



EESC info

European Economic and Social Committee

A bridge between Europe and organised civil society

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The Grassroots View – S3 Episode 20 – The Energy Crisis

One in four households in the European Union cannot afford to sufficiently heat, cool or light their homes. What does this mean for European citizens, and especially for those with fewer resources? This episode of The Grassroots View analyses the impact of the energy crisis on our daily lives. With **Elena Mastantuono** (EESC), **Sonja Van Renssen** (Energy Monitor), **Sabrina Iannazzone** (European Anti-Poverty Network) and **Thomas Dorget** (Confrontations Europe). (tk)

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EDITORIAL



Editorial

Dear readers,

The war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic have caused significant socio-economic turmoil across Europe and the world. Almost seven months on from the start of the war, fear of rising energy prices and energy insecurity, together with food price volatility and global inflation, are endangering people's lives and well-being worldwide. Thus, the situation in Ukraine, with its long-term consequences of soaring energy prices, will be among the topics that dominate our work at the European Economic and Social Committee in the coming months.

In our contribution to the European Commission's work programme for 2023, we emphasised the energy crisis, which has been amplified by the EU's dependency on Russian gas, the need to limit as far as possible its exposure to unreliable suppliers and to diversify its energy sources.

In addition to the supply difficulties and Member States' duty to ensure energy for households and businesses, another challenge is to stay on track with climate neutrality by 2050 and the EU's other long-term needs. EU policies should at the same time bring economic, social and environmental benefits. Achieving this magic triangle would allow our societies to overcome the crises, respecting the planetary boundaries and leaving nobody behind.

In order to take citizens' demands seriously, measures are needed to improve civil dialogue, as was highlighted in the proposals that emerged from the Conference on the Future of Europe. The EESC stands ready to play its role and properly follow up the Conference's outcome and if a Convention is organised, the EESC must play a prominent role in it. We will continue to work on this in the second half of 2022.

I hope that the summer break has brought everyone at least some peace of mind and the additional energy boost we all need to face the challenges ahead.

Christa Schweng

EESC President

DIARY DATES

21-22 September 2022, Brussels

EESC plenary session

26 September 2022, Brussels

Annual Conference on Fundamental rights and the Rule of Law - Putting the Rule of Law Report recommendations into action

20-21 October 2022, Brussels

Seventh European Migration Forum



TO THE POINT

In our "To the point" column, EESC members share their views on important issues on the European agenda. This time, we asked EESC member **Judith Vorbach** (rapporteur for the September plenary session for the own-initiative opinion on "Social taxonomy – Challenges and opportunities") the following: On a European level, what tracks and challenges lie ahead for the implementation of a social taxonomy in the course of negotiations for the green taxonomy?



JUDITH VORBACH: A SOCIAL TAXONOMY FOR SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT

The goal of the EU taxonomy is to channel investments towards sustainability by providing a transparent classification system for investors and companies. Currently, the EU Taxonomy Regulation and its implementing acts focus on climate-related and environmental goals, complemented by minimum social safeguards. While the EESC welcomes the green goals, it calls for a concept of holistic sustainability, so that the taxonomy includes environmental, as well as social sustainability.

The minimum social safeguards are useful, but not enough to ensure social sustainability for workers, consumers and communities. The planned social taxonomy will gain importance if it is part of an overall policy geared towards social sustainability, which also implies the financing of social welfare by government spending, and the importance of public investment.

The EESC calls on the Commission to publish the overdue report describing the provisions that would be required to extend the taxonomy's scope to "other sustainability objectives, such as social objectives", as requested in the Taxonomy Regulation. The EESC points to the comprehensive preparatory work done by

the Platform on Sustainable Finance, and recommends adhering to the proposed objectives of decent work, adequate living standards and inclusive communities reflected in a multilevel approach. Also, the upcoming Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive would be a complement to a social taxonomy against which the activities could be evaluated. The EESC recommends starting with simple criteria and providing for easy and transparent procedures. The close integration of the social and green taxonomies should be a goal, but as a first step, mutual minimum safeguards might be practical.

The rising demand for socially orientated investment should be supported by providing a reliable taxonomy which makes companies who contribute to social sustainability more visible. A well-designed social taxonomy would contribute significantly to tackling the problem of social washing, where an organisation makes misleading claims about the social responsibility of its products or services. It should constitute a gold standard, reflecting a higher level of ambition than provided for in legislation. In particular, it should refer to the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, such as SDG 8 on decent work. The social partners and civil society organisations should be fully involved when designing the taxonomy and complaint mechanisms should also be provided for them. As with the green taxonomy, the definition of what should be included in a social taxonomy will be controversial. But this is exactly why the definition process should be subject to democratic decision-making. The success of the taxonomy is linked to its credibility, and the activities it includes must meet a widely accepted definition of sustainability.



IMAGINE UKRAINE...

In the column "Imagine Ukraine", we publish photos showing the war in Ukraine and its aftermath. It is often journalists who bring such testimonies, because they are the ones who go where we cannot go, to record the traces and save them from oblivion.

Here is a photo taken by **Olga Chaiko**, Ukrainian journalist on the "Fakty" news program in Kiev, with her comment: "This picture is from Hostomel airport – this is where Russian saboteurs landed, and the broken pavilion where the legendary world's biggest plane, Mriya, stands. It has been destroyed by the Russians, as well as one of the biggest planes, Ruslan". **Viktor Zelenkov**, cameraman from Fakty TV, was there to capture this image and remember it.



ONE QUESTION TO

In our "One question to..." section, we ask EESC members to respond to a question on a hot topic that is high on the European agenda. For the September edition, we spoke to **Lutz Ribbe**, EESC member and President of the Sustainable Development Observatory, on the energy crisis and renewable energies.

EESC Info question: *In the face of the energy crisis, how can renewable energies meet the challenges of trends to revert coal and nuclear reconversion or delaying the Green Deal targets?*



LUTZ RIBBE: ENERGY CRISES AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

In February 2015, the European Commission published its "Energy Union package", a "framework strategy for a resilient Energy Union with a forward-looking climate policy". Many good proposals were put forward; promises on promises were made, including to drastically reduce import dependency, consistently expand renewable energies, and make Europe the world's number one in renewables. Citizens, it was maintained, should be placed at the heart of the policy...

Had we worked consistently on implementing these proposals, we would not have stumbled so deeply into the crisis we are facing today. And yet, Member States seemed to be satisfied with their old policies: Germany allowed itself to be dazzled by Putin's cheap fossil fuels, even declaring the expansion of renewables to be "too fast". The latter was capped, and the result was a real collapse in the wind industry, with a loss of around 40 000 jobs. Poland is failing to get its act together and move away from coal, and France continues to dream of the alleged benefits of the nuclear industry; the reality, however, looks somewhat gloomier as – enter climate change – more than half of France's reactors had to be taken off the grid owing to technical problems and insufficient cooling water. The EU's dependency on energy imports had never been as high as it was in 2021, and our research and development spending on climate-friendly technologies is at the lower end globally.

There are only two real options when it comes to solving our current energy problem while tackling climate change: much more consistent savings and a truly massive expansion of renewable energies. There is huge potential to do both. On the positive side, our domestic resources of wind and sun provide much cheaper electricity than the (currently) still highly subsidised fossil and nuclear power plants.

It therefore comes down to building many new, decentralised production structures, but also to creating new stakeholders, who should form the backbone of the energy transition. This is because the energy transition requires social acceptance, and this can only be created if we involve people. 90% of green power plants in Germany, for example, belong to private citizens, farmers, cooperatives, SMEs and municipal utilities, and not to large energy utility companies. However, there is little evidence of any strategy to genuinely support

civil society engagement in order to increase the potential of producing and using decentralised energy for jobs, and to ensure public ownership of and participation in the energy transition by promoting prosumer and civic energy. We will pay the bitter price of this now and in the months to come. Unfortunately, so too will our climate.

Lutz Ribbe, President of the EESC Sustainable Development Observatory

NEW PUBLICATIONS



[The surprise guest](#)

In the column "The surprise guest" you will find views and opinions of people whose attitudes, actions and commitments are models for others. In this issue, we publish an article written by Olga Vegera and Vasyl Kushmuns - members of the NGO Promote Ukraine - about their activities as a non-governmental

organisation in Brussels working for a free Ukraine.

Promote Ukraine is an independent media and civil society platform that gives voice to experts from Ukraine and the EU on issues relevant to both parties. It is a politically and governmentally independent organisation based in Brussels which aims to empower Ukrainians to take up a role as free European citizens. The team works to boost Ukraine's visibility within the EU, while at the same time promoting Ukraine in political, business and non-governmental circles in European countries.

The NGO's main task is to facilitate relations between the EU Member States and Ukraine. Promote Ukraine's long-term goal is to establish a network entitled 'Successful Ukrainians - Prosperous Ukraine' - to be made up of people who are ready to use their skills and time to benefit Ukraine. About 150 volunteers of numerous nationalities work in the organisation. Most are from Ukraine, but there are also Spaniards, Italians, Belgians, French people, Canadians and Americans

To turn solidarity with Ukraine into concrete action, in April 2022 the EESC joined the European Parliament's civil society hub initiative for Ukraine, allowing Promote Ukraine to use part of its offices, premises and equipment situated in the Rue Belliard 68-Rue de Treves 74 complex in Brussels' EU district, while also providing administrative and technical support to help coordinate Ukrainian civil society's activities. In this way the EESC has offered Promote Ukraine a secure home in the heart of Europe. (ehp)



Olga Vegeera and Vasyl Kushmuns: "Promote Ukraine" as a voice of Ukrainian civil society in Europe

How European is Ukraine? Why was it attacked? Does it need reform? How and where does it see its future? - these were the questions our NGO "Promote Ukraine" was set up to address back in 2014.

Today, these questions are as relevant as ever, although the response is much clearer. Along with civil society colleagues, our team of 150+ volunteers works tirelessly, both to amplify the message about Ukraine - which is enduring unspeakable hardships on its path towards Europe - and to show how the EU and its Member States are standing united with Ukraine. Thus, we see ourselves as a civil society advocacy and media hub, acting as a bridge, bringing the EU and Ukraine closer together.

To achieve this goal, our work is divided into 10 working groups. Progress and results are communicated on the website, in the journal and in our podcast. To strengthen our partnerships, we operate a free international helpdesk for organisations, businesses and initiative groups that are offering or seeking help in Ukraine. Our team in Brussels is split across three locations: the workspace made available by the EESC president and the Station Europe building offered by the president of the European Parliament, which together provide a kind of hub for Ukrainian civil society, and a cultural centre.

During these six months of war, we have:

- held more than 50 meetings with representatives of various European and Asian countries, European institutions and NATO, advocating for Ukrainian airspace to be closed, for sanctions against Russia, for Ukraine to be provided with weapons, for Ukraine to be granted EU candidate status, for the Black Sea ports to be unblocked so that foodstuffs can be exported, etc.
- organised over 55 demonstrations in front of the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Council, NATO and the representations of Russia and some EU Member States, the largest of which were attended by 8 000 people, as well as weekly Lukoil boycotts
- sent humanitarian aid worth more than EUR 170 000 at the request of military units, including ambulances, cars for evacuating the wounded, personal protective equipment, communication devices and individual first-aid kits
- operated two warehouses in Brussels providing food, hygiene products and clothes to temporarily displaced persons from Ukraine, serving more than 1 000 people weekly
- provided assistance to refugees, in the form of psychological and administrative support, job fairs, distributing PCs and bicycles, dance therapy, painting classes etc.
- raised funds for Ukrainian Armed Forces through the #UkraineNeedsYou campaign

We at "Promote Ukraine" appreciate and rely on the EU's unfading support and plan to continue making headway towards not only Ukraine's victory, but also its membership in the EU.

True to our values, we keep on "Promoting, Connecting and Sharing". Join us!

Members of the NGO "Promote Ukraine":

Marta Barandi, founding chair of Promote Ukraine

Maryna Yaroshevy, Ukraine

Olga Vegeera, Ukraine

Liza Bezvershenko, Ukraine

Lyuba Karpachova, Ukraine

Vasyl Kushmuns, Ukraine

Oksana Terletska, Ukraine
José Aynat, Spain
Yuliia Chervona, Ukraine
Iryna Nohai, Ukraine
Pieter Goossens, Belgium
Kateryna Polyakova, Ukraine
Oksana Bulda, Ukraine
Olena Kuzhym, Ukraine
Bohdan Yeromenko, Ukraine
Olga Gusarova, Ukraine
Anna Melenchuk, Ukraine
Andrea Castagna, Italy
Natalia Maksymenko, Ukraine
Lesya Magas, Ukraine
Ivanna Malchevska, Ukraine
Artem Shostak, Ukraine
Filip Haugland, Sweden

Our websites :

<https://www.promoteukraine.org/>

<https://www.ukrainianhub.eu/>

EESC NEWS



Europe's organised civil society will not give up on Ukraine

On 19 July, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) held a high-level conference in Kraków on the relief and reconstruction of Ukraine, at which it pledged its full support on all fronts for the war-ravaged country.

With war fatigue kicking in and solidarity seeming to wane as Europe braces itself for the harshest winter in decades, European civil society remains committed to helping Ukraine on its path to recovery and to "building back better", in line with Europe's core values.

At its conference, the EESC stressed that it would continue advocating for ongoing EU solidarity with Ukraine. It pledged to work closely with Ukrainian civil society, the social partners and authorities to assist

the country through the lengthy and demanding accession process, with the final goal of it one day becoming a full EU member.

The conference was opened by EESC president **Christa Schweng** and the deputy mayor of Krakow, **Andrzej Kulig**.

Ms Schweng commended the "concrete support for Ukraine" shown since the beginning of the war by civil society across the Member States, and above all in Poland. The EESC chose to hold the conference in Kraków "to pay tribute to this heartening solidarity, as well as to express our closeness to those who are working on the ground every day."

The conference brought together high-level EU, Polish and Ukrainian officials, alongside representatives of civil society organisations, including trade unions and employers' organisations, from both the EU and Ukraine.

The aim was to discuss the efforts undertaken so far by the grassroots level to directly aid those in need on the ground, including refugees, internally displaced people and those who have still not left, despite Russia's brutal attack on their country.

The conference also looked at ways of directly helping the Ukrainian economy cope with the devastating effects of the war, amid gloomy projections of its GDP dwindling by some 45% in 2022. This calls for nothing short of a new Marshall Plan to help rebuild the country from scratch, in a green and sustainable way that is also in line with European labour and social rights.

The speakers in the high-level introductory panel warned against the war fatigue and against losing momentum for helping Ukraine. They highlighted the crucial role of the EU's and Member States' support for Ukraine to remain on the European agenda.

Vitaly Portnikov, Ukrainian journalist, political commentator and opinion maker, stressed the need to have objective and independent journalism in Ukraine: "This is as important as having the Ukrainian government and armed forces. To have this, we need the EU's support and international programmes. Without freedom of speech and high-quality information, without resources, we will have a risky situation."

The conference featured three panels, which discussed various aspects of aid for Ukraine. The first debate gave an overview of the work done so far by civil society organisations providing immediate support for refugees on their arrival and helping with their integration.

The second panel focused on displaced people and the role of Ukrainian civil society in ensuring that their country continues to function in the face of the crisis. The final panel explored how EU civil society can help and support Ukraine's recovery in accordance with EU values and norms, such as the rule of law, democracy and transparency, in particular from the perspective of an EU candidate state.

More information about the conference is available on our [dedicated webpage](#). (II)



[Gradaim an Aontais maidir le táirgeadh orgánach 2022: tá ainmneacha iomaitheoirí chomórtas CESE againn!](#)

Is cúis bhróid do Choiste Eacnamaíoch agus Sóisialta na hEorpa (CESE) iomaitheoirí [Ghradaim an Aontais maidir le táirgeadh orgánach](#) a fhógairt de réir catagóire. Eagraíodh na gradaim seo den chéad uair riamh, i gcomhar leis an gCoimisiún Eorpach agus le comhpháirtithe eile chun aitheantas a thabhairt do bharr feabhais i slabhra luacha orgánach an Aontais. Fógrófar buaiteoirí gach catagóire an 23 Meán Fómhair ar Lá Orgánach an Aontais, ag searmanas speisialta le Janusz Wojciechowski, an Coimisinéir Eorpach um Thalmhaíocht.

Léirítear leis na tionscnaimh spreagúla atá ar siúl go bhfuil an t-aistriú orgánach ag dul i bhfeidhm cheana féin ar fud na hEorpa. Tá an chéad chéim sa phróiseas meastóireachta curtha i gcrích anois, agus tar éis measúnú críochnúil a dhéanamh ar na hiarratais go léir, is iad seo a leanas na buaiteoirí sna trí chatagóir:

- Maidir leis an FBM a phróiseáil na táirgí bia orgánacha is fearr:

[Gino Girolomoni Cooperativa Agricola](#) – Isola del Piano, Cúige Pesaro agus Urbino, an Iodáil
[Goodvenience.bio GmbH](#) – Magdala, an Túraing, an Ghearmáin
[Labonca Biohof GmbH](#) – Burgau, Styria, an Ostair

- Maidir leis an miondíoltóir bia orgánach is fearr:

[Ecoveritas SA](#) – Barcelona, an Spáinn
[La ferme à l'arbre de Liège](#) – Lantin, Liège, an Bheilg
[BIO MERCATO, seiVital GmbH](#) – Kempten, an Bhaváir, an Ghearmáin

- Maidir leis an mbialann orgánach is fearr:

[Trattino](#) – Lyon, an Fhrainc
[Lilla Bjers HB](#) – Visby, Oileán Gotland, an tSualainn
[Luftburg - Kolarik im Prater](#) – Vín, an Ostair

Is féidir tuilleadh eolais faoi na hiarrthóirí, na critéir roghnúcháin agus na gradaim i gcoitinne a fháil ar shuíomh gréasáin [Ghradaim an Aontais maidir le táirgeadh orgánach](#) agus ar [shuíomh gréasáin CESE](#).



Czech EU Presidency will rethink, rebuild and repower Europe

"Europe as a Task: Rethink, Rebuild, Repower". This is the official motto of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which started on 1 July 2022 and will focus on managing the consequences of the war in Ukraine, reducing Europe's energy dependence and increasing its future strategic autonomy.

Addressing EESC president **Christa Schweng** and the other EESC members at the plenary session debate on 13 July 2022, the Czech Minister for Foreign Affairs, **Jan Lipavský**, presented the priorities of his country's EU presidency.

"The delicate economic and geopolitical context has partially shifted the priorities and the war in Ukraine, and its impact on Europe will guide the Czech Presidency throughout its mandate," he said. "We are at a time when there is a war going on just outside the borders of the European Union and our main task in the period ahead will be to find a united and strong consensus on measures that will mitigate the negative impact of the developments on our citizens as much as possible."

Inspired by Czech statesman Václav Havel's vision in a speech 26 years ago, the motto provides a strong message to sum up the five pillars of the Czech EU Presidency:

1. managing the refugee crisis and the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine,
2. increasing the EU's energy security,
3. increasing European defence capabilities and cyberspace security,
4. strengthening the strategic resilience of the European economy,
5. protecting the EU's democratic institutions and its values.

Saying that the Czech EU Presidency's priorities were also the priorities of the EESC and Europe as a whole, Ms **Schweng** added: "The Czech Republic is taking over the rotating Council presidency at a time when the European Union is still struggling to recover from the consequences of the pandemic, while facing the consequences of the war in Ukraine. We will do our utmost to ensure that our Committee makes a powerful contribution to the activities of the Czech Presidency." (mp)



Dúshláin choiteanna do thodhchaí na hEorpa á bplé ag cathaoirligh CESE agus Choiste na Réigiún

Ag seisiún iomlánach Choiste Eacnamaíoch agus Sóisialta na hEorpa (CESE) i mí Iúil, phléigh cathaoirleach Choiste Eacnamaíoch agus Sóisialta na hEorpa, Christa Schweng, agus

cathaoirleach nuathofa Choiste Eorpach na Réigiún (CnaR), Vasco Alves Cordeiro, na hionchais nua atá ann don chomhghníomhaíocht agus don chomhar idir an dá choiste.

Ag oscailt na díospóireachta di, is éard a dúirt **Christa Schweng**, cathaoirleach CESE, gurbh í cosaint thogra na hEorpa ba dhual don dá choiste riamh, agus gur luachmhar an t-ionchur atá déanta acu sa togra. ‘Ós í uair na cinniúna í faoi láthair, ós amhlaidh atá an Eoraip faoi bhrú ar gach taobh, is tábhachtaí anois ná riamh beart a dhéanamh i gcomhar le chéile agus an Eoraip a thabhairt i ngaire dá cuid saoránach,’ ar sí.

Bhí **an tUasal Cordeiro** ar aon intinn léi faoin tábhacht a bhaineann leis an gcomhar oibre idir CESE agus CnaR ó thaobh na polaitíochta de, go mór mór faoi láthair nuair is crua don Aontas. ‘Idir téarnamh na forbartha tar éis na paindéime agus neartú an daonlathais san Eoraip, idir aghaidh a thabhairt ar an gcogadh i gcoinne na hÚcráine agus na hiarmhairtí sóisialta agus eacnamaíocha a bheidh air agus an beartas comhtháthaithe a chosaint: is é leas an dá choiste, agus is dá gcuid freagrachtaí araon labhairt de ghlór glan glé agus an tAontas Eorpach a thabhairt chun cinn,’ ar sé.

An Eoraip a bheith níos láidre agus níos córa ná mar atá, mar aon leis an mBeartas Comhtháite a neartú, ag sin an dá phríomhchuspóir atá ag cathaoirleach nuathofa CnaR. Is de chuspóirí CESE iad sin chomh maith, agus tacaíonn CESE leo. An Eoraip a bheith níos láidre ó thaobh an daonlathais de, fágfaidh sin luachanna láidre ag an Aontas, agus fágfaidh sé prionsabail a bhunaithe aici, an tsaoirse agus an urraim do dhínit an duine, mar shampla, an smacht reachta agus an daonlathas; an Eoraip agus í níos córa le cur ar son chomhionannas na n-inscní agus ar son sochaí chuimsitheach. Is lárnach an ról atá ag an dara tosaíocht, an Beartas Comhtháthaithe, leis an gcomhtháthú eacnamaíoch, sóisialta agus críochach a neartú san Aontas Eorpach. Dúirt an tUasal Cordeiro go ndéanfadh CnaR an beartas comhtháite a chosaint go díograiseach roimh an díospóireacht mhór a bheidh ann faoi bhuiséad an Aontais tar éis 2027.

Chuir **Christa Shweng** béim ar a thábhachtaí atá rannpháirtíocht na saoránach i bpróiseas an Aontais. Arsa sí: ‘ba cheart dúinn tuilleadh oibre a dhéanamh as láimh a chéile i leith na ceiste seo.’ Dúirt sí go bhféadfar sin a dhéanamh go praiticiúil ach a mbeifear i mbun na hoibre leantaí ar an gComhdháil ar Thodhchaí na hEorpa (CoFoE). ‘Is deis an-mhaith atá sa Chomhdháil, ach is mór an fhreagracht atá ann freisin i leith na saoránach’. a dúirt **an tUasal Schweng**. ‘Caithfidh a bheith soiléir faoi rannpháirtíocht na saoránach a chumhachtú,’ arsa an tUasal Cordeiro.

Le linn na díospóireachta a bhí ann ina dhiaidh sin, is éard a dúirt cathaoirleach Ghrúpa Eagrais na Sochaí Sibhialta sa CESE **Séamus Boland**: ‘Táimidne sa CESE ar aon sprioc lenár gcomhghleacaithe i gCoiste na Réigiún, is é sin a chinntiú go mbeidh rochtain ag na daoine a ndéanaimid ionadaíocht orthu ar sheirbhísí poiblí nuair atá gá acu leo. Má oibrímid lámh ar lámh le chéile, tig linn riachtanais na ndaoine a fhágtar ar lár de dheasca na bochtaineachta nó an eisiata a chur in iúl go paiteanta.’

Maidir le cathaoirleach Ghrúpa Fostaitheoirí CESE, **Stefano Mallia**, chuir seisean ról an bheartais chomhtháite i bhfáth is é sin borradh a chur faoin bhfás agus faoin rathúnas agus an gá atá le timpeallacht ghnó a chruthú ina dtiocfaidh biseach ar ghnólachtaí nuálacha idir bheag agus mhór. De réir mar a deir an tUasal Mallia, is ionann an Eoraip féin a neartú agus na geilleagair a neartú, faoi mar is ionann sin agus Margadh Aonair a mbeidh teacht aniar ann, agus dálaí níos fearr le haghaidh a thabhairt ar dhúshláin nua.

Ba dhíol sásaimh do chathaoirleach Ghrúpa na nOibrithe **Oliver Röpke** tiomantas mór chathaoirleach nuathofa ChnaR do neartú na hEorpa, agus í a bheith níos córa, agus do neartú an daonlathais. Leag sé béim freisin ar an ról comhlántach atá ag an dá choiste. Thug sé suntas don chomhar le CnaR i gcur chun feidhme na Comhdhála faoi Thodhchaí na hEorpa, agus dúirt sé go ndéanfadh an dá choiste a seacht ndícheall ar son

rannpháirtíocht na saoránach.

Chuir cathaoirligh an dá choiste béim ar a dtiomantas féin don chomhoibriú i dtreo neartú na hEorpa agus í a bheith níos córa, agus ar an tiomantas atá acu a chinntiú go dtabharfar éisteacht dóibh siúd atá gníomhach i measc na ndaoine. (ab)



Tá sé thar am ag na Balcáin Thiar infheistíocht a dhéanamh san óige

Chun todhchaí níos rathúla a chinntiú dá saoránaigh, ní mór do rialtais na mBalcán Thiar aghaidh a thabhairt ar na fadhbanna a bhíonn ag daoine óga óir tá ríthábhacht leo má táthar chun todhchaí den sórt sin a chur i gcrích. Is réamhriachtanas é

leithdháiltí leordhóthanacha agus trédhearcacha buiséid a chur ar fáil d'fhorbairt an bheartais um an óige agus do chuimsiú daoine óga i bpróiseas aontachais an Aontais Eorpaigh chun athruithe dearfacha a éascú agus chun staid na ndaoine óga sa réigiún a fheabhsú.

Chuir **Ionuț Sibian**, comhalta CESE agus rapóirtéir na [tuairime, 'An beartas um an óige sna Balcáin Thiar'](#) mar chuid den Chlár Oibre um Nuálaíocht do na Balcáin Thiar i bhfios go láidir an ról atá ag institiúidí an Aontais mar leanas: 'Caithfidh institiúidí an Aontais tuilleadh tacaíochta a thabhairt do na Balcáin Thiar chun rannpháirtíocht na hóige a fheabhsú. Ba cheart an Ráthaíocht don Aos Óg sna Balcáin Thiar a chur chun feidhme i gcomhpháirtíocht le soláthraithe na Ráthaíochta don Aos Óg agus le geallsealbhóirí ábhartha'.

Tá **Andrej Zorko**, comhalta CESE agus comhraphóirtéir na tuairime, ag iarraidh ar na sé chomhpháirtí sna Balcáin Thiar cloí le príomhdhoiciméid an Aontais i dtaobh an bheartais um an óige, agus tuilleadh infheistíochta a dhéanamh i mbeartais óige fianaisebhunaithe lena dtugtar aghaidh ar na dúshlán forbartha a bhíonn ag daoine óga.

Áit a dhéanamh de na Balcáin Thiar ina mbeidh féachaint suas ag an óige

Is é is cúis leis an ardleibhéal imirce i measc an aosa óig sna Balcáin Thiar, ar fadhb sheanbhunaithe í, go háirithe, nach bhfuil daoine óga in ann rochtain a fháil ar oideachas ar ardchaighdeán agus nach mór na deiseanna gairme atá le fáil sa réigiún.

Tá géarghá leis na córais oideachais agus na curaclaim reatha a athchóiriú. Ba cheart cumas fiontraíochta na ndaoine óga a spreagadh agus a chur chun cinn, agus ní mór bonneagar sóisialta an réigiúin a neartú tuilleadh.

Cuimsíonn Clár Oibre um Nuálaíocht an Aontais do na Balcáin Thiar an óige agus, dá bhrí sin, spreagann sé rialtais na mBalcáin Thiar a gcreat beartais um an óige a fhorbairt agus leanúint orthu leis na hathchóirithe riachtanacha chun go mbeidh ionchais do dhaoine óga sa réigiún amach anseo. (at)



Ní mór foréigean in aghaidh na mban a chur ar liosta choireanna an Aontais

Ag an seisiún iomlánach a bhí aige i mí Iúil, phléigh Coiste Eacnamaíoch agus Sóisialta na hEorpa (CESE) an dréacht-treoir ón gCoimisiún maidir le dul i ngleic le foréigean inscnebhunaithe agus comhionannas inscne le Cristina Fabre ón Institiúid Eorpach

um Chomhionannas Inscne.

Le blianta beaga anuas, tá dlús curtha ag an Aontas Eorpach lena iarrachtaí comhionannas inscne agus cumhachtú na mban a chur chun cinn agus a phríomhshruthú. In ainneoin na n-iarrachtaí sin, is é foréigean in aghaidh na mban an sárú is coitianta ar chearta an duine ar fud na hEorpa, agus aon trian de mhná ina n-íospartaigh foréigin.

Agus tús á chur aici leis an díospóireacht, bhí an méid seo a leanas le rá ag Uachtarán CESE, Christa Schweng: 'Thar ceann na sochaí sibhialta, tá CESE tiomanta do shochaí atá níos cothroime ó thaobh inscne de a bhaint amach agus d'Aontas saor ó fhoréigean in aghaidh na mban agus na gcailíní a bhaint amach.'

Labhair **Cristina Fabre**, ionadaí na hInstitiúide Eorpaí um Chomhionannas Inscne, faoin tionchar eacnamaíoch a bhíonn ag neamhionannais: 'Tríd an gcomhionannas inscne a chur chun cinn, tá borradh á chur faoin ngeilleagar againn. D'fhéadfadh OTI *per capita* ardú ó 6.9 % go 9.6 % má áirithimid go bhfuil cearta comhionanna ag mná agus ag cailíní.'

Phléigh **José Antonio Moreno Diaz**, rapóirtéir don tuairim maidir leis an [togra le déanaí le haghaidh treoir maidir le foréigean in aghaidh na mban agus foréigean teaghlaigh a chomhrac](#), conas is féidir leis an Aontas Eorpach dul i ngleic le heipidéim seo an fhoréigin in aghaidh na mban: 'Is sárú ar chearta an duine é foréigean in aghaidh na mban, dá bhrí sin iarraimid go gcuirfí ar liosta choireanna an Aontais faoi Airteagal 83(1) CFAE é'. Tá sé á chur in iúl ag CESE nach réitítear fadhbanna sóisialta trí chóras na cúirte amháin agus nár cheart gurb é an pionós sin an t-aon bhealach amháin chun gníomh a dhéanamh. 'Ní mór dúinn a áirithiú go mbeidh rochtain ag íospartaigh ar sheirbhísí cúraim sláinte, lena n-áirítear seirbhísí sláinte gnéis agus atáirgthe', a mhínigh an comhrapóirtéir **Ody Neisingh**, 'Is ar an gcóras atá an locht, ní ar na mná.'

Arna iarraidh sin d'Uachtaránacht na Seicia, glacadh [tuairim ar leith maidir le comhionannas inscne](#) le linn an tseisiúin iomlánaigh sin freisin. Dúirt rapóirtéir CESE, **Milena Angelova**, go n-éilíonn an comhionannas inscne aitheantas, úinéireacht agus tiomantas leanúnach ó na geallsealbhóirí uile sa tsochaí. 'Ní mór dúinn cultúr comhionannais inscne ar feadh an tsaoil a thógáil, ina gcuimseofar gach céim agus gach réimse den



Ní mór an ghné shóisialta a chur san áireamh i rialacha nua maidir le táirgí inbhuanaithe

Ag an seisiún iomlánach a bhí aige i mí Iúil, d'iarr Coiste Eacnamaíoch agus Sóisialta na hEorpa (CESE) ar an gCoimisiún Eorpach gnéithe sóisialta na bpríomhthograí a neartú chun rialacha an Aontais maidir le táirgí inbhuanaithe,

éicidhearthóireacht agus teicstílí inbhuanaithe a ailíniú.

Ghlac CESE tuairimí maidir le treochlár an Choimisiúin i dtaca le táirgí inbhuanaithe, cuir i gcás ['Féachaint leis gur táirgí inbhuanaithe an gnás'](#), [rialachán nua maidir le héicidhearthóireacht](#) agus [straitéis um theicstílí inbhuanaithe](#).

Tá na tograí mar chuid de [phlean nua an Aontais don gheilleagar ciorclach](#) agus cuirfidh siad leis na hiarrachtaí chun go mbeidh an Eoraip ag brath níos lú ar acmhainní i bhfianaise na ngéarchéimeanna atá ann faoi láthair, lena n-áirítear paindéim COVID-19, cogadh na Rúise ar an Úcráin agus an t-athrú aeráide.

Sa [tuairim](#) maidir leis an treochlár um tháirgí inbhuanaithe agus leis an rialachán maidir leis an éicidhearthóireacht, chuir CESE in iúl nach mbeidh rath ar an straitéis um an ngeilleagar ciorclach ach amháin má tá idir tháirgeoirí, thomhaltóirí agus oibrithe, chomh maith leis na húdaráis, rannpháirteach ann agus ar an eolas i gceart ina thaobh.

Beidh gá le rialacha soiléire fóna comhsheasmhacha chun é a chur chun feidhme go rathúil. Tá gá leo sin chun a áirithiú go mbeidh táirgí inbhuanaithe iomaíoch agus chun go mbeidh an t-aistriú chuig geilleagar ciorclach níos cuimsithí.

Raon feidhme níos leithne do rialachán nua maidir le héicidhearthóireacht

Má tá an t-aistriú chuig an ngeilleagar ciorclach le baint amach, tá gá le ceanglais nua ó thaobh táirgí de, maidir le marthanacht, indeisitheacht, athchúrsáil, tionchar ar an gcomhshaol agus astaíochtaí CO2, mar shampla, agus le rialacha feabhsaithe maidir leis an bhfaisnéis a roinntear le pasanna táirgí digiteacha agus lipéid dhigiteacha.

Ar an drochuair, déanann an rialachán atá beartaithe neamhaird ar an ngné shóisialta den scéal. Ní móide gur leor an tagairt a dhéantar ann don togra ón gCoimisiún maidir leis an Treoir i dtaca le Dícheall Cuí maidir le hInbhuanaitheacht Chorparáideach.

Tá gá le fócas níos láidre ar chearta oibrithe agus ar shaothar leanaí

I [dtuairim](#) ar leith ó CESE maidir le teicstílí inbhuanaithe, chuir CESE i bhfios go láidir go bhfuil gá le béim níos mó a leagan ar ghnéithe sóisialta in earnáil na dteicstílí, go háirithe ar chearta oibrithe agus ar chómhargáil. Tá CESE ag iarraidh go ndéanfaí bearta diana lena gcuirfí toirmeasc ar an gcaidreamh eacnamaíoch le gnólachtaí a úsáideann saothar leanaí nó nach n-áirithíonn dálaí oibre cuibhiúla.

Ina theannta sin, molann CESE gur cheart do dhaoine éadaí a cheannach agus a chaitheamh ar bhonn freagrachta

I gcomhréir leis an méid sin go léir, tá gá le hinfheistíochtaí agus cláir chun feabhas a chur ar chumas na gcomhlachtaí cigireachta agus ar chumas oibríochtúil na gcomhpháirtithe sóisialta faireachán a dhéanamh ar chomhaontuithe domhanda agus ar chearta oibrithe.

Ar deireadh, chun cothromaíocht a áirithiú idir gnólachtaí agus gníomhaithe eile de chuid na slabhraí soláthair teicstíle, molann CESE dea-chleachtais dhomhanda a chur chun cinn ó thaobh na hinbhuanaitheacht de. (ks)



[Treochlár an Aontais maidir leis an tslándáil agus an chosaint: iarraidh ó CESE ar na Ballstáit gníomhú go teann agus le chéile](#)

I dtuairim nua ó Choiste Eacnamaíoch agus Sóisialta na hEorpa (CESE), léirigh sé a thacaíocht iomlán do chuspóirí an [Treochláir Eorpaigh maidir le teicneolaíochtaí criticiúla le haghaidh na slándála agus na cosanta](#), treochlár atá tráthúil i bhfianaise an chogaidh san Úcráin.

Ina sheisiún iomlánach i mí Iúil, ghlac CESE [tuairim](#) i dtaca leis an Treochlár Eorpach maidir le teicneolaíochtaí criticiúla le haghaidh na slándála agus na cosanta. Is díol sásaimh do CESE na moltaí ón gComisiún. Creideann sé gur tionscnamh maith atá ann, ar an iomlán, lenarbh fhéidir gníomhú agus freagairt do ghéarchéimeanna agus dúshláin gheopholaitiúla éagsúla. Chuir an Coiste i bhfáth sa tuairim, mar sin féin, gur cheart don Choimisiún tuilleadh infheistíochta a dhéanamh i sineirgí cothrománacha agus ingearacha idir na Ballstáit.

Thar aon ní eile, creideann CESE gur cheart cur chuige cuimsitheach a ghlacadh a luaithe is féidir, ceann lena gcumhdófaí an taobh sibhialta agus míleata den scéal agus lena dtabharfaí le chéile an leibhéal Eorpach agus náisiúnta. Oscailt súl atá san ionradh ar an Úcráin, rud a léiríonn nach mór dúinn gníomhú i bhfad níos tapa ná mar is gnách.

Anuas air sin, maidir leis na gnéithe teicniúla, moltar sa tuairim torthaí na Faireachlainne um Theicneolaíochtaí Criticiúla a ionchorprú sna treochláir. Ní féidir an t-aistriú ó chéim amháin go céim eile den timthriall teicneolaíochta tionsclaíochta a bhainistiú i gceart ach amháin más léir cé leis na tionscnaimh agus cé air a bhfuil na freagrachtaí a bhaineann leo.

Ag an am céanna, tá CESE ag iarraidh ar na Ballstáit a áirithiú go mbeidh a bhfreagairtí láithreacha ar ionsaí na Rúise ar an Úcráin i gcomhréir le hábhar agus cuspóirí an Treochláir, rud arb iarracht fhadtéarmach é. Ní foláir infheistíochtaí gearrthéarmacha náisiúnta cosanta a chomhordú ar an leibhéal Eorpach ionas nach mbeidh tuilleadh ilroinnte agus dúblála ann.

Tá sé á mholadh freisin ag CESE go mbunófaí ionad ilfhreastail ar líne d'fhiontair bheaga agus mheánmhéide agus do ghnólachtaí nuathionscanta. 'Cúinne FBManna an Aontais' ar líne a bheadh ann, áit a bhféadfadh gnólachtaí sonraí réamhshainithe a chur isteach agus faisnéis shaincheaptha a fháil ar ais faoi na cláir Eorpacha is fearr a bheadh ina dtacaíocht dóibh. (ks)



Ní mór do Chomhairle Trádála agus Teicneolaíochta AE-SAM breith ar an bhfaill atá ann chun bheith ar thús cadhnaíochta sa trádáil, sa teicneolaíocht agus sa nuálaíocht

Ag an seisiún iomlánach a bhí aige i mí Iúil, d'áitigh CESE gur féidir leis an gComhairle Trádála agus Teicneolaíochta (TTC) nua a bheith ina huirlis nuálach don Aontas agus do Stáit Aontaithe Mheiriceá chun oibriú le chéile ar mhaithe le domhan níos sábháilte agus níos rathúla atá bunaithe ar phrionsabail na forbartha inbhuanaithe agus luachanna daonlathacha. Tá an Chomhairle ceaptha chun feidhmiú mar phróiseas rannpháirtíochta agus, dá réir sin, ní mór di a trédhearcacht agus a rannpháirtíocht láidir leis an tsochaí shibhialta agus leis na geallsealbhóirí a léiriú.

Sa tuairim féintionscnaimh uaidh [An Chomhairle Trádála agus Teicneolaíochta nua AE-SAM faoi lán seoil: tosaíochtaí maidir le gnólachtaí, oibrithe, tomhaltóirí agus na coimircí a bhfuil gá leo](#), tá béim leagtha ag CESE ar thosaíochtaí na Comhairle Trádála agus Teicneolaíochta.

'Is foirm nua chomhair í an Chomhairle Trádála agus Teicneolaíochta. Ní mór é a bheith mar phríomhchuspóir aici féachaint conas is féidir leis an trádáil agus an teicneolaíocht oibriú ar bhealach níos fearr chun folláine ár sochaithe a chosaint. Ní mór ról tábhachtach a bheith ag an tsochaí shibhialta eagraithe ar dhá thaobh an Atlantaigh sa Chomhairle Trádála agus Teicneolaíochta,' arsa Christa Schweng, Uachtarán CESE.

Dúirt Timo Vuori, comhalta CESE agus rapóirtéir na tuairime, an méid seo a leanas: 'Ní mór do Chomhairle Trádála agus Teicneolaíochta AE-SAM réitigh a sholáthar chun an timpeallacht trádála dhéthaobhach agus idirnáisiúnta a fheabhsú sa ghearrthéarma agus san fhadtéarma. Murach sin, féadfaidh an Chomhairle Trádála agus Teicneolaíochta an móiminteam atá aici a chailleadh.'

Is idir an tAontas agus SAM atá an caidreamh eacnamaíoch déthaobhach is comhtháite ar domhan, caidreamh eacnamaíoch atá cothrom le leath de OTI an domhain agus aon trian de shreafaí trádála domhanda.

Mhínigh an t-eacnamaí agus scríbhneoir Fredrik Erixon, ar tugadh cuireadh dó labhairt ag an seisiún iomlánach, gur deis nua a bhí sa tionscnamh seo don dá pháirtí tionchar a imirt ar gheilleagar an domhain, trí bheith aontaithe agus trí chomhpháirtíochtaí a lorg le tíortha atá ar aon intinn leo agus ag a bhfuil na bunluachanna eacnamaíocha agus polaitiúla céanna.



A stronger internal market through uniform digital taxation

In an exploratory opinion, the EESC insists on the importance of coordinated European legislation establishing tax rates for digital service companies. This will ensure a growth-friendly business environment and benefit the internal market, while avoiding the gaps that separate national initiatives would create. The Committee's opinion, drafted at the request of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union, states that any new rules must avoid double taxation and minimise compliance costs for businesses.

While the EU can play a leading role in defining rules for taxing the digital economy, it should respect the international agreement reached by the OECD/G20. On that, rapporteur **Benjamin Rizzo** stated: "Both Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 of the OECD Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting must be implemented within the EU as soon as it is feasible. It will help achieve a high degree of consistency with the international agreement that will be negotiated by the OECD/G20". Co-rapporteur **Petru Dandea** added: "The EESC stresses that properly devised international tax laws on digital businesses are instrumental in preventing tax evasion and tax avoidance practices, as well as in designing a fair, stable and progressive taxation system".
(tk)



Taxation rules on cross-border teleworking must be updated and simplified

How should wages and company profits be taxed in a way that meets the needs of today's work environment? In an opinion adopted at its July plenary session, the EESC takes up this challenge, while welcoming and encouraging the rise of teleworking. An updated and easy-to-follow set of rules should ensure that employees and employers in Europe do not face multiple taxation or unintended non-taxation because they are working from abroad.

"We are in a new world, where people want to work differently. The EESC fully supports more flexible work and cross-border teleworking situations," says rapporteur **Krister Andersson**. "But this new paradigm also

poses serious challenges for international taxation systems and an efficient European single market". Among other measures, the EESC proposes to create a one-stop-shop, such as exists for VAT, at a European level. An employer would report the number of days teleworkers worked in their country of residence and in the country where the employer is located. With this information, tax authorities would be able to assess in which country income would be taxable, or what part of the income would be taxable in each country. **Mr Andersson** points out that "This system would allow employees and employers to reduce tax disputes between Member States, and at the same time help ensure that taxes are levied correctly without requiring the individual to file in multiple countries". (tk)



The digital transition must be fair: human rights and human control must remain central

Many Europeans are not yet digitally literate and most national administrations have not yet implemented digital solutions. Making people's access to some services of general interest conditional on having a digital identity could result in a lose-lose

situation: a significant number of Europeans could see their right to access these services being denied.

The EESC opinion adopted at the July plenary session and drafted by **Dumitru Fornea** sounds the alarm. New governance tools introduced with the digital and industrial revolution must not be oppressive and make people's daily lives contingent on having to sign up to digital technology systems that are controlled in an undemocratic way.

"The advantages of digital technology solutions are obvious," said Mr **Fornea**. "However, their rapid implementation, especially for services of general interest such as digital identity, could lead to the exclusion of a significant number of Europeans. We must ensure that humans remain in command, with democratic control and with the involvement of civil society organisations."

According to the EESC, digital technology solutions such as digital identity, digital means of payment and incorporation into virtual and augmented reality platforms should remain complementary tools and should not completely and unfairly replace other practices that have been developed and perfected by humans over thousands of years.

The EESC was the first European institution to call for the "human in command" approach when dealing with AI systems and reiterates that it is paramount for humans to have the last say and be in full control of decision-making processes when it comes to machine developments. (mp)

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS



Dícheall Cuí maidir le hInbhuanaitheacht Chorparáideach: Rómhaorlathas nó uirlis úsáideach?

Le Antje Gerstein, Comhalta de Ghrúpa na bhFostóirí in CESE

An 23 Feabhra, sheol an Coimisiún Eorpach a thogra le haghaidh Treoir i dtaca le Dícheall Cuí maidir le hInbhuanaitheacht Chorparáideach, ina leagtar amach creat éigeantach do chuideachtaí chun drochthionchair chomhshaoil agus chearta an duine a shainaithint agus gníomhú ina leith ar fud a n-eagraíochta féin — agus a slabhra luacha iomlán.

Ar an drochuair, ní dhéanann an togra mar atá sé na spriocanna a bhfuiltear ag dréim leo a bhaint amach. Tá sé tábhachtach a thabhairt faoi deara gur tharraing Bord an Choimisiúin féin um Ghrinnschrúdú Rialála aird ar lochtanna tromchúiseacha sa mheasúnú tionchair, mar shampla go bhfuil an cur síos ar an bhfadhb doiléir agus gur cheart an tuarascáil a ailíniú níos fearr le tionscnaimh eile.

Ba cheart é a bheith d'aidhm ag na comhreachtóirí imeacht ó fhorálacha nach ndéanann ach oibleagáidí a fhorchur agus cur chuige atá níos dírithe ar phróiseas a roghnú ina ionad sin, bunaithe ar rannpháirtíocht agus ar mhuinín a chothú. Fágann sin gur cheart a bheith ag súil go ndearfadh gnólachtaí a bpróisis díchill chuí maidir le cearta an duine atá ar dhóigh rioscabhunaithe agus go mbeadh siad i gcomhréir leis an tionchar féideartha agus an tionchar iarbhrí a bheidh acu.

Ós rud é go mbíonn deimhneacht dhlíthiúil de dhíth ar chuideachtaí agus go mbíonn orthu rioscaí dliteanais a íoslaghdú, tá seans ann go mbraithfidís go bhfuil iallach orthu slabhraí soláthair a ghiorrú agus tarraingt siar ó réigiúin a bhféadfadh fadhbanna a bheith ag baint leo maidir le cearta an duine. D'fhéadfadh impleachtaí tromchúiseacha a bheith aige sin, ós rud é go ndéanfaí damáiste don trádáil dhomhanda agus go gcaillfeadh roinnt mhaith oibrithe i dtíortha i mbéal forbartha agus i dtíortha atá ag teacht chun cinn a bpost.

Sa tuairim ón mBord um Ghrinnschrúdú Rialála agus sa tuairim ó CESE maidir le [‘Rialachas corparáideach inbhuanaithe’ \(INT/973\)](#), leagtar béim iontu araon ar an ngá atá le comhleanúnachas rialála agus beartais. Is iad Prionsabail Threoracha na Náisiún Aontaithe maidir le Gnó agus Cearta an Duine agus Treoirlínte ECFE na tagarmharcanna lena leagtar amach go soiléir dualgais agus freagrachtaí na ngníomhaithe uile agus ní mór dúinn cloí leo sin.

Ní mór do Pharlaimint na hEorpa agus do Chomhairle an Aontais Eorpaigh cinntí a dhéanamh: an bhfuil siad ag iarraidh cur chuige cuiditheach a chruthú i leith slabhraí soláthair domhanda inbhuanaithe, cur chuige atá bunaithe ar chomhpháirtíocht, a bheidh slán i bhfad na haimsire, agus atá dírithe ar thorthaí agus ar an bhfíorshaol? An bhfuil siad ag iarraidh a áirithiú go ndéanfar tionscnaimh chomhthreomhara a bhaineann le táirgí a ailíniú ar bhealach níos fearr? Más amhlaidh atá, is fada fós an bóthar atá rompu. Is féidir linn a dhearbhu do na comhreachtóirí go bhfuil fostóirí tiomanta dá gcuid féin a dhéanamh chun toradh rathúil a áirithiú. Baineann an Treoir seo le príomhghnó ár gcomhaltaí. Níl an dara rogha againn ach go mbeidh sé mar is ceart.

Léigh an téacs ina iomláine i nuachtlitir Ghrúpa na bhFostóirí: <https://europa.eu/!vYX7Wq>



Winter, Gas, and Heating

By the EESC Workers' Group

Europe finds itself in a difficult situation after many years of negligence and unfounded optimism on energy issues. Fuelled by shutdowns of nuclear facilities that were mostly replaced with gas or coal (and with tens of thousands of premature deaths added each year), an addiction to natural gas as an easy and cheap (and lately, also green) alternative, and an energy market ill-designed for crises or for providing high shares of renewables, frost this winter looks particularly menacing.

These ingredients, set on fire by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, have made transport and energy prices skyrocket. Together with the price spikes for many basic food products due to disturbances in the global food chain, inflation has reached levels not seen in decades. The steep rise in prices affects, first and foremost, the most vulnerable populations who already had no margins for increasing energy, transport and food costs. Not to speak of the likely starvation and hunger in the rest of the world where spending extra is not a possibility.

As our companies struggle to continue under severe cost hikes, and our citizens and workers doubt if they will be able to turn on heating this winter, the initiative on REPowerEU and that on reforming the energy market are a welcomed relief. Green and just transitions have become not only a climate necessity but also a social and geopolitical one. Without decisive action to break away from fossil fuels, our political systems will likely collapse long before we reach any climate targets. (prp)



Volunteers: essential actors in European societies

By the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group

The informal and formal voluntary activities undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic and the assistance provided to Ukrainian refugees have once again demonstrated the vital and holistic contribution volunteering makes to society. Volunteering plays a pivotal role in building social capital, social inclusion and cohesion. It is also an important source of self-development and the most obvious example of civic engagement and active citizenship.

At the conference on **Volunteers - citizens building the future of Europe**, which took place on 7 July 2022 in Gdańsk, Poland, participants therefore called, among other things, for:

- increased social awareness of the contribution of volunteering to European societies, for instance through the availability and sharing of reliable models and data that measure the economic contribution of volunteering, as well as its contribution beyond GDP;
- the introduction of enabling policy and/or regulatory and legal frameworks, to be decided on a country-specific basis and in direct consultation with civil society organisations;
- the provision of structured and sustainable funding and safe and good levels of support and infrastructure for volunteering;
- volunteering to be put back onto the European political agenda, for instance by developing and actively supporting a more comprehensive European-wide voluntary programme, creating an EU-wide volunteering website and designating 2025 as the European Year of Volunteers.

The conference was organised by the EESC's Civil Society Organisations' Group, in liaison with several European and local partners. It brought together volunteers, researchers, representatives of national and European civil society organisations and public authorities, to discuss and share their experience of volunteering trends in the EU, public authority support for organisations and volunteers, and new forms of volunteering.

The complete set of conclusions and recommendations from the conference is available at:
<https://europa.eu/!KC4tFR>

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