



A strategic agenda with four good priorities but it still needs an ambitious vision for Europe

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Statement by

As EESC President, I welcome the new strategic agenda for 2019-2024 adopted on Thursday by the European heads of state and government.

There is no other alternative than to strengthen the role of the European Union in an increasing volatile and unsettled changing world.



At the last European elections, citizens have given us five years to build the Europe of tomorrow. We cannot waste this new chance and deliver business-as-usual. Now it is the right time to show great European leadership to deliver a genuine **#rEUnaissance** and ensure a strong sustainable development vision for tomorrow's Europe.

Building a climate-neutral, green, competitive, fair and social Europe, underlined in the strategy, is a good step in the right direction. However, the new strategic agenda should have gone further by highlighting the Sustainable Development Agenda, which is flagged only in the European role in shaping a new international order.

In fact, the Agenda 2030 should be the driving force also in the European Union and must become the EU's overarching strategy for the next decade. The next European budget must earmark not just 25%, but 40% of total resources to the sustainable development and climate change agenda. The European Semester should become the main vehicle for managing the Sustainable Development Strategy. Such a commitment would call for the appointment of a dedicated vice-president in the new Commission.

It is regrettable to learn that some Members States failed to commit to climate neutrality by 2050. With our young people taking to the streets to push for ambition and determination, I find it unacceptable to see some leaders falter to stand by their own commitments as stated in the Paris Agreement.

This said, I would like to salute the mention of the European Pillar of Social Rights. There is no other way for Europe than to fully implement its 20 principles, in order to make Europe truly inclusive and sustainable. It is not enough to mention upward economic convergence, as this must go hand in hand with more social convergence.

The commitment to manage migration and asylum policy effectively, including reaching a consensus on the Dublin regulation reform, is welcome. However, more must be done to foster the integration of migrants in our society and labour market.

Of course, we welcome many other points: Protecting citizens and fundamental values, strengthen competitiveness, our internal market, EMU, trade policies and the role of Europe in the world to promote peace, multilateralism and progress.

Having chosen culture as one my presidency priorities, I can only applaud the decision to invest in culture and cultural heritage, which are crucial pillars of a genuine open European identity.

I also want to underline the need now to give more consistency to the structured dialogue with citizens, civil society, social partners, local and regional authorities.

Europe was truly the best idea we had in the last century. A daring, highly successful project for peace and progress which we have laboured to build, step by step, over more than 60 years. Now, together, we must propel it into the future, in the firm belief that it is what it is needed today. Let's dare to dream the Sustainable Europe for the future generations.

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