Every generation has its measure of outcasts. There are people in each generation assigned to the outcast status because a "generation change" must mean some significant change in life conditions and life demands likely to force realities to depart from expectations implanted by the conditions quo ante. These changes devalue the skills they trained and promoted, and therefore render at least some among the new arrivals, those not flexible or prompt enough to adapt to the emergent standards, ill-prepared to cope with novel challenges and unarmed to resist their pressures. It does not however happen often that the plight of being outcast may stretch to embrace a generation as a whole. This may, however, be happening now.

Several generational changes have been noted during the post-war history of Europe. There was a 'boom generation' first, followed by two generations called respectively X and Y; most recently (though not as recently as the shock of the collapse of the Reaganite/Thatcherite economy), the impending arrival of the Z generation was announced. Each of these generational changes arise from more or less traumatic events; in each case a break in continuity and a necessity of sometimes painful readjustments, caused by a clash between inherited/learned expectations and unanticipated realities, were signalled. And yet, when looking back from the second decade of the 21st Century, we can hardly fail to notice that when confronted with the profound changes brought about by the latest economic collapse, each one of those previous passages between generations may well seem to be an epitome of inter-generational continuity...

Indeed, after several decades of rising expectations, the present-day newcomers to adult life confront expectations falling – and much too steeply and abruptly for any hope of a gentle and safe descent. There was bright, dazzling light at the end of every one of the few tunnels which their predecessors might have been forced to pass through in the course of their lives; instead, there is now a long, dark tunnel stretching behind every one of the few blinking, flickering and fast fading lights trying in vain to pierce through the gloom.

This is the first after-war generation facing the prospect of downward mobility. Their elders were trained to expect, matter-of-factly, that children will aim higher and reach further than they themselves managed (or had been allowed by the now bygone state of affairs) to dare and achieve: they expected the inter-generational ‘reproduction of success’ to go on beating their own records as easily as they themselves used to overtake the achievement of their parents. Generations of parents were used to expecting that
The EESC organised its 10th Civil Society Media seminar on "Communicating Migration" focusing on communication aspects in the context of migration, refugees and integration.

The aim of the event was to debate how communication tools and the media have been instrumental in telling the story of migration into and across Europe. The event brought together communications and media representatives of the EESC’s host organisations, EESC members, National Economic and Social Committees and similar bodies, other EU institutions, journalists and journalists’ organisations.

The conference focused on the key role of the media and government in providing information on the so-called refugee and migration crisis, to such an extent that public opinion and policy itself on this issue has undoubtedly been influenced.

In his statement, Group III President Luca Jahier underlined that 2016 was expected to have been the deadliest year yet in terms of drownings of individuals attempting to cross the sea into Europe. Smuggling has indeed become big business, carried out almost on an industrial scale, with smugglers launching up to 2,000 individuals onto the sea at a same time in flimsy boats – all with the aim of bringing/forcing them to sea to drown from so many boats at the same time. But just as smugglers have an objective, however perverse, so too have the media, civil society organisations and governments in their coverage of this tragedy. All of these actors have a particular stance or position or way of thinking, which is their starting-point, and which they will follow throughout – all with the aim of persuading citizens, aligning them to their position and manipulating them. Mr. Jahier mentioned the oversimplification of the situation – an oversimplification of the historical, geopolitical or social context, which is all the more true with the social media, where opinions and facts are shaped or shaped by extreme positions expressed in a few words.

Mr. Jahier concluded by saying that media should move away from the language of ‘cost’ towards that of ‘investment and opportunities’, but that whatever the role of the media in shaping our beliefs, we, as individuals are ultimately responsible; it is we alone. While noting that ‘anger, even hate’ can be observed in the class of 2010 graduates, political scientist Louis Chavel, in his article published in the 4th January issue of Le Monde under the title “Les jeunes sont mal partis”, asks how much time it will take to combine the rancour of the graduates and part-time jobs, unpaid ‘trainee’ pseudo-jobs deceitfully re-branded automatic, the seductive power of the promise was all but impossible to resist. Now however the throes of the seduced are turning wholesale, and almost overnight, into the crowds of the frustrated. For the first time in living memory, the whole class of graduates face a high probability, almost the certainty, of ad-hoc, temporary, insecure and part-time jobs, unpaid ‘trainee’ pseudo-jobs deceitfully re-branded practices – all considerably below their acquired skills and eons below their life task is to outshoot and leave behind the parental success and partis”, asks how much time will it take to combine the rancour of the graduates, political scientist Louis Chavel, in his article published in the 4th January issue of Le Monde under the title “Les jeunes sont mal partis”, as European migrants to the EU, rather than an amalgam of national approaches. For us, we must develop a coordinated European strategy. We need a common vision, for more than 6 years. Ten years after the adoption of CRPD, the disability movement in many regions of the world and also at the international level has gone through profound changes in order to represent the rights and the interests of one billion persons with disabilities worldwide in an effective, progressive and CRPD driven way.

To date, 168 countries have already ratified the CRPD. Altogether 27 out of 28 EU Member States (except Ireland) have done the same. The EU ratified the CRPD in December 2010. It is the first time in its history that the EU has become a party to a human rights treaty. After the CRPD ratification by the EU the EESC has been very active in promoting the human rights of persons with disabilities. Since then, disability rights have become a key priority in the EESC’s work.

More particularly: a) the EESC has established - after proposal of Group III - a Permanent Study Group on Disability rights in order to follow systematically the implementation of CRPD by the EU institutions and to draw from this experience. b) the EESC has issued several opinions on specific issues concerning persons with disabilities, c) the EESC has recently published the Opinion SOC/S353 on the Concluding Observations (COs) of the UN CRPD Committee to the EU.

We should add in that in 2015, the EU was reviewed by UN CRPD Committee. The EU was requested to explain what it has done for the rights of persons with disabilities. On this, in September 2015, the EU received the COs from the CRPD Committee that gave guidance to the EU on how to better promote, protect and ensure the rights of persons with disabilities in the EU. Following CRPD COs SOC/S353, the EESC expresses its thesis on how the recommendations of the CRPD committee should be implemented in order to re-define the EU disability policy for the next 4 years.

On 13 December 2006, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution that established the General(ite) Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its optional protocol. The period of negotiations was full of hope, emotions and it can be characterized as a romantic one. Persons with disabilities and their advocates fought all over the world for pushing forward a long standing demand to achieve the legal recognition of their rights at the UN level. And we did it!

“I was historically fortunate to represent the Europeans with disabilities throughout the negotiation process”

These negotiations were not only a victory for human rights but also a landmark achievement in the history of the international disability community, since leaders coming from different parts of the world and representing different groups managed to convert suspicion into trust and trust into solidarity by working together. The CRPD is a common vision, for more than 6 years. Ten years after the adoption of CRPD, the disability movement in many regions of the world and also at the international level has gone through profound changes in order to represent the rights and the interests of one billion persons with disabilities worldwide in an effective, progressive and CRPD driven way.

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The EESC is a political committee of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). It is a representative assembly of about 350 members that make up the EESC, of the civil society, economic and social councils, or similar institutions, representatives of employers, trade unions, other economic and social interests groups and NGOs from countries which are members of the Union for the Mediterranean. Mrs. Slavova moderated a panel and exchanged views on the current migrant crisis and strategies to adopt. It is rather a change for once to be speaking about ‘legal migration’ into Europe; I have spoken so many times at events dealing with illegal migration and refugees – it is a pleasure to be looking at things from a more positive perspective, speaking the language of opportunities and ‘win-win’ situations. Not all that European citizens would agree. But I do believe that a functioning system for legal migration into the EU from EuroMed countries could act as social changer and stabiliser. In other words, it could help to shape more positive views on migrants, to encourage them to respect working migrants who are self-reliant and contributing to European society. Unfortunately, citizens have less and less trust in statistics and hard data in the campaign in the UK for Brexit is a clear example. In that case, despite the fact that legal migrants in the UK are not net contributors to the British economy, the Leave campaign was able to stir up emotions of fear, which had nothing to do with hard facts, indeed throughout the EU, polls show that European voters worry more about immigration and terrorism than about economic issues. In fact, the migration and refugees – it is a pleasure to be looking at things from a more positive perspective, speaking the language of opportunities and ‘win-win’ situations.
Group III Members in the Spotlight: Playing a key role

Towards a fair sharing economy: the role and place of cooperative platforms

On 5 December 2016, President Jahier chaired a conference where activists of the social & solidarity economy gave examples of how fair and sharing platforms can be created, showing the variety of models, opportunities and challenges they represent for legislation and society.

Digital platforms are powerful tools for matching needs, cooperation and the sharing of information. Over the last few years, there has been much debate surrounding the legality of services and platforms such as Uber. But there has not been sufficient discussion of the variety of business models that already exist, and how to support the development of these new business models. There is also insufficient data on the economic weight of this sector.

In reality, there are already many varied examples of cooperative platform businesses. Nonetheless, these experiences and practices mostly develop in isolation; there is a great deal of fragmentation and ignorance of similar examples and best practices. What we need is to jointly discuss what works, what doesn’t, what is required, how to get set up, how to deal with the absence of regulation for the sector here in Europe, etc.

These online platforms bring workers, owners, consumers and communities together in a form of joint solidarity. It is a system which benefits all and a vehicle for like-minded people to reanimate an economic model of shared ownership, democratic governance, solidarity, inclusion and equality.

Cooperative platforms are closely linked to social and political protest, active citizenship, social and territorial solidarity. This is something that here at the EESC we have worked on considerably: be it from the angle of indicators to measure well-being beyond GDP, promoting the social economy and to support ethical trade and consumption; encouraging the emergence of the green economy and consumers; ethical banks, etc.

What we have learnt is that for each of these examples, there is a framework which is necessary for the sector to flourish: an enabling environment and an ecosystem including trans-parent, innovation-friendly regulation, tailored public procurement, potential tax support, training, awareness raising, etc.

That is why the sharing economy, cooperative platforms and social innovation at large, are able to tear down the walls separating sectors and markets, replacing competition logic with long-term partnership solutions. Ultimately, it is this type of citizen-led initiatives which will promote the social market economy that defines our European Union.

ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly: the EESC was there!

The ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) brings together elected representatives from the various ACP countries and members of the European Parliament (MEPs). It meets twice a year: in principle once in Brussels and a second time in an ACP country. In mid-December the meeting was held in Niamey, and the EESC – through its representatives on the ACP-EU Follow-up Committee – was once again invited to speak about its past, present and future activities.

It is always most valuable for the members of our follow-up committee to attend the debates at JPA meetings, because it allows them to hear the viewpoints of the parliamentarians involved, in particular those from ACP countries, on subjects which are discussed at our own meetings. Whilst Louis Michel, JPA Co-President, spoke of the importance of the parliamen-tary dimension, he also made reference, as did Commissioner Mimica, to the importance of civil society and to exchanges with civil society, especially in ACP countries. Apart from the post-Cotonou framework, Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and energy, Mr Mimica placed particular emphasis on sustainable development goals (SDGs). On this front, many parliamentarians feel that climate change is requiring a paradigm shift, insolar as these changes are having a tangible effect on matters of topical importance such as migration, trade and family farming.

After Commissioner Mimica’s statement, the JPA discussed a report on “Challenges for family farming and small-scale agricultural production in ACP countries”. There was also a discussion on the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 agenda and the Paris agreement on climate change, on the role of trade in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and on the impact of illicit financial flows on development finance. There was then a presentation and a very lively discussion on the need to support the resettlement of migrants in their country of origin and on the role of infrastructure development in promoting regional integration.

On the civil society side, the ACP-EU Follow-up Committee organised talks with representatives of Kenyan civil society. The aim of this contact was to explain our role, as defined under the Cotonou agreement, and to present the EESC more generally. The conclusion of these two-hour talks could be summed up by saying that there was a complete lack of information and understanding of the Cotonou agreement and its impact on the economy of Kenya. The EESC was able to tell them about the EESC’s work and to emphasise the importance of civil society and its role in the development of the Cotonou agreement.

Lastly, the ACP-EU Follow-up Committee spoke about the outcome of the two meetings at the EESC had organised in June 2016, also in Niamey. Thus, with regard to the Economic Partnership Agreement, the EESC monitors transatlantic links with civil society

A delegation from the EESC’s EU-North America Follow-up Committee carried out a mission to Canada and the US between 28 November and 4 December 2016.

The objective of the mission to the US was to meet with the representatives of US civil society and to assess their expectations of the future US trade policy and in particular of the future of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations. It was also a good opportunity to present the most recent EESC opinion on TTIP entitled “The position of the EESC on specific key issues of the TTIP” (adopted on 21 September 2016) to US stakeholders and authorities.

The timing of the mission was very interesting, taking into account the ratification of the Canada EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and in particular the recent presidential elections in the US.

In Canada we had meetings both in Montreal and in Ottawa. Regarding CETA, the agreement was signed after many delays in Brussels on 30 October. The ratification of the agreement by the European and Canadian Parliaments is expected in the first months of 2017. The objective of the mission in Canada was to assess this ratification procedure and the positions of Canadian civil society regarding the expected benefits and challenges of CETA implementation.

The mission allowed the EESC to understand the positions of Canadian civil society on CETA and the future challenges of CETA ratification and implementation. In the course of the mission, the EESC was still on the ratification process both in Canada and in the EU and that only when the agreement enters into provisional application, might there be an opportunity to discuss more in depth the civil society monitoring on the way to support the resettlement of migrants in their country of origin and on the role of infrastructure development in promoting regional integration.

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The mission showed that it is very difficult to predict how US Trade Policy will evolve under the new administration. This was clearly a time of uncertainty and speculation. It remains to be seen how the Donald Trump’s electoral promises to pull the US out of the Transatlantic Partnership (TPP) and to renegotiate NAFTA would be met by the Congress, dominated by a traditionally pro-trade Republican majority. Most of those we spoke to expressed the opinion that there might be a surge in the use of trade defence measures and even in some cases of other types of protectionism and trade-distorting measures, which might not be in compliance with the WTO rules.

Regarding TTIP it became clear that the pause in the negotiations will be rather long and that the future of the negotiations is unclear as no new date has been set. The EESC expressed the opinion that there might be a surge in the use of trade defence measures and even in some cases of other types of protectionism and trade-distorting measures, which might not be in compliance with the WTO rules.

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In general, contacts agreed that it would be very difficult to predict how US-EU relations would look during the mandate of the new administration, but most think-tanks expressed the opinion that the new presiden-tial administration would first deal with domestic policy by implement-
HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DECEMBER PLENARY SESSION

Group III members co-ordinating the work on new opinions

**Ariane RODERT (SE)** is the Co-Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: “Europe’s next leaders: the Start-up and Scale-up of our World, our Dignity, our Future” – REX/483

**Bernardo HERNÁNDEZ BATALLER (ES)** is the President of the study group for the opinion on: “Proposal for a new European Consensus on Development – Our World, our Dignity, our Future” – REX/484

**Baiba MILTOVIČA (LV)** is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: “States affected by natural disasters” – TEN/626

**Gianluca BUONAIUTO (IT)** is the Rapporteur-General of the study group for the opinion on: “Specific measures to Member States affected by natural disasters” – TEN/626

**Ronny LANNOO (BE)** is the Rapporteur-General of the study group for the opinion on: “Eco-design work programme 2016-2019” – ECO/427

**Seamus BOLAND (IE)** is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: “Clean Energy For All package” – CCMI/149

**Christian MOOS (DE)** is the Rapporteur-General of the study group for the opinion on: “Clean Energy For All package” – CCMI/149

**The full listing of membership of the above study groups for the new work may be consulted here:** [http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.group-3-new-study-groups](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.group-3-new-study-groups)

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New evaluation role launched by the Committee

As many people now know, our Committee has received a new task, that of evaluating existing European directives and legislation. How has this legislation turned out in the Member States, on the ground, for the public and businesses large and small, and for workers and consumers? How do their national and regional organisations gauge this?

Agreed, this is not a straightforward task, and it is a demanding one, coming on top of the Committee’s other (core) tasks. It is quite understandable that some colleagues should be asking questions about this extra role. Yet the Committee is resolved to respond appropriately to this request from the European Commission. For are we not faced every day with the many questions from the grassroots in our respective areas, all of which boil down to: “What does the European Union do for us in practice?” How often do we hear the complaint that “Brussels” and its European technocrats pointlessly stick their noses into anything and everything? In short, people see Europe as an out-of-touch busybody, far removed from the realities of daily life. Are they over- simplify ing, painting things black and white? This is undoubtedly the case. For this reason too, it is so important to have as correct an assessment as possible of European legislation, based on what happens in practice. Our democratic societies (in Europe) need smoothly functioning, effective rules and agreements, with the broad support of everyone involved. Rules which do not—or are difficult to—apply, actually lead to disorder, chaos, injustice and abuse of power.

There are many ways to carry out such assessments. One of these is by means of surveys – preferably as representative as possible. Here too, more needs to be done in the EU. An opinion issued previously by the Committee already stressed this point. A referendum? We can seldom be summed up in a simple yes or no. The Committee was therefore right also to opt for this, the best, but certainly not the simplest method: we operate in the field, in context. We put the question to representative civil society organisations on the spot, in the Member States, face to face in an open exchange of views between real people.

For our first assessment, of consumer rights, we applied the same method: talks in the field between a Committee delegation and local representatives of relevant civil society organisations on the spot in a number of Member States. I myself, together with other Committee members, have had the pleasure of being part of such a delegation, one to Italy, the other to Belgium: a most encouraging and valuable experience. What struck me, amongst other things, was the pragmatic outlook of consumer organisations and their good cooperation with industry and trade. It thus became clear that both their argument to give priority to co- and self-regulation and their concern to support small businesses were most apt, without losing sight of their main goals.

A second finding was that the organisations involved clearly seemed to value the fact that, through our Committee, “Europe” was coming to them: we were often perceived as being part of the “European machine”. For many organisations, “Brussels” is still considered to be something somewhere “out there”, despite the many efforts being made to keep people informed, including those made by our own Committee. At the same time, we will of course also have to constantly assess and, where necessary, further improve the evaluation arrangements now in place. Personally I believe we have made a good start.

In conclusion, I should like to add the following: as has already been pointed out, in terms of both organisation and content, this new evaluation role— including the organisation of delegations in the field —remains a difficult task, for Committee members, in budgetary terms and also for our colleagues in the Committee administration. Therefore our sincere thanks are also due to them for the success of this launch. It can but boost the EESC’s authority, both in the eyes of our grassroots and of the European institutions. For the intention is that our additional efforts will now be taken into account by all the European institutions, and first and foremost by the Commission, through adjustments to legislation, wherever it be necessary. This too, the Committee will have to keep evaluating.
At its plenary session on 14–15 December 2016 the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted the following opinions for which Group III members were Rapporteurs or Co-Rapporteurs.

**Elżbieta STADZIŃSKA (PL)**
Polski Związek Obywatelski
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

**INT/803 – European standardisation for 2017**

The Committee has already highlighted the **importance of standards** when it comes to strengthening the competitiveness of the single market, developing innovative products and services, and improving the quality and safety of these products and services for the benefit of consumers, workers, businesses and the environment. As a representative of organised civil society, the Committee supports a standardisation system that responds to the needs both of society and of the economy.

If the pluralism of the European standardisation system is assured through the involvement of the organisations referred to in Annex III of Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012, this will ensure that the system is more transparent and accessible. Such participation on the part of civil society representatives in the standardisation system should not only take place at EU level; they should also have access to national standardisation systems. The Committee points out that the competitiveness of SMEs should be supported by involving them in the process of developing and implementing standards, and by adopting appropriate educational measures to raise awareness about the benefits of standardisation. As in its earlier opinion, the Committee supports the proposal to establish interinstitutional dialogue with regard to standardisation.

**Cristian PIRVULESCU (RO)**
Asociatia Pro Democratia
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

**SOC/547 – Common European Asylum System Reform Package II**

The EESC welcomes the proposed improvements to the CEAS, such as the clarification of rights and obligations regarding access to the procedure, the replacement of the concept of vulnerability with the concept of special needs, as well as clear criteria for assessing it, the introduction of greater guarantees for minors, and the broadening of the concept of family. The EESC is concerned about the limitation of fundamental rights, such as the restriction of free movement, the limitation of the right of minors to education, the application of a procedure to unaccompanied minors at the border, the possible lack of a case-by-case approach when analysing the safe country concepts, the limitation of guarantees for subsequent applications and accelerated procedures, the automatic review of protection statuses, and the punitive approach of the restrictions on reception conditions.

The EESC recommends the standardisation of protection statuses, elimination of the differences between refugee status and subsidiary protection status as regards the period of the residence permit, its renewal, and the limitation placed on social assistance for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.

**Mindaugas MACIULIEVIČIUS (LT)**
Agricultural Cooperative ‘AT Chamber of Agriculture’
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

**NAT/696 – Effort sharing decision in 2030 climate and energy policy framework and emissions and removals from land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF)**

The EESC welcomes the timely proposals from the Commission to implement the EU’s commitment to reducing its greenhouse gases by 2030 in all sectors of the economy and society. The EESC, however, emphasises the need to simultaneously take into account the global long-term challenge of climate change mitigation. This requires a thorough evaluation of whether the EU’s current climate policy approach, with regard to efforts at global, EU and national levels, is appropriate in paving the way for a carbon-neutral world. With regard to effort sharing, the EESC fully agrees with the view that differences between Member States have to be taken into account to ensure fairness and cost-effectiveness. To achieve genuine cost-effectiveness in a fair way, effort sharing calculations should, however, address both aspects at the same time across all Member States and set the targets in such a way that the relative costs are the same for each country. Due to the shortcomings of effort-sharing, the EESC feels it is important to introduce flexibility mechanisms and develop them further.

Integration of land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) into the 2030 framework brings a remarkable new element into EU climate policy. Sustainable use and active management of bio-based natural resources, i.e. a sustainable bioeconomy – including sustainable forest management and climate-smart food production – is a key element of this transition.

**Mihail IVASCU (RO)**
Chamber of commerce and industry of Romania
Member of the Various Interests’ Group


The EESC values the Commission’s ongoing efforts in tackling aggressive tax planning. Although a precise economic analysis of the impact of hybrid mismatches is difficult to conduct, the EESC believes that the adoption of the proposal for amending the Anti Tax Avoidance Directive as regards hybrid mismatches with third countries will significantly increase corporate income tax in all Member States. The EESC considers that this Directive will reach its full potential only if similar rules are implemented in third countries as well.

While it supports the current approach concerning hybrid mismatches, the EESC considers that the Member States should also look at the causes of hybrid mismatch arrangements, close the potential loopholes and prevent aggressive tax planning, rather than just seeking to obtain tax revenue. The EESC recommends all Member States to look into the possibility of introducing and applying sanctions to taxpayers benefiting from hybrid mismatch arrangements, in order to prevent and/or tackle such practices.
Overview of our Members’ Work in the EESC

Bernardo HERNÁNDEZ BATALLER (ES)  
Asociación de Usuarios de la Comunicación (AUC)  
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

INT/795 – Consumer Rights Directive
In this Information Report, the EESC evaluates the perceptions and experience of EU civil society organisations (CSO) in the implementation of the Consumer Rights Directive (2011/83/EU). The information gathered and the solutions proposed are the result of questionnaire responses, five fact-finding missions (Riga, Rome, Warsaw, Madrid, Brussels) and an Expert Hearing.

Carlos TRIAS PINTO (ES)  
Consejo de Consumidores y Usuarios de España  
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

INT/793 – Communication on the collaborative economy
Faced with the new paradigm of a decentralised digital economy, the EESC is of the view that it should be ensured that this is not accompanied by job insecurity and tax avoidance, and that the value added does not massively shift away from industrial players towards the owners of proprietary digital platforms. The Committee therefore encourages the Commission to develop a collaborative economy, an economic model which embraces a democratic and participatory dynamic similar to that of the social economy.

Simo TAIINEN (FI)  
Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners  
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

NAT/682 – The main underlying factors that influence CAP post-2020
The CAP has always been among the EU’s key policies. Agriculture is central to the strategic, economic, environmental and social challenges of tomorrow. The CAP has been a success story for Europe mainly as European consumers have benefited from safer food with decreasing prices over the last decades. However, in some areas we are facing problems with biodiversity, the environment and landscapes which have to be addressed. Production of high quality food with sustainable agriculture is at the core of citizens’ and consumers’ concerns. To meet these expectations there is a need for a Common Agricultural Policy in order to guarantee healthy and safe food, high quality at a fair price, environmental protection, landscape conservation and a dynamic economy in rural areas.

NAT/685 – Towards applying Nudge Thinking to EU policies
The opinion draws up a number of recommendations:
• Encourage the use of nudges in public policy-making in conjunction with traditional tools, in particular when nudges can help reach environmental, social or other objectives connected to sustainability;
• Promote the exchange of good practices and knowledge about nudges and help interdisciplinary research on nudges;
• Identify methodologies and ethical rules for using nudges, ensuring in particular transparency, freedom of choice for individuals, reliability of information nudges are based on and avoiding any approach tending to make people feel guilty;
• Envisaging the organization of the first European Days of nudges at the EESC.

What is nudging?
Much of our behavior is habitual. Our brains are designed to go into autopilot once we’ve established a routine that works for us. This is bad when the behavior has negative consequences, especially for the environment. This is where “nudging” could help.

Concrete examples of nudging: a trail of green footsteps painted on the floor leading up to the nearby bins; a series of bright red strips along the floor leading up the stairs; using small plates instead of big plates. Probably the most famous example is that published by Sunstein and Richard Thaler: an image of a black house fly was painted onto the bowls of the Amsterdam airport’s urinals, just to the left of the drain. The result: Spillage declined 80 percent. It turns out that, if you give men a target, they can’t help but aim it. Normally, if a government, employer or even parent wants to promote a certain type of conduct, they introduce rules, offer a financial reward or both.

Is a ‘nudge’ in the right direction all we need to be greener? Nudging refers to strategic changes in the environment that are anticipated to alter people’s behaviour in a predictable way, without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives. It is definitely worth to investigate in-depth.


Simo TAIINEN (FI)  
Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners  
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

INT/793 – Communication on the collaborative economy
Faced with the new paradigm of a decentralised digital economy, the EESC is of the view that it should be ensured that this is not accompanied by job insecurity and tax avoidance, and that the value added does not massively shift away from industrial players towards the owners of proprietary digital platforms. The Committee therefore encourages the Commission to develop a collaborative economy, an economic model which embraces a democratic and participatory dynamic similar to that of the social economy. It also recommends stepping up the pace of research and achievements in new methods of production and consumption connected to functional economy such as product eco-design, the circular economy, the collaborative economy and the economy of common good. An EU legislative package could provide a structure for services delivered through the functional economy, particularly in terms of collaborative consumption, obsolescence, consumer understanding of these models, and a legal and pro-innovation tax. Clarifying and simplifying insurance issues relating to functional economy models will be crucial.

Jorge PEGADO-LIZ (PT)  
Associação para a Defesa dos Consumidores  
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

INT/796 – EU legislation on consumer and marketing law
The Information Report evaluates directives 2005/29/EC on unfair commercial practice, 1999/44/EC on sales and guarantees, 93/13/EEC on unfair contract terms and 2006/114/EC on misleading and comparative advertising. The information gathered and the solutions proposed are the result of questionnaire responses, five fact-finding missions (Riga, Rome, Warsaw, Madrid, Brussels) and an expert hearing.

Thierry LIBAERT (FR)  
Fondation Nicolas Hulot pour la Nature et l’Homme  
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

INT/784 – The functional economy
In this opinion, the EESC calls for society to begin an economic transition from over-exploitation of resources and a throw-away culture to a more sustainable, job-rich era, based on quality rather than quantity. In this context, the Committee would very much like to see Europe take the initiative in devising new economic models. Moreover, the functional economy is not an end in itself and must be supported. A thorough assessment should be carried out of services or product types in order to identify the advantages and if necessary establish the conditions under which the functional economy should be rolled out to people’s benefit.

The EESC recommends that the Member States and stakeholders promote responsible consumption, including over the whole of the education process, with an emphasis on the functional economy. It also recommends stepping up the pace of research and achievements in new methods of production and consumption connected to functional economy such as product eco-design, the circular economy, the collaborative economy and the economy of common good. An EU legislative package could provide a structure for services delivered through the functional economy, particularly in terms of collaborative consumption, obsolescence, consumer understanding of these models, and a legal and pro-innovation tax. Clarifying and simplifying insurance issues relating to functional economy models will be crucial.

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The complete texts of all EESC opinions are available in various language versions on the Committee’s website:
http://dm.eesc.europa.eu/EESCDocumentSearch/ Pages/opinionssearch.aspx
On 14 December, Group III welcomed Andor László, former European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, on “EU actions to combat youth unemployment in times of crisis”

In his introductory remarks, Mr László provided background and statistics on unemployment among young people (15-29 years old). He then provided an outline of the structure of his statement, and the issues he would tackle:

- Creation of the Youth Guarantee
- Highlighting key aspects of debates
- Addressing common concerns and misconceptions
- Implementation of the Youth Guarantee across the EU
- European Employment Strategy.

Mr László emphasised that the most important and long-lasting of these initiatives was the Youth Guarantee. He then clarified and gave a detailed description of this initiative, its purpose and its main goal.

In his conclusions, he noted the importance of the political attention and support that had been attracted; however, the main emphasis should be put on long-term structural reform, which would improve the transition from school education to work opportunities and the professional environment. At the end of his statement, Mr László emphasised that the Youth Guarantee initiative, once fully implemented, should remain a central component of a modern European social model.

The next Social Economy Category will take place on 4 April 2017.

The Consumers and Environment Category will meet on 16 March. Topics discussed will be overindebtedness and energy package.

The Farmers’ Category will meet on April 11 in the presence of European Commissioner Phil Hogan. The discussions will focus on rural development and the post 2020 CAP.

For more details, please consult the web pages: http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.categories

New staff member at the Secretariat

Welcome Silvia!

Silvia Chromekova recently joined the Group III Secretariat. If her name is not totally unfamiliar, that is normal, for Silvia has been working at the EESC for 12 years, namely at the Registry. Group III is delighted to count on Silvia’s professional, efficient and always positive support. On behalf of the whole group: a very warm welcome to Silvia!