



The **EESC**'s activities during the **Belgian Presidency**

January – June 2024

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European Economic
and Social Committee



A word from the President

Oliver Röpke, EESC President

The Belgian Presidency of the EU will have the challenging task of restoring citizens' confidence at a time when they will exercise their democratic rights in the 2024 European Parliament elections. As President von der Leyen highlighted in her State of the Union address, it will be a time to decide on what kind of future and what kind of Europe our citizens want. The Belgian Presidency will be expected on the one hand, to bring to a close the current legislative term and on the other, to prepare the ground for the next one, while the new European Parliament and the Commission are settling in.

The Belgian Presidency will have to champion the EU's fundamental values and ensure that people's voices are heard. As the President of the EESC, I can guarantee that the house of organised civil society will work closely with the Belgian Presidency to build a stronger, more resilient, and more democratic Europe.

As European citizens struggle with inflation, access to healthcare and affordable housing, I truly commend the Belgian Presidency for tackling pressing issues that matter to people. Our committee is dedicated to work alongside the Presidency to prepare for the EU of tomorrow by addressing economic recovery and social cohesion.

Our cooperation with the Belgian Presidency has begun on the front foot with the request of 11 timely exploratory opinions, among which "strengthening the civil dialogue and participatory democracy" features prominently. The other requested opinions include European Innovation Stress Test, Critical Medicines Act, digital inclusion, and combating poverty and social exclusion – topics on which the EESC stands ready to share its valuable expertise and knowledge.

I wish the Belgian Presidency every success, and I look forward to our further fruitful cooperation in the coming months.

The EESC's activities during the Belgian Presidency



Economic and Monetary Union, Economic and Social Cohesion – ECO

- Actively working on the involvement of organised civil society in the implementation and the monitoring of national recovery and resilience plans
- Putting forward its recommendation on the euro area economic policy in view of creating a more sustainable, competitive and resilient EU economy
- Following the implementation of a new economic governance framework for a sustainable recovery and a just transition
- Continuing its work to promote a more participatory European Semester, with greater ownership at national level and closer involvement of organised civil society
- Contributing to early preparations for the next Multiannual Financial Framework, adapted to new challenges the EU is facing
- Actively supporting efforts to introduce additional genuine own resources for the EU budget
- Ensuring the stability, integration and resilience of European financial markets, and redirecting investment flows to support sustainable growth; this includes contributing to the work of the co-legislators on the reform of the bank crisis management and deposit insurance framework, on the Listing act, and on a regulation on environmental, social and governance ratings
- Deliver recommendations on the Commission proposals to rationalise reporting requirements affecting financial services, InvestEU programme and benchmarks
- Contributing to the discussions on the future of cohesion policy after 2027 and closely monitoring the implementation of the new territorial and urban agenda
- Stocktaking and proposing solutions on what has to be done in the current programming period of cohesion policy in the context of the 9th Cohesion Report
- Examining the consequences of the EU enlargement in the cohesion policy
- Combating tax fraud, tax avoidance, money laundering and tax havens; preparing policy proposals on the Business in Europe: Framework for Income Taxation and transfer pricing, as well as making recommendations on establishing a Head Office Tax System for SMEs



Single Market, Production and Consumption – INT

- Contributing to the Presidency work on the new European strategy for the internal market, with a special focus on technological, social, environmental and competition challenges
- Keeping the focus on competitiveness, a sustainable industrial policy and open strategic autonomy
- Following-up on the Artificial Intelligence Act negotiations and bringing the civil society perspective into the debate around general-purpose AI systems, their use by institutions, bodies and businesses and the impact they have on economy, society and workers
- Presenting our opinion on the SME Relief Package and related initiatives on the rationalisation of reporting requirements
- Advancing the Presidency work on the social economy, with a particular focus on combatting poverty and social exclusion
- Promoting a modern and responsible consumer policy and its enforcement, with a focus on the online environment
- Enhancing an environment conducive to nurturing innovation in the EU by introducing a European Innovation Stress Test
- Contributing to the annual strategic foresight report related to Europe's Open Strategic Autonomy



Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society – TEN

- Creating an energy union that enables EU consumers to access safe, clean and affordable energy
- Conveying grassroots civil society proposals for combating energy poverty
- Building an efficient, integrated and green European transport system
- Raising awareness of civil society's demands for universal access to electronic communications
- Supporting a comprehensive European strategy in fighting disinformation
- Promoting a global and secure strategy for an EU space policy

Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship – SOC

- Economic and social recovery from the impact, particularly on families and welfare systems, of the pandemic and the Russian attack on Ukraine and the resulting increase in energy prices and the cost of living
- Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and monitoring the targets set in the EPSR Action Plan and the national recovery and resilience plans
- Future of work, new forms of work, the platform economy, working conditions, collective rights, social dialogue and democracy at work
- Social challenges and opportunities arising from the growing use of artificial intelligence
- Occupational health and safety, well-being at work, and effective health and care policies
- Combating poverty and social exclusion
- Lifelong learning, employee training, and digital and green skills
- Gender equality, disability rights and equal opportunities
- Youth employment, youth participation and youth engagement
- Strengthening the rule of law and fundamental rights in the EU
- Supporting civil society and democracy
- Social priorities in the European elections
- Socio-economic inclusion of migrants and refugees



Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment – NAT

- Accelerating the implementation of the SDGs
- Promoting climate neutrality as part of the European Green Deal
- Developing the social dimension of the transition towards a well-being economy – for a just transition
- Fostering the circular economy (European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, ECESP) in Europe and beyond
- Fostering the transformation towards fairer and more sustainable agriculture and food systems, including through the future CAP post 2027
- Restoring and preserving natural capital – a healthy planet for healthy people (biodiversity, environmental protection, the right to a healthy environment)
- Promoting a holistic strategy for sustainable rural/urban development and the Rural Pact
- Youth engagement in sustainability and the climate



External Relations – REX

- Continuing dialogue with civil society from Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia on reforms needed for their European integration; ensuring specific support for Ukrainian civil society struck by the war via the EESC's Ukraine Hub
- Making an active civil society contribution to the EU enlargement process and to democratisation in the Western Balkans; following-up on the New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans
- Implementing the "Enlargement Candidate Members" pilot project, that will allow members from civil society in the candidate countries to contribute to the drafting process of key EESC opinions
- Maintaining relations with independent civil society in Russia and Belarus in exile
- Creating relations with civil society organisations from Central Asia, starting with Kazakhstan
- Strengthening relations between EU and UK civil society, promoting activities primarily aimed at youth mobility issues and citizens' rights, as well as other activities that are considered to enhance the relationship between the EU and the UK
- Working with civil society from the Euro-Mediterranean region on the promotion of youth involvement in social and civil dialogue; supporting the implementation of a stakeholder engagement mechanism under the Post-Cotonou Agreement and continuing to support the participation of civil society in the Economic Partnership Agreements, in particular with Africa
- Further supporting civil society involvement in the EU trade policy, as well as stronger links between international trade and sustainable development, with particular emphasis on the internal and external consistency between trade policy and other relevant policies of the Union
- Enhancing dialogue between European and Latin American civil society on issues of common interest, such as promoting sustainable trade and investment, and promoting efforts to combat climate change while ensuring a just transition for all. Supporting EU assistance in this regard via the EU Global Gateway
- Continuously engaging in activities aimed at promoting democratic values, civic space and social and civil dialogue in the EU's partner countries, including contributing to the EU's efforts to combat disinformation in the EU Member States and in third countries
- Deepening the perspective on the Arctic region, in view of its special geostrategic position and future environmental and other challenges as well as economic opportunities
- Reinforcing dialogue with Chinese and Turkish partners on economic, social, environmental and human rights issues



Consultative Commission on Industrial Change – CCMI

- Analysing and mitigating the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on key EU industrial sectors
- Post-COVID-19 recovery plan and the EU's industrial sectors
- Enhancing the global competitiveness of EU industry
- Call for an EU Blue Deal follow-up: a comprehensive water strategy for Europe – a cross-sectoral initiative of the EESC, led by the CCMI
- Updated EU Industrial Strategy and transition pathways
- A green and digital transition for European industry
- The decarbonisation of European industry and the role of innovation and digitalisation in driving it
- Towards a more resilient, competitive and sustainable Europe
- Critical Medicine act and availability of medicines
- EU biotech and biomanufacturing initiative
- Innovation Stress Test: the example of the pharmaceutical sector
- European Defence Industrial Strategy

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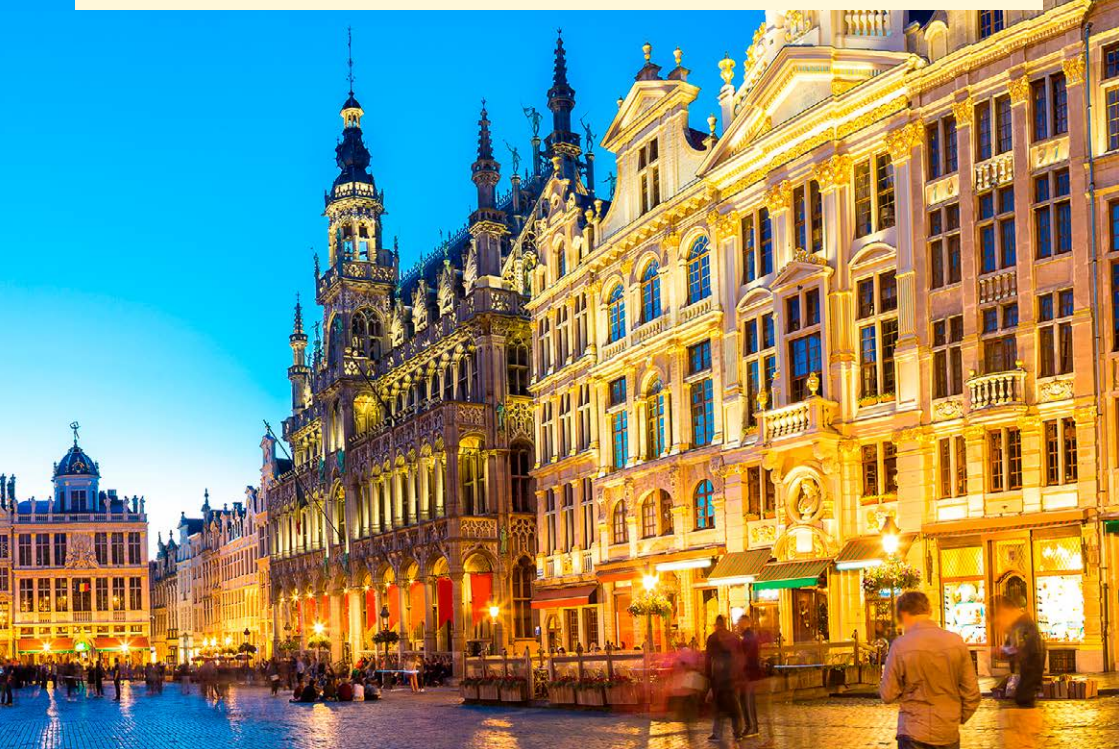
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EESC opinions requested by the Belgian Presidency

1. Posting of drivers in the European transport sector: challenges and opportunities
2. Forging a new European Industrial Strategy: bridging competitiveness, technological, social, and environmental challenges for our companies
3. Introducing a European Innovation Stress Test
4. Boosting long-term inclusive growth through reforms and investment
5. Advancing the EU's just transition policy framework: what measures are necessary
6. Securing Europe's medicine supply: envisioning a Critical Medicines Act
7. Combatting poverty and social exclusion: harnessing the power of the social economy and socio-economic innovations
8. Promoting autonomous and sustainable food production: strategies for the post-2027 Common Agricultural Policy
9. Strengthening civil dialogue and participatory democracy in the EU: a path forward
10. Cross-border infrastructure planning
11. New ways of achieving digital inclusion (integrated into the opinion on the Digital skills and education package)





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