AFTER THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS, WHAT AGENDA FOR THE EU?
FOREWORD

MEGA

Séamus BOLAND (IE)
President, Civil Society Organisations’ Group

There it is: MEGA. “Making Europe Great Again” is the strapline of the Hungarian presidency of the Council of the European Union, which started on 1 July. A Politico article on the launch of the presidency’s motto, priorities and programme quotes János Boka, Hungarian Minister for European Affairs, as saying, “It actually shows manifest the expectation that together we should be stronger than individually but that we should be allowed to remain who we are when we come together. It also portrays the idea that Europe is able to become an independent global actor in our transforming world”. The priorities of the Hungarian presidency for the six-month rotating term are based on the following headings:

1. New European Competitiveness Deal
2. The Reinforcement of European Defence Policy
3. A Consistent and Merit-Based Enlargement Policy
4. Stemming Illegal Migration
5. Shaping the Future of Cohesion Policy
6. A Farmer-Centred EU Agricultural Policy
7. Addressing Demographic Challenges

All of these priorities - I’m sure - will on their own excite debate, not only among the Members of the Civil Society Organisations’ Group, but also in civil society at large. However, our Group might also like to add subjects linked to its work on promoting democracy, eradicating poverty and managing climate change. We would probably also like a debate on how the European Health Union could be implemented and strengthened. At the recent Group conference in Liège on “The State of Health in the EU”, we discussed and examined how we could improve all aspects of health policy in the EU, bearing in mind the limited competences of the EU in this field, the recent crisis brought about by COVID-19 and the potential for European research and innovation, digitalisation, employment, social services and competitiveness in the field of health. The conclusions and recommendations of our event focused on placing health at the top of the European and national political agendas, building a new architecture for health within the EU, investing in prevention and innovative and sustainable health systems, and taking action to combat health inequalities.

It is possible to introduce a discussion on these subjects under the Hungarian priorities. For example, a competitiveness-based new European deal must not be based on a race to the bottom. It will have to build on the magnificent social progress made as a result of the European venture. Equally, it must continue to build on the principle of “Leaving no one behind”. A new competitiveness deal for Europe cannot ignore investment in new skills, in regulation of the looming giant - AI - and in the range of digital innovations now arriving in our societies and communities.

Europe is often quoted as being the largest peace project on the planet. Currently, surrounded by two very significant wars, it is no surprise that defence is on the agenda of the Hungarian presidency. Nor is there any surprise that migration is there as well.

At the Euromed Summit 2024 in Malta, there was a stimulating discussion on how we need to manage migration. Some of the conclusions were stark. Most of the participants agreed that illegal immigration would not disappear. Historically, migration has always been with us. The reality of more wars and the inevitable consequences of climate change mean that Europe, especially with countries bordering states with weak economies, will have to confront what may be one of the greatest challenges on the planet. The question is: are we, Europeans, prepared to watch some of the horrors caused by boats sinking and high numbers of people including children losing their lives, while we do nothing?

In setting its priorities, Hungary has also identified the difficulties posed by EU enlargement and, of course, the situation of farmers, who are now facing enormous challenges. Challenges in terms of climate management and maintaining food security. All of these issues require the attention of each and every leader in the EU, including those recently elected to the next European Parliament. Yes, they will undoubtedly want to “Make Europe Great Again”. Hopefully, that means a Europe built on the values of peace and democracy – built on equality, inclusion and the promotion of sustainable economies that are accessible to all.

Séamus Boland

5. EESC, Euromed Summit 2024 of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions, 18-19/06/2024 in Malta, https://europa.eu/!7BnQFG

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THE FUTURE OF THE EU AS A PEACE PROJECT

The EU elections have concluded, and amidst fears of the citizens, especially by addressing the concerns and arguments of the voters, many moderate politicians are announcing that they have understood the voters’ message. They claim they will do better in the future, as seriously in a political sense through social dialogue, as workers’ and employers’ organisations are through social dialogue. However, the break-up of Yugoslavia and the wars of the successor states took place outside the EU and with no connection to EU membership. Yet, it is precisely this political outreach to the citizens that is essential to give them the feeling of being taken seriously. Too often, one hears statements like “Those up there don’t take our concerns seriously.” “Only the big lobbies have influence,” “Europe is regulating us to death.”

Let’s talk “civil”!

The EU elections have concluded, and amidst the outcry over the shift to the right, many moderate politicians are announcing that they have understood the voters’ message. They claim they will do better in the future, especially by addressing the concerns and fears of the citizens.

Well, I hear the message, but I lack faith in it.

The whole of civil society should be taken as seriously in a political sense through a civil dialogue as workers’ and employers’ organisations are through social dialogue. Civil society organisations are mostly organised in such a way that communications can easily pass from the highest umbrella association at the EU level to the individual member in the local group within the Member State. And back again. When the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) was founded, the original intention was certainly to establish not only the group of employers and workers but also Group III (Civil Society Organisations’ Group) to give civil society a voice. The civil dialogue should establish the link to politics, the parliament, the commission, and the council in parallel to social dialogue, thus bringing Europe closer to the citizens again.

This might also bring more citizens back from the populists, whom they have now willingly followed, if they see that their association, their NGO, their interest group can also have advocate their interests. And faith in the messages of politics could return.

Network for Civil Society
Board Member, European Movement Germany (EBD)

The EU elections have taken place. While there is a lot of ‘business as usual’, important inner divisions remain. The next five years will be crucial for the survival of the European project. Europe’s long period of peace ended, at the latest, in 2014 with Russia’s barely concealed aggression against Ukraine. Of course, war had already returned to Europe in the 1990s. However, the break-up of Yugoslavia and the wars of the successor states took place outside the EU and with no connection to EU membership. But the war that Russia has been waging openly against Ukraine for more than two years now is an attack on Europe. For the revisionist aggressor, the Euromaidan revolution was the casus belli. The EU has long been the target of hybrid warfare that is doing everything in its power to divide Europe and the West. The ‘Axis of Upheaval’ wants to overthrow the world order that is based on the Atlantic Charter of 1941. The United Nations has become a travesty of the global organisation established in the San Francisco Conference in 1945.

The three groups together will maintain the majority, although the Patriots for Europe has officially become the third largest group within the parliament.

2. EESC Employers’ Group, https://europa.eu/!M88nN
3. EESC Workers’ Group, https://europa.eu/!BX79Ft
4. EESC Civil Society Organisations’ Group, https://europa.eu/!RBQJ76
Against this backdrop, can Europe still be a peace project? Of course! It remains the case that Bellona’s power was broken among the countries that became part of European integration. Europe’s peace narrative, which seemed obsolete to many people until very recently, is now more relevant than ever.

Nevertheless, the peace that a united Europe stands for, as an idea and a reality, is not the peace sought by the Russian tyrant. Because freedom means nothing. That Europe needs to be able to defend itself (once more) is proving a painful lesson for many Europeans to learn.

However, building up armed forces in Europe that are good enough to present an insurmountable obstacle to potential aggressors and thereby secure peace is only one aspect of the challenge. The civilian population also needs to become more resilient. This requires functioning infrastructure, contingency planning and active cooperation, in particular between local authorities and civil society.

Above all, it needs social cohesion and more togetherness. Europe’s peace project as an idea and a reality also needs spaces for open discourse and places to meet in person where people can learn once more how to be respectful to each other, listen to each other, exchange and weigh up arguments and, ultimately, jointly consider and implement democratic decisions.

This does not mean citizens’ panels in the sense of orchestrated pseudo-participation but spaces like the agoras of ancient Greece that can save culture in our cities and communities. In society, outward peace and inner peace are contingent on one another.

The toxic echo chambers of the digital world are dividing people. Algorithms make them addicted to infotainment bombardment that clouds the senses. Digital detoxing is needed, but without abandoning digitalisation, which can ensure prosperity and progress. As well as rearming our armed forces and bolstering civil society spaces, this will be the surest guarantee of peace – a task for the European peace project.

The election results are in, but the fight for disability rights continues

László BERCSE
Vice-President, Inclusion Europe

With the EU elections behind us, we are left feeling the same, still fighting for the same things. People with intellectual disabilities often cannot make important decisions about their lives, like voting, choosing where to live or finding a job. This affects millions of people and their families. We need laws to protect their rights and support them in making decisions. Everyone deserves the chance to be included and have a say in their future.

In terms of education, 700 000 children are still in segregated special schools, and 20 000 receive no education at all. No wonder they’re not prepared to make ‘proper’ decisions.

When it comes to employment, less than 10% of people with intellectual disabilities are employed. So it shouldn’t be a surprise when they can’t sign contracts.

With regard to housing, up to 750 000 people with intellectual disabilities are confined in harmful segregated institutions, while an additional 39 000 reside in psychiatric hospitals.

All these aspects of a person’s life are very much intertwined, and depriving someone of their legal capacity has a negative impact on all areas of their life. Protecting vulnerable people is often the reasoning used to justify such measures. But these measures have a huge impact over the lives of 20 million people with intellectual disabilities and their families, as shown by the recently published Inclusion Indicators.

In 2019, around 800 000 people from 16 EU Member States did not have the right to vote or to stand for election based on their disability. Since then, France, Germany and Spain have changed their laws. And the European Parliament adopted a resolution which calls for the enforcement of all EU citizens’ right to vote, regardless of their legal capacity or whether they are currently living in an institution.

In the 2024 elections, around 400 000 people under guardianship did not have the right to vote.

Nearly 50 000 people under guardianship couldn’t vote in Hungary. We need the right to vote so that decision-makers do not make decisions about us without us having a say. Some don’t see the problem, and yet no other citizen must pass an IQ test to vote. Why should people with intellectual disabilities have to do so? Does it mean that people with intellectual disabilities are second-class citizens?

We need the newly elected European Parliament to do everything they can to make the following come true.

• Every person with disabilities must have the right to vote, including all those under guardianship. We are citizens of Europe, and we should have the right to have a say in politics.

• Guardianship must be abolished, and supported decision-making must be promoted because we need good support in making decisions, not guardianship.

• We need quality education to enable us to find a job. We need more jobs, better support in the workplace and higher salaries. We want to do meaningful work in the open labour market.

• Poverty among the families of persons with disabilities must be combated.

• ‘Care’ institutions must be closed and replaced with disability support services enabling people to live independently and be included in the community.

• People with intellectual disabilities must be involved in decisions that concern them. This means having the opportunities and support to share their views and expectations during the policymaking process.

There are several good EU initiatives that need to be fully implemented by Member
### France: high-risk European elections

Rachel BRISHOUAL  
(FR)  
Member, French National Committee of ICOM (International Council of Museums)

Pro-Europe parties may still have the most seats, but the 2024 European elections1 saw the far right gaining considerable ground, coming top in five countries, including France2. The delegation of France’s extreme right party, the National Rally3, with its 30 MEPs, will be one of the biggest in the European Parliament.

Due to the new political landscape brought about by this election, the President of the French Republic dissolved the National Assembly. This is the first time this has happened as a result of the European elections, which generally have limited impact on national politics.

Without knowing the result of the second round of elections on 7 July, calling early legislative elections, with the danger that the far right could surge ahead and result in the President of the Republic being at the opposite end of the political spectrum from the majority of MPs, could create a paradox for France in terms of its stance in Europe. The ideas that France is advocating right now, such as increasing the EU’s budget or developing a European defence policy, could prove very tricky to keep up politically in the very near future.

The danger that France drifts towards illiberal democracy, jeopardising fundamental rights, the independence of the judiciary and pluralism, underscores the need to defend our values and the institutions that enact them. France must continue to be one of the drivers of European integration and a force behind the implementation of an ambitious strategic agenda for 2024-20294, using the European Pillar of Social Rights5 to steer the future of social Europe.

Assemblies such as the European Economic and Social Committee and the organisations represented there play an important role in pushing forward European-level concerns and establishing a link with national ones. Their contribution will be pivotal when it comes to keeping social and democratic Europe alive, at a time when free expression by people and civil society is under fire both in individual Member States and across Europe.

### Addressing demographic change: advancing the EU agenda on demography and loneliness

Miguel Ángel CABRA DE LUNA (ES)  
Member, Civil Society Organisations’ Group  
Member of the Board of Directors and President of the International Relations Commission, Spanish Confederation of Social Economy Enterprises (CEPES)

The European Economic and Social Committee has repeatedly affirmed its commitment to addressing demographic change, minimising its negative impacts and taking advantage of the opportunities it offers for society and the economy.

As well as contributing to the development of a European strategy on age and demography6, the Committee has the opportunity to propose measures and observations on very specific aspects of demographic change.

These include the issue of loneliness, a pressing concern in the EU that affects millions of people of all ages, areas and income levels. The diversity of the population groups at risk of loneliness is reflected in the diversity of the challenges it presents.

Proposing solutions to the loneliness affecting many European citizens will require new political and regulatory measures in different areas: demographic change, as the ageing of the general population causes loneliness to rise; social inclusion, since particularly vulnerable groups are at greater risk of loneliness, undermining social cohesion; mental and physical health, as those at risk of loneliness are more affected both physically and psychologically; and the economic aspect, because loneliness can lead to a loss of productivity, increase medical costs and put pressure on social security systems.

To address loneliness, the EU should promote social inclusion and the participation of older

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2. In French: Rassemblement national, https://rassemblementnational.fr/
people. It could also foster intergenerational interaction, which can help reduce social isolation and promote understanding and mutual respect between generations. The institutions must promote solutions for sustainable rural development (and prevent depopulation) to ensure access to digital technologies and services with the aim of preventing digital isolation.

In conclusion, addressing demographic change and advancing the EU agenda for older people and loneliness calls for a comprehensive and inclusive approach. The EU should recognise and evaluate the need to tackle all aspects of loneliness and incorporate its conclusions into the future European Strategy on Older Persons and Demography.

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1. EESC opinion SOC/757, European Strategy for Older persons, https://europa.eu/!QBmNfm

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**After the European elections: an EU agenda built around young people and future generations**

**Rareș VOICU**  
President, European Youth Forum

In the aftermath of the European elections¹ I can only hope that the next EU agenda will do enough to prioritise policies addressing young people’s concerns, doing justice to their ideas and valuing them as a generation which cares deeply about their communities and the health of our planet and future generations.

As young people, we are often faced with societal issues that are more acute than those which faced previous generations. Home ownership is an increasingly impossible dream. Unpaid and unfair internships have become practically a rite of passage. The COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionate effect on young people in the longer term; this includes our mental health and educational achievements. The climate emergency is most acute for us, as we will bear the consequences of the damage done. The combination of the pandemic, the financial crisis and stagnating wages has led to a new, multi-pronged form of inequality that younger generations have to bear. All of this combined means that young people are far more unlikely to think that the next generation will be better off than this one - a huge step change to a narrative that previous generations had begun to take for granted.

However, we can change this picture if there is sufficient will and vision from EU policy makers. We need to address the challenges facing young people when it comes to labour market access. To do this, we will need EU-level action to ensure that there is affordable housing for young people, an EU directive on psychosocial risks and mental health at work that addresses risks arising from precarious employment, a stronger policy focus on youth mental health as part of the EU4Health programme² and the strengthening of the proposed Internships Directive³ in order to stop young people being exploited in the labour market.

We must not lose sight of our collective responsibility for future generations, or allow any backsliding on environmental regulations. As Europe continues to experience extreme weather events, it is clear that the planet is not waiting for us to decide to act. We need to address overconsumption through binding material footprint targets at EU level as a concrete way of reducing our contribution to planetary degradation⁴.

Finally, we cannot, in good conscience, discuss the future of the EU if young people are not meaningfully and constantly involved in its decision-making processes. At the European Youth Forum, we stand ready to work with the new European Parliament to ensure that young people, who after all make up 25% of the EU’s population, are proportionally represented and engaged in the decisions which affect their day-to-day lives.

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2. European Commission, EU4Health programme 2021-2027, https://europa.eu/!dDvW8y

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**A new social horizon for the European Union**

**Edgar VILARES DIOGO (PT)**  
Member, Civil Society Organisations’ Group Coordinator, Union of Portuguese Mutual Societies (UMP)

The European elections¹ on 9 June reshaped the European Parliament, and expectations are high for the future of the EU. The results of these elections will play a crucial role in shaping the EU’s path, especially in terms of its ability to respond to emerging social challenges.

The new composition of the European Parliament offers a unique opportunity to increase people’s trust in the European institutions. In order to increase participation, transparency and inclusiveness in decision-making, it is particularly important that the European institutions make their processes more accessible and easier to understand for the public. Direct, clear communication combined with greater use of digital platforms can help achieve this goal.

The EU must continue to lead by example on sustainability. The transition to a green economy is not just an environmental necessity, but also an economic opportunity. Investing in renewable energy, clean technologies and the circular economy is a key step. These initiatives must be accompanied by robust policies if they are to be implemented effectively. It is important that the EU maintains and strengthens its leading position in global climate negotiations. It is essential that ambitious agreements are signed involving all countries in order to tackle
climate change in a coordinated and effective way. Encouraging green innovation with tax incentives and subsidies can accelerate the uptake of more sustainable technologies.

Solidarity between Member States is a foundation stone of the European Union. To ensure fair economic development, the EU must also strengthen its cohesion policies, increasing funding for the most disadvantaged regions and promoting projects that reduce economic and social disparities. The social challenges that the EU will face in the coming years are expected to be numerous and complex. Issues such as population ageing require innovative policies to support older people, and the promotion of active ageing should remain on the agenda. The digital transition combined with automation, as drivers for economic progress, can also result in inequalities if they are not accompanied by reskilling and supporting policies for workers affected.

Migration will remain a pressing topic, and the EU should adopt a humane and integrated approach, including effective integration policies for migrants, guaranteeing them access to education, health and employment opportunities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of robust health systems. The EU must work on a common health policy that improves cooperation between Member States and ensures an effective response to future health crises.

Finally, promoting gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights must be a priority. Policies that ensure equal opportunities and combat discrimination are essential for a fair and inclusive society.

The future of the European Union will depend on its ability to respond effectively to these challenges. Increasing its credibility and democratic legitimacy, adopting sustainable strategies and fighting climate change, in addition to promoting solidarity and fair economic development, are essential steps to ensure that the EU remains a project of PEACE and prosperity.

Ultimately, the success of this agenda will determine not only the future of the European Union, but also its relevance in an increasingly interdependent and challenging world. The hope is that European leaders will live up to these expectations and will be able to continue to guide the European Union towards a bright and sustainable future.

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The European election conundrum – maintain the status quo or travel in the right direction?

Justyna Kalina Ochędzan
Member, Civil Society Organisations’ Group
President, Greater Poland Coordinating Council – Union of Non-governmental Organisations

European elections¹ are crucial for determining the pace and direction of Europe’s changes over the following years. The political status quo in the European Parliament at present seems unwavering, but it is significant that, following the turmoil in the run-up to the latest elections, right-wing parties secured the most votes. This outcome suggests that the populists and far-right parties are on the rise, and they want to represent their own national interests at the European political landscape.

In the very same elections, Polish society clearly defined its pro-European and pro-democratic stance – and these were the second elections in which it has done so. Barely a year ago, this country was known as one of the most anti-EU countries of the Member States. But when it gave its voice back to the people, and not to politicians, the people confirmed that they believed a united Europe was the best direction for our future.

However, what can this united future look like in such turbulent times? War is just around the corner. The tech giants are creating their own markets, as well as technology that no one else can control – and they don’t even know what they control! From one country to the next, the cost of living is – almost literally – emptying people’s pockets. And from time to time the temperature of the debate on the EU Green Deal² climbs much higher than the high temperatures caused by climate change!

What decisions will the new European Parliament be making during its new term of office? Will it shut itself off in the Brussels bubble, or will it actually listen to what the voters want … and don’t want? Will it continue to listen to lobbyists from countries near and far? Or will its members work together to strengthen their countries’ societies in the best way possible?

What can MEPs learn from Poland’s example? Well … that the people can surprise politicians in elections and that they do remember what politicians promise, and then compare that with what actually happens!

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SPECIAL: INTERVIEW WITH EESC VICE-PRESIDENT PLOSCEANU ON THE EU ELECTIONS

Conducted by Jérémy Grosjean, EESC trainee

What is your reaction to the outcome of the European Parliament elections and what is your assessment of what this means for the near future of the European Union?

The message that emerged from the polls is clear: European citizens’ choices and concerns have clearly changed compared to five years ago. The results in some countries showed that the populist and far right parties are on the rise, and they want to represent their own national interests at the EU level. They will surely put right-leaning pressure on EU policies, despite the internal rivalries and disagreements. Most voters also showed progressive disinterest towards green and environmental causes, and after...
Empowering civil society in challenging times ahead

Radu Caragea-Szucs
Vice-President, Funky Citizens

Civil society always has, and always will find new and efficient ways to contribute to and influence the broader mechanisms of society. Throughout history, there are countless examples of individuals and communities who have shifted the balance of power and influenced key policies through determination, honesty, innovation, and unity. However, the short- and medium-term challenges facing civil society, both globally and particularly within the EU, are complex.

The balance of power in societies appears progressively polarised, with fewer individuals gaining more power. Social media serves as a powerful tool for disseminating information but also facilitates the spread of misinformation and disinformation when manipulated by malevolent actors. Societies are becoming more polarised in their opinions, often at the expense of nuance and compromise. External influences are increasingly focused on eroding trust and weakening the role, credibility, and image of civil society as a watchdog monitoring organised power structures. Rapid changes in demographic trends – ethnicity, gender roles, age structure, family structure, etc. – are transforming societies quickly, often outpacing cultural adaptation. Specific events or phenomena, such as war, pandemics and climate change, also have significant impact on politics, policies, societies, and, implicitly, on civil society.

These challenges are constantly reshaping how social groups and communities interact. We believe that democracy, despite its flaws, has proved to be the most viable system humanity has created to function and grow continuously as a whole. Therefore, the protection and constant refinement of democratic principles and values must be at the core of all civil society groups – whether organised or informal, local, national, or global – with a focus on the environment, social justice, cultural enrichment, administration, budgets, fact-checking and more. Preserving unity and applying consistent standards for all stakeholders in the decision-making process should be key objectives for representatives of civil society. These principles will provide a strong foundation for overcoming any obstacles that lie ahead.
Healthcare professionals and civil society representatives called on policy-makers to introduce a ‘Health check’ for all future policies. Their demand: the ‘Right to Health’ must remain at the top of the EU and national agendas in the new legislative term, as citizens demanded at the Conference on the Future of Europe.

National and European health measures must be better coordinated and aligned so as to build a more sustainable health sector that is resilient to future shocks and guarantees equal access to quality healthcare for all. Investment, prevention, technological innovations and early health education are expected to play a key role in this, according to a conference on The State of Health in the EU, held on 4 June in Liège, Belgium. The event was organised by the Civil Society Organisations’ Group of the European Economic and Social Committee, together with the CHU Liège and the Hôpital de la Citadelle, in the context of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

‘In the legislative term 2024-2029, health must remain a key strategic priority for the new European Commission, the new European Parliament and Council’, said Séamus Boland, President of the Civil Society Organisations’ Group. The European institutions should embrace a ‘One Health’ approach that promotes the interlinkages between health policy and changing demographics, the digital and environmental transitions, economic security and industrial policy.

Mr Boland stressed that health policy can only function effectively if it is managed alongside accessible, adequate and high-quality social services and public social policies and staffed with sufficient numbers of well-trained health professionals. Reiterating the need for direct involvement and responsibility in healthcare for civil society organisations (CSOs), such as patient associations, he said: ‘The take up and success of European health initiatives and programmes are dependent on transparent, regular and structured dialogue with CSOs. Their ability to carry out this work is in turn dependent on obtaining sustainable and predictable funding.’

Christie Morreale, Vice President of the Government of Wallonia, Minister for Employment, Training, Health, Social Action and the Social Economy, Equality of Opportunity and Women’s Rights, said that the challenges in the health sector would not be limited to State or disciplinary boundaries. ‘Let us adopt a global and integrated approach on health, by focusing our attention on the promotion of health, prevention, access to healthcare, research and innovation, as well as the fight against health inequalities,’ she said, stressing that only a global and integrated approach could guarantee viable health systems.

Ms Morreale concluded: ‘We must move away from a short-term vision and consider health in the long run. We will only be able to claim the ‘Right to Health’ for all by truly committing and investing in innovative strategies. In this mission, the EU is an indisputable partner.’

The conference discussed several fundamental aspects for a strengthened European Health Union:

- The commitment to One Health;
- Digital innovations and their impact on health;
- Sustainability and future-proofing health systems through social investment;
- And the global fight against health inequalities through the prism of European solidarity; the case of rare diseases.

Marc De Paoli, Managing Director of the CHU Liège, welcomed the opportunity to take stock of the situation, using the One Health approach, a systemic and sustainable approach to care, avoiding silos and well-trodden paths. He explained: ‘Running a hospital is no longer simply a matter of treating patients or preventing the onset of diseases. Our job is to provide the means to anticipate risks, to tailor treatments and to support people through crises. It also requires us to “govern” in line with change and not against it, to aim to make programmes sustainable and to ensure proper management, exercising careful consideration.’

Jean-Pascal Labille, Secretary-General of Solidaris Mutualité, focused on the priorities of the European Commission and the importance of participatory democracy. ‘For the next legislative term, we must consolidate and extend the acquis of the EU4Health programme and strengthen the integration of health into all sectoral policies,’ he said. Referring to the Conference on the Future of Europe, Mr Labille highlighted: ‘We must consider a reform of the EU treaties as requested by European citizens. Major deliberative democracy exercises cannot remain empty words because of a lack of follow-up.’

Working together with healthcare professionals is imperative in order to both define and implement a sustainable and comprehensive European Health Union. Speakers repeatedly stressed that future healthcare policy should be characterised by the four ‘Ps’: it should be personalised, preventive, predictable and participatory, placing the patient and the professionals at the centre of the system. Participants also agreed that the digital transition in the health sector and Artificial Intelligence (AI) will require countries to work together and to agree on common standards. A European Plan on Rare Diseases was also urgently called for.

The conclusions and recommendations of the conference focus on:
- Placing health at the top of the European and national political agendas;
- Building a new architecture for health within the EU;
- Investing in innovative and sustainable health systems;
- Taking action to combat health inequalities.

Find out more at: https://europa.eu/vn3cYw
Social Economy Category: what to expect from the next European term

On 17 June, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)’s Social Economy Category held its first meeting of the year. Chaired by co-speakersons Giuseppe Guerini and Justyna Ochędzan, the category took stock of the Conference on Social Economy held last February in Liège under the Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union. A large EESC delegation composed of many of the Category’s Members had taken part in this event.

Members then heard from Sarah de Heusch, Director of Social Economy Europe and Secretary of the European Parliament’s Social Economy Intergroup. Ms de Heusch outlined the Social Economy Action Plan and the key actions already taken in 2022 and 2023. She stressed the importance of the intergroup and the unique momentum provided worldwide for the social economy. The social economy is an answer to the pressure on the cost of living and the increasing inequalities and social divides.

The category then welcomed Andris Gobiņš, spokesperson for the EESC’s Associational Life Category, for an exchange on potential common initiatives. Mr Gobiņš urged Members to lobby the incoming European Parliament on the defence of civic space and the importance of the social economy. Ms Ochędzan agreed that the two categories have a lot in common. She listed possible synergies between the two categories’ work programmes, such as lowering taxes for social services provided by private operators, especially from the social economy sector.

Finally, there was a discussion on recent EESC opinions relating to the social economy, such as the Opinion on a Taxation framework for social economy entities and the Opinion Towards a just transition legislative proposal and EU policy tools that enable a more social European Green Deal. The first opinion will be presented and voted on at the EESC plenary session in July, the second in October.

3. EESC, Associational Life Category, https://europa.eu/1Vd3XXB
4. EESC opinion ECO/641, https://europa.eu/1I3Q4q
5. EESC opinion NAT/933, https://europa.eu/1QFM4v

MEMBERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Lidija Pavić-Rogošić at the EUROMED Summit

Lidija PAVIĆ-ROGOŠIĆ (HR)
Vice-President, Civil Society Organisations’ Group
Director, Croatian civil society organisation “Sustainable Community Development” (ODRAZ)

The annual Euro-Mediterranean Summit of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions was held in Malta from 18-19 June 2024. The Euromed Summit provides civil society organisations (CSOs) from the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Member States and other stakeholders, such as the Economic and Social Committee (EESC), with a platform to debate common challenges and opportunities and to exchange best practices. The main topic this year was focused on young people and their involvement in social and civil dialogue.

This theme is connected with the own-initiative opinion that the EESC is preparing on the same topic (Youth involvement in social and civil dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean region). As co-rapporteur, Lidija Pavić-Rogošić gave a keynote speech at the end of the opening session.

Why this opinion?

Young people are a significant demographic group. Around 45% of the population in the Southern Mediterranean is under the age of 25, and they bring unique perspectives, energy and innovative ideas. They should therefore have a say in their future. The other reason is that involving young people is one of the Committee’s priorities.

Before the summit, an interesting and lively session was held with representatives of young people from both sides of the Mediterranean, who had the opportunity to ask the EESC President and Group Presidents questions on issues that interested them. This new format proved to be a good way to open the summit and confirmed the importance of involving young people in preparing opinions that interest their future.

The Euro-Mediterranean region faces a number of challenges, including the climate crisis, high unemployment (particularly among young people), as well as a just, digital and energy transition to a sustainable and inclusive economy. It is important to recognise needs and current challenges in the region – including for institutional participatory processes – from a youth perspective.

‘Involving young people in participatory processes of social and civil dialogue is important as the basis for a thriving and stable democracy, an open and inclusive society, and a just and prosperous economy.’

Lidija Pavić-Rogošić

‘Social dialogue in the Southern Mediterranean faces many challenges. While national institutions often ensure the provision of tripartite social dialogue at national level, sectoral or bipartite dialogue structures at company level are in many cases very limited. It is important to strengthen them and to formally involve young people. That region presents a more complex landscape for civil dialogue. Practices vary widely across countries, reflecting diverse political contexts and levels of civic development. Structured reforms enhancing legal protections for civil society, funding and a comprehensive capacity-building scheme could be effective in promoting civil dialogue,’ said Ms Pavić-Rogošić.

2. EESC opinion REX/583, which will be put to vote in the last trimester of 2024.
The EESC’s pioneering Youth Test is a call to action to other EU institutions

The first debate at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) plenary session on 30 May 2024 focused on the topic ‘Youth voices for EU choices’ and the EESC Youth Test, which is designed to strengthen the voice of young people in policy-making. Over the last year, the EESC has been testing its Youth Test and, during the plenary session, youth representatives from various backgrounds across Europe came to the EESC and called on other EU institutions to follow suit. In June, the EESC invited youth organisations to apply to be part of the permanent structure created following the success of the Youth Test pilot project. Successful applicants will then be able to flag up the EESC opinions they would like to work on.

As President of the EESC, Oliver Röpke praised the EESC in the debate for ‘giving young people a seat at the table’ through the Youth Test. He added that, ‘thanks to the Youth Test, we can make sure that young people’s views are included in EU policies on a regular basis. Young people have been calling for more say in the EU decision-making process and the EU institutions must respond.’

As Minister for Youth and Children of Albania, Bora Muzhaqi wants to ensure adequate representation of young people and all minorities. She described how, in Albania, local youth councils act as consultative bodies for municipalities, as well as to the national Youth Council. ‘With our work today with youth and for youth, we are preparing our young people for the future,’ he stated.

Biliana Sirakova, EU Youth Coordinator at the European Commission, explained the Commission’s plan to give young people a stronger voice in EU policy-making. The Commission’s Youth Check aims to ensure that EU policies’ impact on young people is taken into account. Describing the principles behind the Commission’s initiative, she commented that ‘information and communication, continuous dialogue with young people and mainstreaming youth across different policies: this is how we believe we can engage youth in a meaningful way.’

Elias Dray, Vice-President of the European Youth Forum, remarked that the Forum has been advocating for a Youth Test and that, in the EESC, they had found ‘not only a strong supporter but a genuine desire to bring the EU institutions closer to young people’. He concluded by stating that ‘the Youth Test is very far from just being an unsexy administrative tool; it comes to strengthen the foundations of the EU.

As she listed the EESC’s measures to integrate youth representatives into its work, Katrina Leitāne, Member of the Civil Society Organisations’ Group and president of the EESC Youth Group, emphasised that by adopting the EU Youth Test the course the EESC had taken towards meaningful and structured youth engagement in policy-making was anchored in its work and was here to stay. The youth representatives, Christelle Savall, Maurizio Cuttin, Pegah Moulana, Anthony Efstathiadis, Vasilis Angelopoulos, Sébastien Pérel, Petra Pieskā and Jean Matthieu Thévenot, also praised the EESC, adding that ‘the youth dialogue in the EESC exceeds the national standards and should be reproduced in the Member States.’

Several Members of the EESC’s Civil Society Organisations’ Group contributed during the debate. Michael McLoughlin noted the unequal environment in which European youth organisations had to compete for meetings and influence with very wealthy organisations defending private interests.

Corina Murafa highlighted how young people were crucial in bringing climate change to the centre of politics. She advised European governments not to let young people down when it came to science-based climate action or they may take to the streets again, adding that ‘no segment in our society can match their power and their courage.’

Neža Repanšek said that ‘change is hard but it is absolutely necessary. And the Committee started to change with this initiative. The EU Youth Test is a pledge to inclusivity and acknowledgement of the young people’s role. It is like trying to plant a seed in the hope of one day receiving fruit from the tree. It will be a long time before results from this work are seen, but we can already see that it is essential.’

Andreas Kruse stressed that ‘adolescence is the moment to form one’s identity’. However, he observed that young people do not seem to receive sufficient attention by the institutions. Therefore, the EESC’s inclusion of young people was setting a welcome example.

The EESC calls for defending Europe together

On the first day of its plenary session, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) held a debate on the EU defence strategy, which was linked to the adoption of opinion CCMI/222 on the European defence industrial strategy. The EESC invited Anne Fort, head of unit for Defence Industrial Policy at the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space (DEFIS); Tania Latici, political officer for Peace, Security and Defence at the European External Action Service and associate fellow at the Egmont Institute and the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), and Pietro De Lotto, president of the EESC Consultative Commission on Industrial Change, to take part in the debate.

In his introduction, EESC President

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LAST EESC PLENARY SESSION
**The future of cohesion policy in the focus of the EESC plenary**

At its plenary session on 31 May, the EESC emphasised the crucial role of cohesion policy – the EU's primary funding instrument for regional development – in future EU enlargements. The EESC’s plenary assembly was discussing and adopting opinions on *The role of cohesion policy in upcoming rounds of EU enlargement* and the *Ninth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion*, which stresses the importance of pre-accession aid.

EESC President Oliver Röpke underlined: ‘Cohesion policy is essential for addressing the challenges of EU enlargement, allowing civil society partners to engage and benefit from it.’

In its opinions, the EESC calls for, amongst other things, compliance tools to be included in accession treaties to address potential post-accession challenges such as emigration and rule of law concerns. The EESC also recommends adapting cohesion policy to new challenges and involving civil society organisations in aid planning and implementation processes.

These and other related issues were discussed with Elisa Ferreira, Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Vasco Alves Cordeiro, President of the European Committee of the Regions, and Prof. Andrés Rodríguez-Pose, Chair of the Group of High-Level Specialists on the Future of Cohesion Policy, who joined the plenary debate.

Ms Ferreira expressed her firm belief that Europe needed a strong cohesion policy to cope with its many internal and external challenges, as this instrument boosted competitiveness and convergence across the EU, while empowering local communities. She said: ‘Without cohesion we risk a fragmented EU, a dysfunctional single market, and the rise of a geography of discontent.’

‘We need to put economic, social and territorial cohesion at the top of the EU political agenda,’ said Mr Alves Cordeiro. Regarding the future of cohesion policy, he added: ‘We need to join forces and mobilise to prevent a centralised and ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to become reality.’

Several Members of the EESC’s Civil Society Organisations’ Group took the floor. While cohesion policy was in general a tremendous success, the remaining differences between rural and industrialised areas needed to be addressed, said Séamus Boland, President of the Civil Society Organisations’ Group. This was important for tackling anti-EU sentiment and for succeeding with the green transition. Policy needed to involve both civil society organisations and local and regional authorities.

Group Vice-President Lidija Pavlić-Rogosić confirmed the importance of

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1. EESC opinion CCMII/222, https://europa.eu/!YbTVFy

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cohesion policy for rural areas in terms of agriculture, mobility, access to education and services, and other questions. Concerning the pre-accession instruments for candidate countries she said: ‘The pre-accession assistance needs to be adjusted to the specific needs of these countries and we need to help the candidate countries to build up their capacities for absorption.’

The situation in the EU’s eastern external border regions was addressed by Group Vice-President Simo Tiainen, who called for solidarity and a strong cohesion policy for those regions. ‘For geopolitical reasons, these regions need to be integrated into the Union. People in the east of the Union have to feel that they belong to the Union as much as people from the West. There are positive elements in the situation in the eastern border regions and one of these is that there are no wars in the region, only a conflict about how to decide the future of the region and how to transform it from a conflict region into an economic region,’ Tiainen said.

2. EESC, opinion ECO/659, https://europ.eu/!rvYTvC

United Against Hate: Mobilising the civil society, citizens and institutions to combat growing intolerance in Europe

The second debate on 31 May, of the European Economic and Social Committee’s (EESC) plenary session centred on combating hatred. After the debate, the EESC adopted an opinion entitled No place for Hate: a Europe united against hatred, denouncing all forms of hatred and welcoming the European Commission’s Communication on the same topic, aimed at stepping up action across a variety of policy sectors, including the security, digital, education, culture and sports sectors, and also aimed at combating hate in all its forms, from harassment and online and offline verbal abuse to threats and actual acts of violence.

Several guest speakers participated in the debate: Marie-Colline Leroy, Belgian State Secretary for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunities and Diversity, Emmanuel Achiri, representative from the European Network Against Racism, Katrin Hugendubel, Head of the EU Affairs, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA Europe) and Janelle Rizzo, representative of the European Citizens’ Panel on Tackling Hatred in Society. Commission Vice-President for Democracy and Demography Dubravka Šuica sent a video message.

According to the participants of the debate, recent figures show an unprecedented rise in hate and violence.

An EU-funded project analysed 8 million online messages in the EU, concluding that hate toxicity has risen by 30% since the start of 2023.

‘We all have a responsibility to combat hatred. To effectively tackle it, we must all work together – politicians, civil society and citizens. Only together and in dialogue can we prevail and fight the increasing hostility in our society, which is a true threat to our democracy,’ stressed EESC President Oliver Röpke.

In its opinion, No place for Hate: a Europe united against hatred, the EESC calls on the EU to adopt a comprehensive approach to fighting hate based on any protected human characteristics, and to use the same approach for fighting all types of hate.

‘Combating hate speech is an existential imperative, and all European and national institutions must take coordinated measures to defend liberal democracy. Combating disinformation, foreign interference and covert and malicious external funding of organisations that incite and spread hate speech should be priorities for the EU and the Member States,’ said the rapporteur of the EESC opinion, Cristian Pirvulescu, Member of the EESC Civil Society Organisations’ Group.

Other Members of the Civil Society Organisations’ Group took the floor.

João Nabais pointed out that it was essential that Member States criminalise incitement to hatred and violence against immigrants and those who were different on the grounds of race, religion or ethnic origin. Europe must not sink back into the obscurantism and intolerance that had swept across it in the first half of the last century.

Juliane Neiendam drew attention to the fact that 47% of female MPs in Europe had received death threats or had been threatened with rape or assault. We needed to combat this hate, which was preventing women from daring to run for election to political positions.

Svjetlana Marijon pointed out that during discussions in the European Citizens’ Panel on Tackling Hatred in Society, the public had strongly advocated for their continued involvement in various initiatives, such as promoting dialogue, inspiring debates at local level in schools and among young people, and legitimising media through public participation. These calls emphasised the need for further public involvement both at EU level and at other levels of governance.

1. EESC opinion SOC/792, https://europa.eu/!v0FRcK
Lessons for tomorrow from successful past enlargements

At its last May plenary session debate, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) discussed lessons learned from the 2004 EU enlargement with László Andor, Secretary-General of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), Jaroslav Pietras, former Polish Secretary of State in charge of EU accession, Dr. Tinatin Akhvlediani, Research Fellow in the EU Foreign Policy Unit at the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), and Stefan Füle, Former European Commissioner for Enlargement and Chair of the European Policy Center (EPC) Task Force on EU enlargement. The main focus of the debate was the success of the post-accession economic and societal transformation in the newly admitted countries. The debate underlined that the current geopolitical and security situations make further enlargement an even more urgent task for Europe.

The EESC President, Oliver Röpke, celebrated the 2004 enlargement’s 20-year anniversary as ‘not only a significant milestone, but also the ongoing success of the EU enlargement process, with more countries aspiring to join. We must recognise the influence of ideas, ideals and role models in shaping the European project. This is why our commitment to enlargement must remain strong, guiding candidate countries along the European path.

Dr. Tinatin Akhvlediani stressed that the EU needs to be ready for the next enlargement wave. While the process of enlargement was largely seen as economic convergence, it now also has to be regarded as a security and geopolitical question. She therefore pointed out three elements that are key for future enlargements: economic integration, social issues, and security at the new, post-enlargement borders.

László Andor reviewed the challenges and lessons of the last enlargement wave, namely gradualism, the incompleteness of the enlargement rule of law issues, and the evolving doctrine. Drawing on these, he remarked that the original idea of enlargement policy had been a merit-based approach. Now, as it also responded to a geopolitical event, enlargement policy must evolve to combine both approaches.

Jaroslav Pietras highlighted that the enlargement’s ‘process of transformation started much before 2004’, rather it had started when the Copenhagen criteria had made clear how a country could join. He argued that the criteria had provided essential guiding tools for Poland, clarifying the necessary transformations. He added that ‘enlargement is a two-way transformation process, bringing benefits not only to the candidate countries but also to the EU Member States’.

Stefan Füle gave insights on the ‘big bang enlargement’, stressing that ‘we need to prepare both candidate countries and the EU Member States for the new wave of enlargements’. He also emphasised that the accession process needed to be reformed by putting fundamental values first, ‘because if we do not link the phases of the accession process to our values, then we will not make genuine progress with the candidate countries towards the EU.’

The President of the EESC’s Civil Society Organisations’ Group, Séamus Boland, noted that ‘enlargement was a clear political decision to reunite Europe, which brought about values of peace, democracy and the rule of law, and offered socio-economic governance’. He said that ‘the lesson learned as we face more enlargement is that the EU must make sure to bring about a Union of values, democracy and freedom. That’s the most important.’

Several Members of the Civil Society Organisations’ Group contributed during the debate. Group Vice-President Krzysztof Balon reminded the audience of the referendum Poland had organised prior to joining the EU and noted that Polish citizens were still highly in favour of being in the EU.

Group Vice-President Simo Tiainen highlighted the benefits that enlargement had brought to the whole EU. He noted that the fears prior to the 2004 enlargement had therefore been unfounded. He ended by asking what the EESC would be without its Eastern European Members.

Looking back at the last 20 years, or indeed at the past 75 years of European history, Andris Gobiņš drew the lesson that we must forget fear and instead focus on our assets: our people, democracy and the rule of law.

OVERVIEW OF RECENT WORK

The last EESC plenary session took place on 30 and 31 May 2024. The EESC plenary adopted 13 opinions of which 5 were drafted by Members of the Civil Society Organisations’ Group. A list of the recent work can be found below.

Cristian Pîrvulescu (RO), rapporteur, SOC/792: No place for hate: a Europe united against hatred
Jaume Berní Castells (ES), NAT/918: Revision of the animal welfare legislation
John Bryan (IR), CCMI/224: Industrial and technological approaches and best practices supporting a water resilient society
Maurizio Menší (IT), rapporteur, CCMI/222: European defence industrial strategy
Panagiotis Gkofas (EL), rapporteur, CCMI/214: Drone manufacturing industry: a case study to assess the outcome in a strategic sector of the different policies in place to enhance European strategic autonomy

The complete texts of all EESC opinions are available in various language versions on the Committee’s website.

The next EESC plenary session will take place on 18 and 19 September 2024. For more information on the upcoming plenary session please visit our website.

A list including all new work appointments of Civil Society Organisations’ Group Members is available on the Committee’s website.

4. EESC opinions. https://europa.eu/!RkVHQK
5. EESC plenary sessions. https://europa.eu/!TKCHb8
6. EESC opinions. https://europa.eu/!wF86wY
7. EESC opinions. https://europa.eu/!wQjrrp
9. EESC, New work appointments. https://europa.eu/!4gK4pQ
11. EESC, New work appointments. https://europa.eu/!wF86wY
12. EESC, New work appointments. https://europa.eu/!wQjrrp
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17. EESC, New work appointments. https://europa.eu/!4gK4pQ
19. EESC, New work appointments. https://europa.eu/!wF86wY
20. EESC, New work appointments. https://europa.eu/!wQjrrp
21. EESC, New work appointments. https://europa.eu/!4gK4pQ
WHAT IS EESC OPINION NAT/913 ALL ABOUT?

An interview with Stoyan Tchoukanov, rapporteur for the European Economic and Social Committee’s (EESC) opinion NAT/913 on Promoting autonomous and sustainable food production: strategies for the Common Agricultural Policy post-2027.

The opinion was presented and adopted at the January plenary session in 2024.

Stoyan TCHOUKANOV (BG)
Member, Civil Society Organisations’ Group
President, Beef Breeders Association of Bulgaria

Your opinion was recently adopted by the EESC plenary session. What are the main concerns of this opinion?

Although 2027 may sound far in the future for some objectives, in term of reforms to the common agricultural policy (CAP) it is just around the corner. And yes, we need to enter this debate, because on the one hand we have farmers on the streets of Brussels and elsewhere, and on the other Europe is the fastest warming continent. In drawing up our opinion we tried to gather as many perspectives as possible from a wide variety of stakeholders and civil society organisations, including young people, and to have the document ready for the next European Commission. It is worth mentioning that we were the first EU institution to provide an opinion on the CAP post-2027!

Here are some key points from this large and complex paper. The EESC considers that the CAP post-2027:

• must provide a stable long-term policy framework geared to sustainable food production and open strategic autonomy for the European Union, while protecting the diversity of types of farming in the EU and responding to societal and ecological needs (“public money for public goods”), alongside ensuring rural development;
• must be a wake-up call shining a spotlight on the need to adequately support farmers through the transition;
• despite the fact that the share of the EU budget going to the CAP has fallen constantly over the past 40 years, to less than 25% in 2021, must provide funding that is commensurate with its ambition to support a sustainable transition. Basic income support based on surface should be gradually replaced by financial incentives to farmers for environmental and social services, with a reasonable transition period that may go beyond the scope of one single multiannual financial framework (MFF);
• alongside other policies and in order to stop the further drop in the number of farms in the EU, promote generational renewal through access to land, increase average earnings from farming, favourable investment conditions, empowerment of women, good labour conditions, improvement of long-term prospects for farmers, promoting the sustainable exploitation of abandoned or marginal land and extensive livestock breeding;
• must preserve sustainable agricultural production throughout the EU and contribute to promote consumer demand in the EU for healthier and more sustainable diets, decrease food waste and regulate food markets to address the financialisation of the food sector.

How could these issues be addressed? What are the main recommendations or proposals of the opinion?

The EESC believes that the CAP post-2027:

• should consider including counter-cyclical components and provide investment support schemes dedicated to renewable energy production locally and on farms in rural areas;
• should be based on reinforced public/private partnerships for insurance schemes in response to the consequences of extreme climate conditions;
• should support digital technologies that demonstrably contribute to the reduction of natural and environmental impacts and the improvement of animal welfare or working conditions;
• should revamp processes for designing and adapting the strategic plans, to allow for stakeholder involvement, more flexibility for Member States and faster adaptation after their initial approval.

After the adoption of this opinion, what have you done and will you do to promote it?

In the following months after the adoption of the opinion I had the chance to present it on many occasions and to participate in very constructive discussions with Norbert Liens, chairman of the European Parliament’s Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, Pieter Lietaer, Attaché for agriculture at the Belgian presidency of the Council of Ministers, Wolfgang Bertscher, Director-general for Agriculture and Rural Development at the European Commission, and

Prof. Dr Peter Strohschneider, Chair of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of the Agriculture at the Committee of the Regions, to mention but a few. The opinion was presented to a number of different media such as Euractiv, AgroTV, Agrig.bg, Agrozoa and Femes.bg. In July I am going to present the opinion to the European Coalition of Agri Regions. Last but not least, this opinion served as a basis for the discussions on the ongoing EESC opinion on How to ensure the social, environmental and economic sustainability of the EU agri-food sector with future enlargement, as I am convinced that the CAP needs to be reformed before enlargement takes place.

Read the EESC opinion on Promoting autonomous and sustainable food production: strategies for the Common Agricultural Policy post-2027 at: https://europa.eu/!DpDc7

1. EESC opinion NAT/913, https://europa.eu/!DpDc7
2. EESC opinion NAT/913, https://europa.eu/!DpDc7
4. EESC opinion NAT/924, https://europa.eu/!DpDc7
UPCOMING EVENTS

18-19 September: 589th EESC plenary session