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Civil Society Organisations'
Bulletin



CIVIL TÁRSADALMI SZERVEZETEK CSOPORTJA

BULLETIN NOVEMBER 2025

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EDITORIAL: We can make a difference

6 November 2025

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Cillian Lohan ©EU/EESC

By Cillian LOHAN, President, EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group

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It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this edition of our newsletter, the newsletter of the Civil Society Organisations' Group. A few days ago, we celebrated the start of the new term in the European Economic and Social Committee ([EESC](#)). This term will last from 2025 to 2030. The Committee's renewal is always an exciting time for our Group. We are, of course, sad to see experienced members leaving us and there is a sense of loss in terms of the knowledge and expertise that typifies our Group. However, the beginning of a new term is always tempered by an air of expectation and unique optimism, given the abilities and expertise that our new members will undoubtedly bring to the Group.

When I was a new member, back in 2015, I recall feeling like I was jumping on to a moving train. The EESC building in Brussels reverberated with the sound of constant conversation. Each overheard snippet could range from a mundane hello or somebody ordering a coffee to an exciting glimpse of a negotiation on a Committee position or text. The excellent staff who work with our members here in Brussels, acted confidently and with a clear sense of purpose. I remember being excited to be here, and wanting to make a difference, but wondering how best to get started.

This is where our Group comes in, helping members to fully understand and orient themselves in the workings of the Committee. Our Group has spent the last month welcoming its new members and reconnecting with returning ones. In the next step, we must empower all members to fully play their role.

Our shared aim now is to deal with all the formalities and then get down to work – for each other and for the people and networks of communities that we represent here at the EESC. We must cherish the fact that we have this dedicated space within the EU governance structures for civil society organisations to give their input into EU policy-making. That right is enshrined in the [Treaty of Rome](#), one of the founding treaties of the European Union. Our job, as members, and my focus as President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group, is to now ensure we take full advantage of this privilege and be as effective as we can when engaging with the European institutions and our constituencies.

That will require us to do our work here in Brussels, building coalitions and working together to deliver practical results. It will require all of our readers and organisations across the 27 EU Member States and at EU level to spread the word about what we are always working to achieve here in the Civil Society Organisations' Group at the EESC. Our strength is in our connection to communities and networks. As members, we live and work within our cities, towns and villages in every Member State. This distinguishes us from members of other EU institutions and bodies. It gives us the opportunity to help develop more efficient EU policies, policies that truly address people's needs, and are therefore better accepted by our communities and implemented more easily.

I am very honoured and excited to start my term as President of this Group, a new challenge for me. I am equally enthusiastic about getting to know and tapping the full potential of our Group, with new and now experienced members. The last time our Group started a new mandate, we did so under the restrictions of lockdowns and COVID-19. This time we are all ready to hit the ground running.

We will not shy away from difficult debates and conversations. We will work to help the social partners align with us, and us with them. We will keep talking to you, our networks, our community, to help you reach decision-makers. And we invite you to join us, as together we make collaboration the most effective tool in participation.

[Cillian Lohan](#)

President, EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group

CURRENT AFFAIRS: COP 30 in Brazil

6 November 2025

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By Stoyan TCHOUKANOV, President of the EESC's Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment ([NAT](#)), Member of the Civil Society Organisations' Group and representative of the Beef Breeders Association of Bulgaria

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A DECADE AFTER PARIS: COP30 AND THE NEXT CHAPTER OF GLOBAL CLIMATE GOVERNANCE

Every climate summit [\[1\]](#) seems historic. Such was the case of [COP29 in Baku](#), with the adoption of the *new collective quantified goal* ([NCQG](#)), a milestone in the history of international climate finance. The same can be said of [COP28 in Dubai](#), where the first *global stocktake* was approved, highlighting the need to phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies. And of [COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh](#), which finally established the long-awaited *Fund for responding to Loss and Damage*.

Undoubtedly, [COP30 in Brazil](#), to be held on the tenth anniversary of the [Paris Agreement](#), will also be another historic summit, given the context of multilateral tension and the expected absence of the United States.

The role of European civil society has always been essential within the framework of these climate summits. We represent all those who address, on the ground, the transition to a net-zero future that leaves no one behind. Once again, we will play a vital role in safeguarding climate aims in an increasingly hostile atmosphere.

COP30 will witness the presentation of the Nationally Determined Contributions ([NDCs](#)) for 2035. This comes in the same year that the International Court of Justice ([ICJ](#)) issued an [advisory opinion](#) on the climate obligations of states, stating that countries need to ensure that the NDCs represent their highest possible aims. A clear message that should serve as a wake-up call for the European Union, which is still unable to agree on an ambitious NDC, jeopardising its historic leadership role in the negotiations.

Climate finance, just transition and climate adaptation will be other key topics. COP30 will adopt the [Baku to Belém Roadmap](#), which must outline how to mobilise the USD 1.3 trillion agreed under the NCQG, an effort that will inevitably have to involve private actors alongside governments. Moreover, this will be the year when parties have to provide greater clarity on just transitions, assessing how affected communities can deal with the socioeconomic impact of climate change on vulnerable communities. The adoption of indicators to measure progress towards the global goal on adaptation will also be important.

Ten years on from the historic moment in Paris, it is time now to move into the implementation phase and to adopt tangible measures to translate the mitigation and adaptation goals into practice. The ICJ has confirmed that these goals are legally binding. Once again, European civil society will fulfil its mission of reminding the world that we no longer have time to turn our backs on the high targets demanded by science.

[\[1\]](#) *Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).*

[Stoyan TCHOUKANOV](#) (Bulgaria)

President, [NAT section](#), EESC

President, Beef Breeders Association of Bulgaria ([BBAB](#))



Photo exhibition "Motherhood and Disability"

6 November 2025

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By Dovilė JUODKAITĖ, Member of the Civil Society Organisations' Group and representative of the Lithuanian Disability Forum

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The photo exhibition [Motherhood and Disability](#) was conceived by the Lithuanian Disability Forum ([LDF](#)) in 2024, with the aim of telling the stories of mothers with various disabilities. Photographer and visual storyteller [Rytis Ilionis](#) met with seven mothers in different cities and towns across Lithuania.

By sharing moments from the everyday lives of mothers with disabilities, the LDF hoped to show the diversity of experiences of motherhood.

The individual stories were an invitation to get to know mothers with different disabilities and the barriers they face in everyday life in raising children. Motherhood is not an easy path for anyone, but when you also have a disability you have to be prepared for greater challenges. Some challenges may arise from the disability itself – it is difficult to carry a child, to see where it is going, to hear if it is crying, to lift it onto a slide in the playground and to hold its hand. Other obstacles that can cause a lot of pain relate to the judgmental gaze of those around us – can a mother who needs help herself raise a child? And if she does raise a child, is she a good enough mother?

From the outset, neither the initiators nor the creators sought to portray mothers as heroes or to tell their stories in order to elicit sympathy or pity from those around them. We wanted to show the situations that mothers with disabilities face in their daily lives and the ways in which they are solved or attempted to be solved, and that the need for help, which is common to all mothers, is not an obstacle to loving and caring for your children. The mothers who shared their experiences did it not just for themselves, but rather for future mothers and women who are considering becoming mothers.

We hope that the words of these strong mothers will challenge preconceptions and stereotypes, as well as draw attention to the urgent decisions that various institutions have postponed, which are needed by mothers with disabilities and their children throughout Lithuania and Europe.

First, photo stories were published in social media, and then a physical exhibition was mounted in the Presidential Palace in Vilnius. The text was then translated into English and the exhibition presented at the United Nations headquarters in New York during the 18th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ([CRPD](#)) in 2025. Among other things, the exhibition provided a space to discuss and advocate for the social policy and support services needed for women with disabilities raising children.



More information on the exhibition is available here: <https://www.15min.lt/media-pasakojimai/kai-pagalbos-poreikis-nekliudo-myleti-ir-rupintis-fotopasakojimo-ciklas-motinyste-ir-negalia-2054>

Dovilė JUODKAITĖ (Lithuania)

Member, Civil Society Organisations' Group

International Cooperation Officer, [Lithuanian Disability Forum](#)



EESC RENEWAL: European Economic and Social Committee elects Ireland's Séamus Boland to its top post

22 October 2025

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The new president of the EESC vows to put civil society at the heart of Europe through a people-centred programme that balances economic growth and social inclusion and ensures everyone has a fair chance to thrive. Topping his priorities are the eradication of poverty by providing opportunities and protecting and empowering civil society to ensure Europe stays

true to its democratic and social core amid a shrinking of civic space and growing political and economic instability.

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Séamus Boland has become the 35th president of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the second Irishman to head the EU body representing organised civil society in its 67 year long history (and the first

Irishman in the body's current form). The two new vice-presidents elected to join him at the helm of the EESC are Alena Mastantuono (Czech Republic) for budget and Marija Hanževački (Croatia) for communication. The new Bureau, led by Mr Boland and succeeding Oliver Röpke, will serve for two and a half years, until March 2028.

Central to the new president's vision is the fight against poverty. With over a fifth of the EU population at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and extreme poverty levels rising despite economic progress, the new president is committed to eradicating it. His approach focuses on collaboration to protect and help the most vulnerable, while balancing economic prosperity, active labour market policies and social inclusion.

Following his appointment, Mr Boland said: 'With so many instabilities impacting Europe, it is key that the EU embraces change. The EESC should play an essential role in shaping that change and in building this new Europe, which is prepared, resilient and self-reliant. This is why during my mandate as President I will prioritise a people-centred work programme that puts civil society at the heart of the EU. My vision is of an EU of opportunities, security and resilience, that together we can help deliver.'

Mr Boland, who serves as the CEO of the Irish Rural Link outside the Committee, has long championed the inclusion of rural communities and other often overlooked groups, including minorities and young people.

The EESC appointed its new leadership on 22 October, during its 600th plenary session, marking the start of the 2025-2030 term, with 36% new members. The EESC will begin its new mandate rejuvenated and with a higher proportion of women. The average age of members fell from 59 in the last mandate to 55 in the new one. Women now make 39% of the Committee, compared to 33% five years ago.

The motto of the new presidency is 'Civil Society at the Heart of Europe' and the president's programme will be based on three key pillars:

- A Union of Opportunities — tackling poverty, social exclusion and youth challenges through social justice, affordable housing, and structured youth participation.
- A Union of Security — defending civic space, democracy and media freedom, while supporting the EU's preparedness and solidarity with Ukraine and other partners.
- A Union of Resilience — advancing the European Green Deal, sustainable rural development, food security and water resilience (Blue Deal) to strengthen Europe's future.

The EESC is to act as a catalyst for civil society participation — a platform where employers, workers and organisations can listen, debate and shape EU policy-making together. The Committee, he stressed, has a shared responsibility to demonstrate the EU's value, sound the alarm when needed, and stay closely connected to the concerns of citizens and civil society across Europe.

The elected vice-president for budget, Ms Mastantuono, said: 'We must ensure the Commission, Council and Parliament see the EESC not as a procedural box to tick, but as an indispensable partner shaping smarter, more effective EU laws for businesses and citizens alike. We know that without a healthy economy, there is no social progress, and without social stability, economic gains are fragile. Every decision we take in the Committee must reflect this vital balance'.

The new vice-president in charge of communication Ms Hanževački said: 'It is an honour and a pleasure to take on this responsibility today in an institution whose values I strongly share and believe in. In an era of information overload, rapid technological change, social and economic challenges, armed conflicts and fake news, listening to citizens' voices has never been more important. We represent citizens who are part of social partners and civil society organisations. To make sure their perspectives truly shape our core mission - advising the EU institutions - we must communicate with clarity, consistency, and transparency.'

The president will present his programme on 23 October, alongside interventions from European Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management Hadja Lahbib, Vice president of the European Parliament Younous Omarjee and Irish Minister of State for European Affairs Thomas Byrne. President of the European Commission

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Council Antonio Costa, and European Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection Michael McGrath will address the plenary via a video message.

The inauguration ceremony was streamed live [here](#).

BACKGROUND

- Seamus Boland (IE): EESC president, president of the EESC's Civil Society Organisations' Group (2020-2025)
- Alena Mastantuono (CZ): vice-president of the EESC, member of the Commission for Financial and Budgetary Affairs, Employers's' Group
- Marija Hanževački (HR): vice-president of the EESC, member of the Commission for Communication (COCOM), EESC Bureau, Workers' Group

The president and the two vice-presidents are elected by a simple majority during the inaugural assembly session. They are chosen from each of the EESC's three groups (Employers' Group, Workers' Group and Civil Society Organisations Group) in rotation, for terms of two and a half years. This means that they are elected twice during each EESC term of office – at the beginning and at mid-term. The president is responsible for the orderly conduct of the Committee's business, and represents the EESC in its relations with other institutions and bodies. The two vice-presidents – elected from among the members of the two groups to which the president does not belong – are responsible for communication and the budget respectively.

The EESC is made up of 329 members from its 27 Member States. They are nominated by their national governments and appointed by the Council of the European Union for a period of five years. They then work independently in the interests of all EU citizens. These members are not politicians but employers, trade unionists and representatives of various sectors of society, such as farming, consumer and environmental organisations, the social economy, SMEs, professionals, and associations representing persons with disabilities, the voluntary sector, gender equality, youth, academia, and so on. The EESC's new term of office – its 17th since it was set up in 1958 – will run from October 2025

to September 2030.

Source: EESC press team

EESC RENEWAL: Civil Society Organisations' Group of the EESC appoints new President

6 November 2025

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Cillian Lohan is the new President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group of the EESC. The Group appointed the environmentalist for the 2025-2028 term. Peace, democracy and resilient communities will take centre stage during his presidency.

Cillian Lohan, President, Civil Society Organisations'

Group ©EU/EESC

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[Cillian Lohan](#) is the new President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The Group appointed the environmentalist for the 2025-2028 term. Peace, democracy and resilient communities will take centre stage during his presidency.

Watch the interview with the new President:

Cillian Lohan on the role of the EESC's Civil Society Organisations' Group:



If you are a civil society organisation or if you are an individual working with a civil society organisation or volunteering, we are here to help you reach the decision-makers in the EU.

The new President on his motivation:

Within our group, I don't find another space within the EU architecture where civil society organisations have this standing, where we are able to represent viewpoints and have an impact with our work. That is what motivates me, that I have seen how we can actually make a difference.

Cillian Lohan on priorities for the 2025-2028 Group presidency:

We need to look at what can we make a difference in, from the perspective of our Group. Rather than talking about defence, I prefer to look at what we can do about peace and how we can contribute to peace. And that is connected to building resilient communities.

Read the press release on the appointment of Cillian Lohan: [Civil Society Organisations' Group of EESC appoints new president | EESC](#)

EESC RENEWAL: Krzysztof Balon, new Vice-President of the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group

6 November 2025

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Krzysztof Balon, Vice-President, Civil Society

Organisations' Group ©EU/EESC

Meet our Vice-President and representative of the Polish Committee of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN Poland)

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EU MEMBER STATE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS NOMINATION AS EESC MEMBER:

Poland

NOMINATION AS REPRESENTATIVE OF:

Polish Committee of the European Anti-Poverty Network ([EAPN Poland](#))

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

I hold a Master of Science degree in Social Management from the [University of Krems](#) (Austria). My mother tongue is Polish, and I am also fluent in both English and German. In Poland, I co-founded and led numerous civil society organisations – large ones like the Working Community of Associations of Social Organisations ([WRZOS](#)) but also grassroots ones like the [European Dialogue Foundation](#). I was also managing director and now president of the German-Polish association EUROSIZIAL (makes part of the larger German Parity Welfare Association, [Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband](#)). Nowadays, I am especially active as a Vice-President of the Polish Committee of the European Anti-Poverty Network ([EAPN Poland](#)). My commitment to civil dialogue is demonstrated by my membership – dating back over 20 years – of the Council for Public Benefit Work ([RDPP](#)), a main statutory civil dialogue body (I have twice been elected by civil society organisations as co-president of this assembly) as well as of the National Committee for the Development of the Social Economy ([KKRES](#)).

MOTIVATION FOR THE VICE-PRESIDENCY:

EXPERIENCE, COLLEGIALLY AND TEAMWORK: having already twice been Vice-President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group – thus a member of an excellent team – I am still very motivated to invest my time, skills and energy for the benefit of our Group. Since 2010, I have served the Civil Society Organisations' Group by making key contributions to the work of EESC bodies as well as by drafting a large number of opinions in the [SOC](#), [ECO](#), [INT](#), [TEN](#) and [REX](#) sections. In doing so, I have learned that collegiality also means reaching good compromises. After all, our members are active in NGOs tackling poverty and social exclusion, in consumer organisations, in organisations for people with disabilities, in movements for democracy and equality and against climate change, in organisations representing farmers, liberal professions, social economy and in many other areas. And still, all those activities have something in common: shaping participatory democracy and developing active citizenship.

FURTHER INFORMATION: KRZYSZTOF BALON

EESC RENEWAL: Katrīna Leitāne, new Vice-President of the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group

6 November 2025

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Meet our Vice-President and representative of the National Youth Council of Latvia

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EU MEMBER STATE RESPONSIBLE FOR HER NOMINATION AS EESC MEMBER:

Latvia

NOMINATION AS REPRESENTATIVE OF:

[National Youth Council of Latvia](#)

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

I bring a robust and multi-layered background, demonstrating comprehensive expertise across political, legal, and youth affairs. My experience spans a remarkable journey, from volunteering in a local youth centre to currently serving as an EESC member, who strongly advocates for youth organisations in Europe and beyond, presiding the [EESC Youth Group](#) from 2023 to 2025. Academically, my foundation is strong, marked by a master's degree in European Union Politics and Law from the [University of Edinburgh](#). My experience spans all tiers of governance, from the local to the EU level. I was a legal adviser at [Latvia's Ministry of Justice](#), gaining expertise in EU policy and international representation, and I also hold local governance experience as a city councillor and director of a youth centre in Sigulda, Latvia. I am an advocacy expert for the [National Youth Council](#). This comprehensive background showcases my strong leadership, deep EU policy understanding, and extensive experience in youth policy and advocacy across the local, national, and European tiers.

MOTIVATION FOR THE VICE-PRESIDENCY:

My primary motivation for going forward for the Civil Society Organisations' Group Vice-President position is to seek to secure the sustainability and resilience of democracy by actively championing strategic intergenerational collaboration. I firmly believe that just, lasting policies require all generations working together, as the success of young people in defending democracy is fundamentally our collective success. This commitment is borne out by my work as rapporteur for the EESC's [EU Youth Test opinion](#). This youth-driven initiative was a challenging but successful process that transformed the Committee from a consultative body into an example of powerful action. This achievement built crucial trust – the very foundation of a thriving democracy. As Vice-President, I intend to build on this courage and commitment. Furthermore, I am keen to advance two proposals within the Group: *Connecting as people* will foster trust amongst members by putting the emphasis on individual connections over professional titles, while *Reaching out to citizens* with more audiovisual reports will create further engagement with the public.

FURTHER INFORMATION: [KATRĪNA LEITĀNE](#)

EESC RENEWAL: Pietro Vittorio Barbieri, new Vice-President of the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group

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Pietro Vittorio Barbieri, Vice-President, Civil Society Organisations' Group ©EU/EESC

Meet our Vice-President and representative of the Italian platform *Third Sector Forum*

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**EU MEMBER STATE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS
NOMINATION AS EESC MEMBER:**

NOMINATION AS REPRESENTATIVE OF:

Italian platform *Third Sector Forum* - [Forum Nazionale del Terzo Settore](#)

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

I was 20 years old when a dive into the sea gave me a spinal cord injury and a thus a permanent disability, putting an end to my dream of being a town planner. It was 1987 and architectural drawing was still being done by hand. I changed tack and enrolled in the faculty of humanities, but a passion for politics took over: I became involved in the student movement and took up the cause of people with disabilities. The level of discrimination encountered was such that I focused primarily on the disabilities issue. My focus has never been limited to just a few forms of discrimination. Minorities in general have been the subject of my personal studies, progressing to the focal point of human rights. I worked for improvements in Italian, European and international legislation. The pinnacle of this work was taking on the role of advisor to the Italian Government's delegation to the United Nations ad hoc committee developing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ([CRPD](#)).

The rule-of-law approach was therefore my first port of call. The democratic model I was looking at required in-depth consideration of economic paradigms. The contrast between existing theories and individual freedoms inevitably arose. Research has thus been the second focus in my life, into non-profit, solidarity-based, mutual and democratic forms of business model. In Italy, the *third sector* is defined as types of activity in which individuals choose to earn less to ensure substantive equality between colleagues, with a strong focus on working for people's rights, environmental sustainability, and culture and knowledge for all. I was then chosen to lead the Italian platform – the *Third Sector Forum*.

At the EESC, my most meaningful work may well have been on civil dialogue, which cuts to the heart of the work performed by the civil society organisations represented in the Civil Society Organisations' Group. In order to

address such a sensitive topic, I had to establish dialogue with the EESC's [Employers' Group](#) and [Workers' Group](#), and work in close coordination with the European networks representing civil society through the EESC's [Liaison Group](#) and other bodies.

MOTIVATION FOR THE VICE-PRESIDENCY:

Clearly, my efforts as Vice-President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group are directed towards all forms of exclusion and poverty, the rule of law and respect for minorities, and of course towards participatory models of the economy, public policy and society – meaning civil dialogue. Other topics: increasing transparency in the method used to assign work to members of our Group, monitoring the implementation of the new regulation concerning members' status, ensuring that restrictions on the EESC budget do not limit members' scope of action, and finding a solution to differences of opinion arising between the Committee's Employers' and Workers' Groups.

FURTHER INFORMATION: PIETRO VITTORIO BARBIERI



EESC RENEWAL: Juliane Neiiendam, new Vice-President of the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group

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Meet our Vice-President and representative of The Women's Council in Denmark

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EU MEMBER STATE RESPONSIBLE FOR HER NOMINATION AS EESC MEMBER:

Denmark

NOMINATION AS REPRESENTATIVE OF:

[The Women's Council in Denmark](#)

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

I hold an MSc in Engineering and an MBA in Marketing and Management. With more than 20 years of leadership experience in industry, entrepreneurship and civil society, I have a lot of knowledge in the area of innovation, digitalisation, visualisation, AI and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) in general.

Alongside my role in the Women's Council, I serve as the president of [Female Entrepreneurs in Denmark](#) and chair of the Copenhagen Region at The Danish Society of Engineers ([IDA](#)), where I lead on diversity and inclusion. I served for six years on the Board of the Danish Refugee Council ([DRC](#)) and six years on the board of IDA. This reflects my commitment to technology, business and equality.

My work at the EESC has spanned democracy, labour rights, social protection, entrepreneurship, energy and external relations, reflecting a broad and versatile profile. I am recognised for collaborative leadership, building consensus and advancing equality and inclusion – core principles that strengthen civil society.

MOTIVATION FOR THE VICE-PRESIDENCY:

It is an honour to serve as Vice-President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group at the start of the new mandate. I see this role as an opportunity to strengthen civil society's voice in shaping a more resilient, democratic and inclusive Europe. My motivation is to ensure that all perspectives – social, environmental and economic – are not only heard but actively woven into EU decision-making. I believe in leadership based on collaboration, transparency and respect, bringing both fresh energy and deep commitment to our shared work. In a time of digital, green and geopolitical transitions, the Civil Society Organisations' Group plays a vital role as the living heartbeat of the EESC. My aim is to build bridges, promote equality as a fundamental value and foster trust and unity across diverse organisations. I am motivated by the belief that no one should be left behind, and that, together, civil society can make the EU stronger, fairer and more human.

FURTHER INFORMATION: JULIANE NEIENDAM

EESC RENEWAL: Rudolf Kolbe, new Vice-President of the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group

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Meet our Vice-President and representative of the Austrian Federal Conference of the Liberal Professions (BUKO)

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EU MEMBER STATE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS NOMINATION AS EESC MEMBER:

Austria

NOMINATION AS REPRESENTATIVE OF:

Austrian Federal Conference of the Liberal Professions ([BUKO](#))

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

I have the privilege of representing Austria in the European Economic and Social Committee, nominated by the Austrian Federal Conference of the Liberal Professions. Professionally, I work as a self-employed engineer in geodetic surveying – a field that requires precision, but also the ability to keep a broad and human perspective. For more than twenty years I have been devoted to representing the liberal professions at both national and European level. Among other functions, I have held the roles of President of the Austrian Federal Conference of the Liberal Professions ([BUKO](#)), co-founder and President of the European Council of Engineers Chambers ([ECEC](#)) and President of the European Council of Liberal Professions ([CEPLIS](#)). Since 2015, I have been a proud member of the EESC, where I have taken on a variety of responsibilities, including in the Communication Commission.

MOTIVATION FOR THE VICE-PRESIDENCY:

Since 2020, I have had the honour of serving as Vice-President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group – a role I wish to continue with energy, experience and a great sense of commitment. My main priorities include affordable housing, strong health and social policies, artificial intelligence, support for SMEs and the work of the

Communication Commission. At the same time, the Presidency's task is to ensure fairness and balance – in gender, in the diversity of groups represented and in geographical terms - with regard to members' involvement in activities. As Vice-President, I see myself not only as part of a strong and cooperative team, but also as a direct and approachable point of contact for our members. I am convinced that with openness, dialogue and teamwork we can make the concerns of Europe's citizens and civil society even more clearly heard at EU level.

FURTHER INFORMATION: [RUDOLF KOLBE](#)

EESC RENEWAL: Lidija Pavić-Rogošić, new Vice-President of the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group

6 November 2025

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Meet our Vice-President and representative of ODRAZ – Sustainable Community Development/Croatian Volunteer Development Centre

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**EU MEMBER STATE RESPONSIBLE FOR HER
NOMINATION AS EESC MEMBER:**

Croatia

NOMINATION AS REPRESENTATIVE OF:

[ODRAZ](#) – Sustainable Community Development/Croatian Volunteer Development Centre

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

I am Director of Croatian civil society organisation [ODRAZ](#) – Sustainable Community Development, have worked on sustainable development for many years, including environmental and social aspects, and have founded several associations and networks.

I graduated from the [Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb](#) and the Diplomatic Academy and have a Master's degree in Social Policy from [London Metropolitan University](#).

I have experience in international organisations – in the environment and the development of civil society organisations (CSOs) – and spent 10 years in the Croatian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Physical Planning.

I have been an EESC member since 2013, a member of the [Rural Pact Coordination Group](#) of the European Commission and of the [Croatian Volunteer Development Centre](#)'s supervisory board, and head of the secretariat for the sustainable urban mobility network [CIVINET Slovenia-Croatia-SEE](#).

I was a member of the Croatian [State Council for Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection](#), the Croatian [Council for Civil Society Development](#), the board of the Croatian Rural Development Network ([HMRR](#)), etc.

MOTIVATION FOR THE VICE-PRESIDENCY:

I am deeply committed to the EESC's core values: solidarity, inclusion and the transformative power of civil society. Leadership, to me, means service – amplifying unheard voices and building bridges where others see barriers.

Since joining in 2013, I have gained institutional insight through my work in the EESC, Civil Society Organisations' Group and EESC [REX](#) bureaux. My roles as rapporteur, co-rapporteur and study group member have focused on

sustainable development, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), rural and urban development, sustainable urban mobility and civil society empowerment. Active across the EESC's sections [REX](#), [NAT](#) and [TEN](#), and contributor to the [ECO](#) and [SOC](#) sections, I've seen the strength of cross-sectional collaboration.

Representing the EESC at events like the [European Rural Parliament](#) and the UN's High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development ([HLPF](#)) has helped elevate our voice globally. My engagement with CSOs across Europe, the Western Balkans and EUROMED informs my inclusive vision.

As Vice-President, I will ensure our Group remains a strong, visible force for a better Europe.

FURTHER INFORMATION: [LIDIJA PAVIĆ-ROGOŠIĆ](#)

EESC RENEWAL: Ariane Rodert, new Vice-President of the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group

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Ariane Rodert, Vice-President, Civil Society Organisations' Group ©EU/EESC

Meet our Vice-President and representative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden

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EU MEMBER STATE RESPONSIBLE FOR HER
NOMINATION AS EESC MEMBER:

Sweden

NOMINATION AS REPRESENTATIVE OF:

[Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden](#)

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

I have worked in the civil society sector for 25 years, firstly for [Forum](#), a Swedish civil society umbrella organisation, and recently for the [Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden](#), the country's largest civil society organisation, representing over 5.5 million members. As Head of Policy, I lead a team of policy advisers covering areas such as climate, forestry, culture, social work, democracy and fundamental rights, civil defence and preparedness. Beyond the EESC, my career has spanned the private and public sectors. I have worked with national governments and parliaments, the EU institutions and civil society partners across Europe. As an EESC member since 2010 I have held various positions of responsibility: Single Market, Production and Consumption ([INT](#)) Section President, Vice-President of Civil Society Organisations' Group, Vice-President of the Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship ([SOC](#)) and EESC Bureau member. I have a Master of Science degree in Business and Economics from the University of Stockholm.

MOTIVATION FOR THE VICE-PRESIDENCY:

We face a complex societal landscape that calls for all resources in society to be mobilised, where civil society must be seen not just as a partner but as a cornerstone of resilience and defender of our common values. I firmly believe that the contributions of organised civil society, and the Civil Society Organisations' Group in particular, are more vital than ever and that our Group must ensure that the voices of Europe's citizens, associations, SMEs, social economy actors, NGOs and voluntary organisations are not only heard but shape the future of Europe. I hope my experience and deep knowledge of civil society in Europe can be of help to our Group as it shoulders this task. As part of the Group presidency team, I hope to improve our working methods in order to better facilitate our work on the basis of openness, structure and transparency. Together we can make the Civil Society Organisations' Group an

even stronger driving force, with real impact that will make civil society in Europe even stronger.

FURTHER INFORMATION: [ARIANE RODERT](#)

EESC RENEWAL: Elena Calistru is the new ECO Section President

6 November 2025

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Meet the President of the EESC's Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion (ECO) and representative of the organisation *Funky Citizens*

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EU MEMBER STATE RESPONSIBLE FOR HER NOMINATION AS EESC MEMBER:

Romania

NOMINATION AS REPRESENTATIVE OF:

[Funky Citizens](#) (plus supporting organisations: Declic, [Center for Independent Journalism](#), [Daruieste Viata](#) and many other local organisations across Romania)

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

- Qualifications – political scientist (University of Bucharest and Sapienza University, Rome) & EMBA (Maastricht School of Management)

- Founder and leader of *Funky Citizens* – I have built one of Romania's most effective civil society platforms for fiscal transparency and democratic accountability, reaching 5 million citizens through innovative approaches to monitoring governments and civic engagement. My professional expertise spans fiscal policy analysis, implementation of EU funds, democratic institution-building and public education on complex budgetary issues.

- Developer of innovative methodologies for translating macroeconomic policy and budgets into accessible public understanding, including real-time budget tracking systems and participatory governance mechanisms now being applied through training courses for civil society across multiple Romanian municipalities. My experience combines rigorous policy research with practical implementation capacity and grassroots mobilisation – essential for effective civil society engagement with EU economic governance.

- Active in European civil society networks with a deep understanding of both Eastern European reform challenges and the EU's institutional frameworks.

MOTIVATION FOR THE EESC'S ECO SECTION PRESIDENCY:

My appointment as President of the EESC's Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion ([ECO](#)) for the term 2025-2028 comes at a decisive moment for European economic governance. The negotiations of the [EU budget 2028-2034](#) (Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)) will determine whether the EU can deliver the competitiveness, cohesion and democratic resilience our citizens need – or whether economic frustration will continue to fuel political extremism.

Civil society has an essential perspective to contribute – we understand how EU policies translate into household realities, where implementation bottlenecks occur and how to build public support for necessary reforms. As ECO section president, I aim to strengthen the bridge between economic policy design and citizens' experience, ensuring that the EU institutions benefit from civil society's on-the-ground expertise.

I bring practical experience combining fiscal policy research with direct implementation through municipal partnerships, along with deep understanding of post-communist Member States' specific challenges in EU economic integration. This presidency offers the opportunity to demonstrate civil society's value as a genuine partner in designing economic governance that delivers tangible results.

PRIORITIES AND MISSION:

As ECO section president, my primary focus is ensuring meaningful engagement by civil society in the MFF 2028-2034 negotiations and the economic governance frameworks that will shape Europe's future competitiveness and cohesion.

Key priorities include:

- building effective coalitions across [EESC Groups](#), with the European Parliament, Committee of Regions and civil society networks to maximise collective influence on economic policy decisions;
- making economic governance accessible – translating complex fiscal policy into clear language that builds citizens' understanding and democratic legitimacy for necessary reforms;
- strengthening multi-level governance in EU budget implementation – working with regional authorities and civil society to ensure that the Commission's proposed centralisation does not undermine subsidiarity principles and local partnerships that make EU funding effective;
- harnessing the expertise of Central and Eastern Europe on fiscal consolidation, democratic resilience and absorption of EU funds – ensuring that the valuable experience of the post-communist Member States informs broader EU policy development and feeds into the enlargement process.

Goal:

Economic governance that strengthens rather than strains democratic institutions.

EESC RENEWAL: Alain Coheur is the new CCMI President

6 November 2025

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Alain Coheur, CCMI President ©EU/EESC

Meet the President of the EESC's Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI) and representative of Solidaritis – Mutual Health Fund

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EU MEMBER STATE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS

NOMINATION AS EESC MEMBER:

Belgium

NOMINATION AS REPRESENTATIVE OF:

[Solidaritis – Mutual Health Fund](#)

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

I studied at the [University of Liège](#), at the Faculty of Medicine (School of Public Health, specialising in hospital management) and at the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences.

In 1991, I joined Solidaris, one of the largest mutual health funds in Belgium, where I have been Director of European and International Affairs since 2002. This role has led me to engage in various European cross-border healthcare projects between Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg.

I have also held responsibilities such as President and Vice-President of [Social Economy Europe](#), Vice-President of the Belgian Agency for Development Cooperation ([ENABEL](#)), Board member of the International Association for Social Security ([ISSA](#)) and [CIRIEC](#), and President of the International Forum for the Social and Solidarity Economy ([ESS FI](#)). I also lecture at the University of Liège, Faculty of Medicine, School of Public Health.

MOTIVATION FOR THE EESC'S CCMI PRESIDENCY:

Since becoming a Belgian member of the EESC in 2015, I have gained broad experience as EESC Bureau Member, President of the Section for Single Market, Production and Consumption ([INT](#)) (2020–2023), vice-president of the Bureau (2023-2025) and active member of the Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship ([SOC](#)) and the Consultative Commission on Industrial Change ([CCMI](#)). These responsibilities have provided me with in-depth knowledge of the Committee's functioning and strengthened my ability to build alliances and deliver solutions. I have served as rapporteur for numerous opinions, which enabled me to develop wide-ranging contacts within the European institutions, the rotating Council presidencies, and with external stakeholders.

My motivation stems from a deep commitment to strengthening the role of the EESC and ensuring that the CCMI continues to play a pivotal part in shaping Europe's industrial, social and economic future.

PRIORITIES AND MISSION:

The CCMI should be a pillar of the EESC in promoting sovereignty, prosperity and unity in Europe's diversity. Faced with major challenges, the EU is seeking industrial renewal. In this context, the CCMI must lead in foresight, preparedness and strategic change by mobilising expertise, boldness and ambition.

Continuing its original mandate, the CCMI will focus on critical raw materials and sectoral industrial policies, ensuring effective implementation of horizontal industrial strategies across sectors. It will thus contribute to the clean and digital transitions (including their circular dimension), strengthen EU strategic autonomy and preparedness, and address the human and social dimensions, including skills. In addition, the CCMI will continue to coordinate the EESC's flagship '[EU Blue Deal](#)' initiative on water.

Working in synergy with all sections of the EESC and civil society stakeholders, and thanks to the complementary expertise of its members and delegates, the CCMI will provide concrete recommendations to reinforce Europe's industrial competitiveness and strategic preparedness, while upholding the values of the EU's economic and social model.

FURTHER INFORMATION: ALAIN COHEUR

EESC RENEWAL: Stoyan Tchoukanov is the new NAT Section President

6 November 2025

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Meet the President of the EESC's Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment (NAT) and representatives of the Beef Breeders Association of Bulgaria (BBAB)

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EU MEMBER STATE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS NOMINATION AS EESC MEMBER:

Bulgaria

NOMINATION AS REPRESENTATIVE OF:

Beef Breeders Association of Bulgaria ([BBAB](#))

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

I hold a Master of Engineering degree in Selection and Reproduction of Livestock from the [Agricultural University of Plovdiv](#), Bulgaria. After advanced training on beef breeding and meat production at [Texas A&M University](#), College Station, Texas, USA, I began developing my PhD thesis: 'Ecologic and genetic factors for development of extensive livestock breeding in Bulgaria'. The genetic data and breeding values used in my thesis were collected during my work at BBAB, where I have been serving as president for the past 10 years. I have a beef cattle farm in south-east Bulgaria. I began my second term of office as member of the EESC in September.

MOTIVATION FOR THE EESC'S NAT SECTION PRESIDENCY:

Honest and non-ideologically bound representation of agri-food producers, operators and rural citizens and their true needs in the face of the approaching catastrophe ([triple planetary crisis](#)). As a farmer personally affected by the consequences of climate change, I believe we need to find a proper balance between the three pillars of sustainability (economic, environmental, and social) in order to crisis-proof the European agri-food system and build real food sovereignty. European nature is suffering and requires immediate action. Our duty is to act as the dedicated section - the EESC's Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment ([NAT](#)) - representing civil society in the EU policy-making process.

PRIORITIES AND MISSION:

Making peace with nature in a pragmatic way came up spontaneously as a motto.

- Building a more resilient and fairer food system through nature-preservation-oriented agriculture based on scientifically proven advancements.
- Fair profit distribution and proper remuneration for the most vulnerable along the agri-food supply chain, supporting generational renewal.

Top priorities will also include:

- A focus on rural and coastal areas and their urban connections as two-way relationships, particularly in light of the ongoing energy transition and persistent poverty;
- Circularity and nature-based solutions to address the carbon footprint, sustainable water management and air pollution;
- Organic and regenerative forms of farming to stop the degradation of our soils and provide healthy products of the highest quality;
- Climate policies and mitigation/adaptation measures to support the EU's targets and keep in line with the [European Green Deal](#).

All this while keeping in mind the triple planetary crisis and the United Nations' [2030 Agenda](#), supporting the Sustainable Development Goals. Working to achieve even more visibility for the work of the EESC and the NAT section at all levels.

FURTHER INFORMATION: STOYAN TCHOUKANOV



EESC RENEWAL: Overview of members taking on new positions in the Committee



During the EESC's inaugural plenary session for its new term of office (2025-2030), the EESC plenary elected members of the Civil Society Organisations' Group to several leadership positions.

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During the EESC's inaugural plenary session for its new term of office (2025-2030), the EESC plenary elected members of the Civil Society Organisations' Group to several leadership positions. Séamus Boland is the new [President](#) of the European Economic and Social Committee ([EESC](#)), after chairing the Civil Society Organisations' Group from 2020 to 2025. Elena-Alexandra Calistru takes over the presidency of the Committee's Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion ([ECO](#)), and Stoyan Tchoukanov will hold the presidency of the Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment ([NAT](#)). Alain Coheur will be president of the Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (known by its French acronym [CCMI](#), *Commission consultative des mutations industrielles*), and Maurizio Mensi will represent the Civil Society Organisations' Group as one of the EESC's Quaestors.

Unlike EESC members, who are elected for a five-year term of office, the presidencies of the EESC, its sections and other permanent and ad hoc bodies are elected for a period of two and a half years, in rotation between the three groups which make up the EESC. New presidencies usually start with the EESC renewal and mid-term renewal. As the EESC's 2025-2030 term of office started on 21 September, the new presidencies will last until April 2028.

Positions to be held by members of the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group during the 2025-2028 term:

- Séamus Boland – [EESC President](#)
- Elena-Alexandra Calistru – President of the [ECO Section](#)
- Stoyan Tchoukanov – President of the [NAT Section](#)
- Alain Coheur – President of the [CCMI](#)
- Maurizio Mensi – Quaestor
- Ioannis Vardakastanis – Vice-President of the [ECO Section](#)
- Giuseppe Guerini – Vice-President of the [INT Section](#)
- Baiba Miltoviča – Vice-President of the [TEN Section](#)
- Ariane Rodert – Vice-President of the [SOC Section](#)
- Corina Murafa Benga – Vice-President of the [NAT Section](#)
- Ionuț Sibian – Vice-President of the [REX Section](#)
- Giovanni Marcantonio – President of the [Labour Market Observatory](#)
- Baiba Miltoviča – President of the [Permanent Group on Transport](#)
- Michael Mc Loughlin – Co-Chair of the [EU-Ukraine Civil Society Platform](#)
- Cristian Pîrvulescu – Co-Chair of the [EU-Republic of Moldova Civil Society Platform](#)
- Danko Relić – President of the [EU-Montenegro Joint Consultative Committee](#)
- Ioannis Vardakastanis – President of the [EU-Türkiye Joint Consultative Committee](#)
- Juraj Sipko – President of the European Economic Area Consultative Committee
- John Comer – President of the [Latin America Follow-up Committee](#)
- Séamus Boland – President of the [EU-Brazil Round Table](#)
- Séamus Boland – President of the [EU-China Round Table](#)
- Martin Böhme – President of the [Ethical Committee](#)
- Stoyan Tchoukanov – President of the [Permanent Group on the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC](#)

Background information:

The EESC is made up of 329 members from the 27 Member States. Nominated by their national governments, they are appointed by the Council of the European Union for a renewable period of five years. EESC members then work independently in the interests of all EU citizens. Members are not politicians but employers, trade unionists and representatives of various activities such as farming, consumer and environmental organisations, the social economy, SMEs, the liberal professions and associations representing persons with disabilities, young people, the voluntary sector, etc.

For the 2025-2030 term of office, the Civil Society Organisations' Group is composed of 110 members (46 new members, corresponding to 42%), including, as usual, a wide range of civil society representatives from the economic, civic, professional and cultural fields.

EESC PLENARY: The New Pact for the Mediterranean is designed to improve young people's future

6 November 2025

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At its plenary session on 18 September, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted an opinion on *A new Pact for the Mediterranean*, calling for bottom-up processes ensuring that the pact has a direct, positive impact on all people and especially on youth. Read the key messages of the members of the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group.

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At its plenary session on 18 September, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted an opinion on [A new Pact for the Mediterranean](#), a month ahead of its [official launch](#) by the European Commission. The Committee calls for bottom-up processes ensuring that the pact has a direct, positive impact on all people, especially on youth.

The New Pact for the Mediterranean aims to deepen cooperation between the EU and Southern Mediterranean countries grounded in mutual respect and shared priorities. It is designed through a people-centred strategic framework, emphasising inclusive participation and sustainable development. Young people should play a key role in all stages of policy-making.

The presentation and adoption of the [EESC opinion](#) were linked to a debate on the state of play of the new pact for the region, hosted during the EESC plenary, with the Director of the Commission's Directorate General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf, Stefano Sannino. He explained that the new pact was based on three pillars: people, including education and vocational training, economic cooperation, including renewable energy and green technologies, and security, resilience and migration management.

The debate was chaired by [Krzysztof Pater](#), former EESC Vice-President (2023-2025) and member of its Civil Society Organisations' Group. He underlined that the Pact must be ambitious, coherent and forward-looking, addressing the region's structural economic weaknesses, while also fostering resilience, sustainability and social inclusion.

Several members of the EESC's Civil Society Organisations' Group took the floor during the plenary debate:

[Lidija Pavić-Rogošić](#), co-rapporteur of this opinion and vice-president of the Group, urged members to view this as a gateway to peace, democracy and rule of law. In her own words, "the New Pact for the Mediterranean must deliver inclusive action, equity and shared prosperity, built *"with"* people, not for them. The Mediterranean is our shared destiny, where inclusive vision, equitable growth, civic co-authorship and collective accountability shape a future of human-centred prosperity, lived solidarity and real impact built with communities."

[Michael McLoughlin](#) stated that "the Mediterranean has one of the youngest populations globally and they have been central to its development. However, they remain poorly represented and excluded from decision-making. Our work seeks to change that, and it must guide all EU action in the region".

[Pietro Vittorio Barbieri](#), vice-president of the Group, echoed the considerations of his colleagues regarding the importance of risk prevention. More specifically, he believes that "as Europe we have done little for the Israel-Palestine conflict and this is a step towards us becoming more present in the area and contributing meaningfully."

[Luca Jahier](#) said that "we expect this new pact to become a new start for constructive relations in this crucial area. A real partnership – a new alliance in a time of tension, conflict, migration, war and a chance for common challenges to be transformed into joint opportunities that explore education, climate change, energy, water, democracy, peace, stability and sustainable prosperity."

Read the EESC's press release: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/news/new-pact-mediterranean-designed-improve-young-peoples-future>

Watch the debate at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/streaming/?event=20250918-0900-SPECIAL-OTHER>

Article co-authored with EESC press service



EESC PLENARY: EESC backs EU Preparedness Union Strategy

6 November 2025

→ [READ ONLINE](#)



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On 18 September, the EESC plenary held a debate with civil defence and humanitarian experts on the European Commission's EU Preparedness Union Strategy and adopted its opinion on the Strategy. Read the key messages of the members of the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group.

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The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has welcomed the European Commission's new [EU Preparedness Union Strategy](#), calling it a long-overdue shift to an "all-hazards, whole-of-government and whole-of-society" approach to crises ranging from wildfires and floods to cyberattacks and full-scale armed aggression. But the EESC warned that the plan must come with clear, long-term financing and a real role for organised civil society to succeed.

At its plenary debate with civil defence and humanitarian experts on 18 September, the EESC stressed that solidarity, public trust and social unity are just as vital as new rules and tools. After the debate, the EESC adopted [its opinion](#) on the Strategy for which [Ariane Rodert](#), Vice-President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group since 21 October, was one of the rapporteurs.

Several members of the EESC's Civil Society Organisations' Group took the floor during the plenary debate:

Ms Rodert opened the debate by affirming that the "EESC welcomes the Preparedness Union Strategy." She stated that "true resilience means investing in an empowered civil society, defending our common values and fundamental rights, as well as fostering social cohesion and inclusion – so no one is left behind."

[Pietro Vittorio Barbieri](#), vice-president of the Group, affirmed that "across Europe, emergency preparedness is omnipresent. Our unpreparedness is undeniable. Time to change the Latin motto: if you want peace, prepare for peace."

[Corina Murafa Benga](#) strongly stated that "crises are the new normal. We need civil society at the core, integrated climate resilience, and long-term and holistic EU funding – not ad hoc fixers."

[Krzysztof Stanislaw Balon](#), vice-president of the Group, urged members to also think of civil duties which are equally important for preparedness. He recommended that "Member States introduce a compulsory service for young people either in the armed forces or in social and health services provided by civil society organisations or social economy entities. This would allow for better preparedness."

[Simo Tiainen](#), vice-president of the Group during the EESC's term 2020-2025, asserted that the importance of preparedness is becoming greater in this insecure world. He said that "crises do not end at the borders of countries, and therefore we need cross-border collaboration at EU level to tackle them."

Read the EESC's press release: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/news/eesc-backs-eu-preparedness-union-strategy-warns-fund-it-leave-no-one-behind>

Watch the debate at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/streaming/?event=20250918-0900-SPECIAL-OTHER>

Article co-authored with EESC press service



EESC PLENARY: EESC reinforces call for water resilience with new recommendations

6 November 2025

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Water must be treated as a strategic priority for Europe, the EESC stressed during its plenary session on 18 September, where three new opinions on water policy were discussed and adopted. Read the key messages of the members of the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group.

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Water must be treated as a strategic priority for Europe, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) stressed during its plenary session on 18 September, where three [new opinions on water policy](#) were discussed and adopted. The debate brought together high-level EU and UN representatives and highlighted the Committee's ongoing commitment to the EU Blue Deal, which it has championed for nearly four years.

EESC Vice-President for Communication (2020-2025) Laurențiu Plosceanu opened the debate by pointing out the Committee's pioneering role in placing water at the centre of EU policy. "The Blue Deal has been one of the most consequential initiatives from our Committee. Civil society, businesses, citizens and social partners are ready to work together to ensure water resilience now, and in the years to come," he said.

Two years after the EESC's [Declaration for an EU Blue Deal](#), progress has been made: the EU now has a Commissioner dedicated to water and the Commission's [Water Resilience Strategy](#) addresses many of the Committee's core demands. Yet challenges remain. The Committee emphasised the need for comprehensive, cross-sectoral policy integration, and regretted the absence of consistent references to water in initiatives such as the [Clean Industrial Deal](#). A key new recommendation of the EESC is to introduce a water test for new and revised EU legislation to ensure that European actions across sectors take into account the water dimension.

Several members of the EESC's Civil Society Organisations' Group also took the floor during the plenary debate:

[Alain Coheur](#), [CCMI](#) President since 22 October, said that water resilience was becoming more and more prevalent in the EU agenda and Europe was changing the way it manages water. "This initiative is a significant step in the right

direction, but to better manage this issue, we need to work together and build momentum as an institution and as one Europe. We need to focus on three points: access to drinking water, limiting water leakage and ensuring efficient use of water."

[Marc Decoster](#) stated that there was still a lot to be done. "It is time we dealt with the geopolitics of water. Water is used as a waste bin and sometimes we have infections and sickness as a result. There are solutions and it is time we established priorities when it comes to water supply: human, animals, then plants."

Zsolt Kükedi, who was a member of the Group during the EESC's term 2020-2025, stressed that "water is a common good, a right for all, a duty to protect. 40% of Europe's population is affected by water scarcity, yet water is barely present in EU policies. This is not just a mistake – it is irresponsibility. Water can teach us again what the EU often forgets: only together, across borders, can we survive."

[Ioannis Vardakastanis](#), former president of the [EESC's ECO Section](#) and member of the Civil Society Organisations' Group, was one of the rapporteurs for the opinion [Blue Diplomacy and water cooperation – solutions to relieve the pressure of climate induced migration](#) that was adopted in the context of the plenary debate.

Read the EESC's press release: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/news/eesc-reinforces-call-water-resilience-set-strong-new-recommendations>

Watch the debate at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/streaming/?event=20250918-0900-SPECIAL-OTHER>

Article co-authored with EESC press service



EESC PLENARY: EESC calls for a European Affordable Housing Plan



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At its plenary session on 18 September, the EESC hosted a debate with Commissioner for Energy and Housing, Dan Jørgensen, and called on the European Commission to take urgent action to address the ongoing housing crisis. Read the key messages of the members of the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group.

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At its plenary session on 18 September, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) hosted a debate with Commissioner for Energy and Housing, Dan Jørgensen, and called on the European Commission to take urgent action to address the ongoing housing crisis.

The EESC urges the European Commission to put together a European action plan on affordable housing, and is ready to contribute to it by adopting a specific opinion with key recommendations, and by committing to co-organising the first-ever EU Housing Summit together with the Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.

The Danish Presidency had asked the EESC to gather civil society's input for the European Affordable Housing Plan. Aurel Laurențiu Plosceanu, former EESC Vice-President in charge of Communication (2023-2025), said: "Our message is clear: the EU needs an action plan to make the right to housing a reality and to anchor it in EU law."

For his part, Commissioner Jørgensen said that housing represented a major challenge in Europe. "However, this also gives us an opportunity to make a real, positive and lasting difference to the lives of millions of citizens across Europe," he added. "If we want a Europe that is fairer, more competitive and truly independent, we need housing that is decent, sustainable and affordable for every citizen. So, let's take on this challenge. Let's seize this opportunity. And let's build a better Europe together."

Several members of the EESC's Civil Society Organisations' Group took the floor during the plenary debate:

[John Comer](#), rapporteur of the EESC opinion [For a European Affordable Housing Plan – the contribution of civil society](#) that was presented and adopted in the framework of the debate, declared that "the fundamental right of affordable housing must be enshrined in EU law. The younger generation cannot afford to live where they want, older people feel under pressure to be downsized after working their entire lives. We acknowledge the principles of subsidiarity, but we also understand that Member States cannot do this alone. This coordinated plan is a step towards a cohesive policy that all Member States could introduce to address the housing crisis".

[Baiba Miltoviča](#), former president of the EESC's [TEN section](#) (2020-2025), declared that European cities need long-term and innovative financing schemes deployed at EU level to support the retrofitting of social and municipally owned housing stock: "It is crucial to recognise that there are different housing support systems and funding gaps in Europe. These need to be tailored schemes with different solutions, and ["InvestEU"](#) can help with wider guaranteed coverage, in some markets, for higher social value low-income housing."

[Elena-Alexandra Calistru](#), president of the EESC's [ECO section](#) since 22 October, backed this by saying that "the housing crisis represents an immediate economic threat requiring a Multiannual Financial Framework (["MMF"](#)) response, especially through its cohesion policy. Regions with unaffordable housing cannot compete globally. It is time to treat housing the same as defence infrastructure; systematically!"

[Giuseppe Guerini](#) recalled that "in Europe we have a network of cooperatives that specialise in the construction and management of affordable housing, but also in providing renewable energy to communities. I urge you to consult these enterprises to create the best policy possible for our communities."

Neža Repanšek, who was a member of the Civil Society Organisations' Group during the EESC's term 2020-2025, said that "many young people would love to move out of their parents' home, but many cannot afford it. Without a place you can call 'home', you cannot build a future. Without a community, you cannot feel like you belong. Without belonging, countries inevitably face a silent brain drain. Young talents leave in search of dignity elsewhere. Let's help young people stay sane in our European community, grow a home and contribute to the future of the EU".

[Corina Murafa Benga](#) focused on housing infrastructure; more specifically she contended the myth that sustainable and affordable housing are incompatible. "Homes built or renovated with recycled materials (heat pumps, solar panels, solid insulation), often prove more affordable in the long-term than conventional housing. But, when making investment decisions, regional and national authorities focus on up-front costs and fully disregard the savings they would get for the public if they applied a life-cycle approach."

Read the EESC's press release: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/press-releases/housingcrisis-eesc-calls-european-affordable-housing-plan>

Watch the debate at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/streaming/?event=20250918-1430-SPECIAL-OTHER>

Article co-authored with EESC press service

EESC PLENARY: Adopted opinions

6 November 2025

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The last EESC plenary sessions took place on 17-18 September and 21-23 October 2025. The EESC plenary adopted several opinion, some of which were drafted by members of the Civil Society Organisations' Group.

The [complete texts of all EESC opinions](#) are available in various language versions on the Committee's website

The next EESC plenary session will take place on 3-4 December 2025. For more information on the upcoming plenary

session please visit our [website](#).

AGENDA: Overview

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24/11/2025 - Extraordinary
meeting of the EESC's Civil
Society Organisations' Group

3-4/12/2025 - EESC plenary
session

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