the website and the development of a truly cooperative and engaged community of stakeholders.

A full report with the main findings of the Conference is to be posted soon on the [European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform's](#) website. (dm)

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## **The EESC calls on EU Member States to speed up completion of the EMU**



**The Member States must urgently work on a stable, prosperous and more resilient EMU. Therefore, further measures at national and EU level are needed: this is one of the main conclusions of a public debate on completing the EMU, recently hosted by the EESC.**

Economic experts and institutional and civil society representatives agreed that current challenges and the lessons learned from past crises showed a clear need to reform and complete the EMU, whilst current EU-wide economic recovery and increasing civic support for the euro provided an excellent opportunity to do so.

The participants in the debate saw a particular need for swift completion of the Banking Union and Capital Markets Union in order to move towards completing the EMU. They urged the Member States and the Commission to ensure the sustainability of future finances and to strike the right balance between responsibility and solidarity in future decisions on the EMU.

Four accelerators that could be used at EU level in order to maximise the effects of domestic structural reforms were presented: a common euro area macroeconomic strategy to deal with asymmetric shocks, a joint approach to financing investment and innovation at microeconomic level, a euro area budget to finance certain European public goods, and a more effective and accountable institutional framework giving the euro area, for example, a finance minister.

The EESC rapporteurs, **Mihai Ivaşcu** (Various Interests) and **Stefano Palmieri** (Workers), will include the findings of the debate in an [opinion](#) on the Commission's [EMU package](#), which will be put to the vote this April. (jk)

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## **EESC at European Industry Day**



**"The challenges for Europe's industry are extraordinary, and no single Member State can meet them alone. But the opportunities are also enormous. We have to grab them to keep our lead in the many sectors where we have it and get it back where we have almost lost it to competitors".**

This path, however, will only be successful if all 28 Member States play together, not solo. Therefore I call on the Commission and the Member States to blend the many existing policies into a single longer-term strategy and commit our countries to coherent action in order to support industry clusters across national borders", said [Gonçalo Lobo Xavier](#), EESC vice-president, at the European Industry Day.

In its opinion **Investing in a smart, innovative and sustainable industry**, adopted on 15 February, the EESC also calls for the completion of the single market, including the capital market. It is particularly necessary to enhance standardisation and self-regulation.

"The low-carbon and circular economy offers many business opportunities. In order to grab them, we need a common framework and a longer-term strategy, as well as Member States' commitment to coherent action. Furthermore, our enterprises need a level playing field. Therefore the Commission must actively tackle unfair trade practices" said opinion rapporteur [Bojidar Danev](#).

Since the structure of the labour market will change dramatically, the EESC wants proper assessments to avoid any potential negative impact on employees. Work-based learning solutions must be applied more widely to enable all workers to upgrade their skills and digital abilities.

"People must be at the core of change", stressed opinion co-rapporteur [Monica Sitarová Hrušecká](#). "The opportunities afforded by new technologies must not only be harnessed to create new products, but also to improve working conditions for staff". (sma)

*In the photo: Gonçalo Lobo Xavier, EESC vice-president*

## **News from the Groups**

### **Employers to discuss measures to bridge the skills gap**

*by the Employers' Group*

**The Employers' Group, together with major Bulgarian employers' associations, is holding a conference in Sofia, Bulgaria on 22 March entitled Bridging the skills gap for growth and job creation - a business perspective. The panellists will share best practices and discuss tangible solutions for addressing the skills gap. The event is part of the calendar of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.**



What are the reasons for the current skills mismatches? How can we promote the right skills, needed in the knowledge-based economy? How can education systems be adapted to modern challenges? What kind of reforms are needed? What should be done at European and national level? These are just a few of the questions that the conference participants will attempt to answer. The conference will bring together speakers from national and European employers' organisations, the Bulgarian government and parliament and EU agencies.

The skills gap is a growing challenge for European companies. Employees with relevant skills are key to companies' competitiveness. Forty percent of employers have difficulty finding people with the skills they need to grow and innovate. At the same time, 70 million Europeans lack proper reading and writing skills and even more have poor numeracy and digital skills. (lj)

## Gabriele Bischoff on International Women's Day



**On International Women's Day we celebrate women, remembering not only what we have achieved, but what still lies ahead of us. This year the Workers' Group is focusing particularly on men. Why focus on men on a day that celebrates women? Because gender equality is not just a women's issue. Without engaging men we will never achieve true gender equality.**

In the European Union, the average uptake of paternity leave and / or parental leave by men is only 10%. In some Members States it is as low as 5%. Women bear the main responsibility for caring for children and other dependents, as well as doing the majority of work in the home. We will never achieve gender equality without tackling these stereotypes.

The European Commission's proposal for legislation on work-life balance for parents and carers would certainly help. It would introduce a right to paid paternity leave for fathers at the time of the birth. It would also introduce **paid** parental leave. Parents can already take parental leave up until the child is 8, however payment is not compulsory. This is one of the main reasons why so few men take it. The Commission proposes that parental leave be paid and available until the child is 12 years old. It also proposes a new right to 5 days paid carers' leave.

This is the added value of Europe: setting common minimum standards. It is our Europe, Social, Just and Democratic.

On 8 March, I always remember our movement's beautiful song:

We want bread but roses too. This year we also want the Work-Life Balance Directive.

#IwantWorkLifeBalance

In Solidarity

Gabriele Bischoff is the president of the EESC's Workers' Group.

## EESC's Various Interests Group calls for innovation in civil society



*by the EESC's Various Interests Group*

An **extraordinary meeting** of the Various Interests Group held on 15 February saw the presentation of a study entitled ***The future evolution of civil society in the European Union by 2030***. The EESC had commissioned the Centre for information service, cooperation and development of NGOs (**CNVOS** - Slovenia) and the European Network of National Civil Society Associations (**ENNA**) to carry out the study.

Its aim was to better understand what is going on within European civil society organisations (CSOs), what challenges they face, how those challenges are affecting them and how to respond to them.

The study, as well as the panellists – among them Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso, European Parliament vice-president in charge of relations with the EESC and the CoR – and participants at the event pointed to clear and encouraging signs – first and foremost, the willingness of CSOs and institutions to engage and stand up for and act upon the European values outlined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights), and preserve and develop the European democratic system, in which CSOs glue together our societies, playing an intermediary role between citizens and institutions.

CSOs promote and defend our fundamental European values. They forge and consolidate identity, trust and solidarity. In order to ensure that they adapt to changes and challenges, and keep on playing their advocacy and participatory role in the decision-making process, a number of measures will have to be put in place. Innovative working methods should be devised, focusing on diversifying funding sources, adapting managerial strategies and developing new services related to civic education, media literacy and fact-checking. (ih)



**Soon in the EESC/Cultural events**

## The Cyrillic Alphabet - the New Alphabet in the European Union



In the framework of the Bulgarian EU Presidency, the EESC is hosting the exhibition "The Cyrillic Alphabet - the New Alphabet in the European Union" from 15 March to 24 May 2018. The exhibition consists of a series of posters, created by students of the Department of Books and Print Graphics of Bulgaria's National Academy of Art in 2007, on the occasion of the country's accession to the EU. (ck)

### Editors:

Eleonora Di Nicolantonio (editor-in-chief)  
Daniela Marangoni (dm)

### Contributors to this issue:

Chrysanthi Kokkini (ck)  
Daniela Marangoni (dm)  
Daniele Vitali (dv)  
Indre Anskaityte (ia)  
Isabelle Henin (ih)  
Jasmin Kloetzing (jk)  
Katerina Serifi (ks)  
Laura Lui (ll)  
Leszek Jarosz (lj)  
Marco Pezzani (mp)  
Margarida Reis (mr)  
Margarita Gavanis (mg)  
Maria Bofill (mb)  
Siana Glouharova (sg)  
Silvia M. Aumair (sma)

### Coordination:

Agata Berdys (ab)  
Katerina Serifi (ks)

### Address:

European Economic and Social Committee  
Jacques Delors Building,  
99 Rue Belliard,  
B-1040 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel. (+32 2) 546.94.76  
Email: [eescinfo@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:eescinfo@eesc.europa.eu)

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Next issue: April 2018

March 2018/3

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