



Προτάσεις μεταρρυθμίσεων και επενδύσεων και η υλοποίησή τους στα κράτη μέλη – ποια είναι η γνώμη της οργανωμένης κοινωνίας των πολιτών

16 Φεβρουαρίου στις 11:00 έως 14:00

Λεωφόρος Βασιλίσσης Σοφίας 2, 106 74, Αθήνα, Ελλάδα (Αντιπροσωπεία της Επιτροπής στην Ελλάδα-αίθουσα "Σιώπη")

Description

This round table was organised as part of the consultation carried out by the EESC's European Semester Group (ESG) for the preparation of an own-initiative opinion entitled "Reform and investment proposals and their implementation in the Member States: the views of organised civil society (2023-2024 cycle of the European Semester)" (ECO/631). With this opinion, the ESG is now continuing the work begun in 2021: consulting national economic and social councils, the social partners and civil society organisations in the EU Member States on a key subject of the European Semester. This consultation focuses firstly on the reform and investment measures in the Member States, in particular those based on the [2023 country-specific recommendations](#), and on their implementation, in order to assess the effectiveness of these measures and the possibilities for better targeting of proposals, improved implementation and monitoring, and the involvement of organised civil society in the procedures. Secondly, it is also focusing on issues relating to the ongoing [review of the EU's economic governance rules](#), the central objective of which is to strengthen public debt sustainability while promoting sustainable and inclusive growth in all Member States through reform and investment. Lastly, the EESC intends to continue previous consultation exercises by examining the state of implementation of the reforms and investments provided for in the national recovery and resilience plans and which are financially supported by the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#) funds. The results of this consultation will be summarised in an EESC opinion, also set out in an annex, in which the Committee continues to promote a more participatory European Semester and economic governance framework, with greater ownership at national level and closer involvement of organised civil society. This round table addressed the following questions (taken from the questionnaire on which this consultation is based):

- ***The reform and investment measures in the Member States, in particular those based on the country-specific recommendations 2023¹, and their implementation;***
- ***The reform of the EU's economic governance rules;***
- ***The implementation of the reforms and investments provided for in the national recovery and resilience plans.***

¹

For a quick overview of the CSRs for your Member State, please consult the [country-specific recommendations database](#) established by the European Commission Recovery and Resilience Plans in the 2023 European Semester (europa.eu).

Report

Statements by organised civil society (social partners and civil society organisations) in Greece

Mr Michalis Mitsopoulos (SEV)

- Monitoring the European Semester (ES) is a difficult task, and it is a challenge for the country and businesses to implement the commitments made through it.
- The country has been bound by a memorandum and now it has to re-engage with the logic of the European Semester and implement the country-specific recommendations.
- It takes resources (human) and expertise to carry out all these reforms, and Greece is starting from the middle of the road.
- Increasing the external balance because a change in the production model of the economy is needed due to imbalances.
- Qualitative upgrading of the public sector is necessary because the public sector is a key factor in the country's development process
- Business life must be improved through simplification rather than through new instruments. 'ERGANI', 'myData' etc., may be useful tools, but they require a lot of resources from businesses as well
- Critical infrastructure and its upgrading. A typical example is the town of Aspropyrgos, where all logistics companies are located but access is difficult
- There is a lack of skills in low-tier jobs and the tax burden is not helpful for attracting large numbers of and skilled staff.

Mr Leonidas Vatikiotis (GSEVEE)

- First time participating in a consultation process of the European Commission. They had participated indirectly through SME United for the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) Fund, but this was the first time directly.
- Fiscal stability and economic growth cannot go hand in hand. You cannot have both at the same time. Right now, there is fiscal stability at the expense of growth.
- The energy support measures must remain because they provide an important relief for businesses.
- Any measures aimed at easing fiscal stability are welcome, and the projected growth stimulus is also important.
- SMEs should be supported, even if just by a quota, as was done for the green transition.
- Along with the account of the funds, there should be an account of the money received by SMEs and where it goes.
- The catering services sector is very important for the Greek economy and should always be taken into account

Mr George Amvrazis (SETE)

- SETE had not been informed of the country-specific recommendations and did not express any opinion on them.

- The flexibility of the budgetary targets is important but the specificities of each sector should be taken into account and the competitiveness of businesses should be ensured, especially for energy-intensive enterprises.
- There are also significant shortages of qualified personnel in the tourism sector.
- Faster administration of justice creates greater legal certainty. A lot of money is lost in tourism investments due to delays in court decisions.
- Bureaucratic procedures should be reduced, and the focus should be on infrastructure, so that residents are satisfied first and foremost, followed by tourists.

Mrs Lilla Dimitriadi (GSEE), Mr Panagiotis Siriopoulos (INE-GSEE)

- Labour is a major thorn in the side of low competitiveness and the well-being of workers.
- Greece is in last place in a number of numerical indicators such as working time, qualifications, employee advancement and involuntary forms of work.
- Female employment remains very low compared to the European average.
- The purchasing power of workers is constantly declining due to low wages and inflationary trends.
- Restore the National General Collective Labour Agreement and increase the minimum wage by reintroducing collective bargaining between the national social partners, and eliminate informal forms of work.
- Increase in minimum wages only with the reintroduction of collective bargaining.
- High living and housing costs for workers.
- Tax exemptions that have no social return should be abolished.
- Greater support and reorganisation of the health system is needed.
- Reservations are expressed about the new economic architecture as many sectors of the economy face significant challenges.
- The country's demographic problem is very big and affects workers too.
- Targeted programmes for the unemployed from the Energy Transition Fund.
- A new model of sustainable and productive development with social balance as a pillar is needed.

Mr Theodore Kounadeas (OEE)

- The OEE is aware of the issues concerning the European Semester, since it participates as a representative of the economic professions in many committees of the Ministries.
- Regarding the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP), the OEE worked closely with national authorities.
- Information needs to be provided at central level because this allows for better interaction.
- The relaxation and flexibility of the financial framework is a positive development.
- There are emergencies and natural disasters that require State aid.
- There is a lack of training, not only of human resources but also of the bodies implementing RRF Fund programmes,
- The cooperation between the public and private sectors is quite problematic and leads to delays in the implementation of programmes.

Ms Efi Bekou – Representative of the Women’s Movement

- Very low performance for women in the labour market and the general representation of women.
- There is no spirit of inclusion and the RRF Fund lacks a social cohesion pillar and a commitment to disburse money in this direction.
- The nanny programme is not working effectively and is more fragmented in nature.
- The women’s movement has requested an opinion from the ESC on women’s representation but it is still pending.
- The Director General for Equality has left the Ministry of the Interior and gone to the Ministry of Labour and, as a result the demographic policy, as implemented in the Ministry of the Interior, has been put on freeze.
- The new policy should talk about the care economy and the social economy.

Mr Christos Moutsios - Region of Central Greece

- Human resources have problems, both qualitatively and quantitatively. There are no new civil servants since, in the region of Central Greece alone over the last ten years, 250 employees have left and only 19 have been hired.
- The VIE area in Neofyta is the largest industrial area in the country with many investments and significant economic activity, but the Region cannot fulfil its role due to the lack of employees, and there are delays in all procedures.
- It is necessary to update the legislative framework on the green transition scheme since there are provisions since 1980. The land-use framework needs to be changed and updated.

Mr George Petrogiannis – GREENPEACE

- Flexibility and relaxation of the financial framework is also important for the environment.
- The environment is not only forests and rivers but it is the whole context in which we live and operate, and we should not forget that not everything revolves around humans.
- The awareness of environmental destruction or degradation should not only be remembered after a major natural disaster when our income is affected (e.g., farmers after the Daniel disaster).
- Mining in the Ionian Sea (oil) will also create problems for tourism as the ecological pollution will be significant.
- Energy shielding of buildings is necessary. The target of 50 000 buildings per year is too low when there are 4.5 million buildings.
- There is a need to inform and educate society about the benefits and advantages of wind turbines and Renewable Energy Sources (RES) in general.
- Wind farms are more stable in performance and work with all seasons, while photovoltaics have a time curve and are clearly more useful in the summer.
- Energy democracy is required through the cheap energy provided by renewables. Greece is ideal for renewable energy and energy storage is also very crucial.

Mr Efstathiadis, Mr Angelopoulos – Get Involved

- There is a lack of knowledge and awareness of the EU's procedures among young people.
- Human resources should be reconstituted to be able to meet the needs of the green and digital transformation.
- The timelines set are inadequate and create further barriers.
- Research centres need to be upgraded and education more generally upgraded.

Mr Logaras – ESA-MEA

- There is no explicit reference to persons with disabilities in the recommendations of the Council of the European Union, despite the fact that the Country Report refers to the high employment gap between persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities, the difficulties of persons with disabilities in accessing training and the little progress made in the deinstitutionalisation of children with disabilities.
- The reform measures do not address the problem of poverty and inequalities, especially at a time when food/product and property inflation is driving the poorer sections of the population, including people with disabilities, into poverty.
- Restrictive fiscal policies are most likely to lead to cuts in the social protection sector, with all that this implies for vulnerable groups of the population and vulnerable households, including people with disabilities and households with disabled members respectively.
- The cooperation was exclusively on action concerning personal assistants.
- The involvement of civil society in the implementation of the national RRP could be improved if civil society was involved in the further specification of actions during the preparation phase of the RRP.

Statements by EESC members

Mr Ioannis Vardakastanis (President of the Economic and Monetary Union, Economic and Social Cohesion Section)

- Brief welcome and introduction to the role of the EESC in the EU.
- Reference to the importance and contribution of organised civil society in the annual cycle of the ES.

Ms Zoe Tzotze-Lanara (employees)

- Commission's failure to mention young people and women in the RRP.
- There is a weakening of the institutionalised structures for social dialogue.
- It is necessary to re-establish the national employment commission.
- The Ministry of Social Cohesion is operating in a state of ambiguity.

Mr George Vernikos (employers)

- The concepts of social dialogue and civil society need further clarification in order to be clear to Greek society.
- There is a broad consensus on the benefits of the green and digital transition, but it is not clear how to move towards it.
- It is necessary to give a voice to categories of people and groups that are not organised.
- Experience shows that public administration does not want social dialogue and prefers direct contact and communication with interested parties in order to exert influence directly. The same is true for politicians, but also for wider civil society itself, where they prefer direct influence on political decision-making.
- The Dutch model is perhaps the most effective: the government does not speak to any organised group unless there is a social dialogue first.

Mr Athanasios Ioannidis (other interest groups)

- The concerns of all stakeholders have a common basis and are aimed in the same direction, to make Greece more competitive and its economy more sustainable, with different connotations.
- The RRF Fund is working effectively and represents an important opportunity to restructure the Greek economy and create a healthier public sector.
- Many reforms, particularly in the digital sector, have been achieved, making life easier for citizens.
- More and more dialogue is needed from the organised state downwards and also cooperation between actors.
- Reforms should continue.

Statements by the European Commission's External Relations Officers

Mrs Irene Vlahaki

- The Commission is in the process of preparing and recording the data that will form part of the European Semester for Greece.
 - The RRP was designed in direct cooperation with the Greek government.
 - The views of the social partners should be included to a greater extent, as there is a gap in the social dialogue,
 - Preparatory work will be done in mid-March and the Commission wants organised civil society to be involved,
 - There is clearly a lack of policies and actions for women and young people in the Greek RRP, although there are some programmes.
 - The RRP cannot solve all of the country's problems.
 - Infrastructure is important but often complex.
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