

Team #vonderleyen gets the green light: Let's now deliver a sustainable Europe in the interest of its citizens!

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Luca Jahier, EESC President

Statement by

Organisation: European Economic and Social Committee

Today's vote in the European Parliament opens the way to a new era for Europe. I am convinced that new Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen** and her team of Executive Vice-Presidents, Vice-Presidents and Commissioners will usher a new momentum for our continent, after the good results of the European elections in May. Our citizens have given us five years to build the Europe of tomorrow and we should not waste this chance.

The new Commission President's agenda for Europe, which included the Green Deal as our new growth strategy for a sustainable Europe, gender equality and fundamental rights, is close to the priorities of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). Our house of European civil society firmly believes that it is high time for the EU to embrace and implement an ambitious sustainable agenda, which requires a shift in our mindsets.

The [EESC presented, at its October plenary session, its contribution to the work programme of the European Commission](#) for the next five years, pointing out that the EU must focus on climate change, digitalisation, the rule of law and globalisation, and embrace a new system of governance, one that more closely involves civil society organisations.

The EESC advises the European Commission to structure its future work plan for 2020 and beyond around this pillar. The Committee also calls for an overarching EU 2050 strategy for sustainability in order to implement the UN Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), something that the European Union has committed to achieving by 2030.

We need to act at all levels simultaneously and create a dynamic of action to address urgent environmental, economic and social challenges. Implementing the Social Pillar for a fair and just transition is paramount. The Committee also stresses that a new EU governance structure, as well as new rules and instruments for defining and implementing EU policies, is crucial. In particular, the role of the European Parliament should be enhanced in order to strengthen democratic accountability.

The goal of sustainability in all its dimensions calls for considerable effort and engagement by all the parties involved. Open democratic debate underpinned by the structured involvement of civil society is therefore vital in making the transition fair and effective.

We took also good note of Ms von der Leyen's decision to launch a new push for European democracy through a Conference on the Future of Europe. Such Conference must be organised with the full involvement of the EESC, as the EU institution that is closer to the citizens and the full expression of participatory democracy. Finally, I am really pleased that culture is now recognized as the bridge between our past and future, and included with a new name in the portfolio of Commissioner **Mariya Gabriel**.

We are committed, more than ever to supporting a Union that strives for more.

As the new President said, let's get to work TOGETHER!

Press contact

[Daniela Vincenti](#)

EESC President Spokesperson

+32 2 546 82 62

+32 497 41 20 95