



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

July – December 2024



European Economic
and Social Committee





A word from the President

Oliver Röpke, EESC President

The Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU will mark the end of two cycles.

On one hand, it represents the end of a trio presidency with common priorities and remarkable achievements in building a competitive, resilient, and social Europe. On the other, it will occur at a decisive moment for the years to come, as a new European Parliament enters into office, and a renewed European Commission is formed.

The stakes are high, and the responsibility upon all of us is to contribute to a stable and successful presidency, which can lay the groundwork for a successful mandate of the EU institutions: one which can address our citizens' concerns. At the EESC, we understand the weight of this responsibility, and we stand ready to work with partners and stakeholders from Budapest to Brussels.

In that sense, we must welcome the request for ten exploratory opinions from the Hungarian Presidency, which will allow organised civil society to shape European advances on shared priorities, from artificial intelligence to enlargement, competitiveness and demography. We will work on this input and look forward to the opportunity to present it in upcoming informal Council meetings and ministerial events.

At this challenging and crucial time for Europe, we are dedicated to building a more socially and territorially cohesive Europe, strengthening the rule of law and fostering innovation and investment into our economies, and continuing the path towards a green transition that can properly serve citizens and businesses. At the centre of our common efforts, and close to this Committee's priority, will be the commitment towards candidate countries, particularly in the Western Balkans region.

At a moment of political renewal, our Committee intends to be a responsible partner for the Hungarian Presidency, and play a pivotal role in shaping some of the political priorities that will be developed throughout the next European cycle.

The EESC's activities during the Hungarian 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
- Contributing to the EU's efforts to ensure just digital and green transitions through recommendations on the macroeconomic impact of climate change and on meeting the financial needs of the transitions
- 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, and focussing on a participatory budgeting approach
- 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 and inclusive growth; this includes providing input to the European Commission for a future reform of the EU securitisation regulation, and being attentive to possible actions to complete the Capital Markets Union, following the conclusions of the European Council ¹
- Contributing to the discussions on the future of cohesion policy after 2027 and closely monitoring the implementation of the new territorial and urban agenda from the civil society angle
- 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 further the consequences of the EU enlargement in the cohesion policy
- Combating tax fraud, tax avoidance, money laundering and tax havens; preparing policy proposals regarding a Taxation Framework for Social Economy Entities

¹ [European Council conclusions, 21 and 22 March 2024.](#)



Single Market, Production and Consumption – INT

- Following up on Enrico Letta's report '[Much more than a market](#)' and its concrete proposals in order to contribute to a new horizontal single market strategy
- Maintaining a focus on competitiveness, taking stock of Prof. Draghi's high-level report and actively contributing to the development of a potential new European Competitiveness Deal
- Keeping Artificial Intelligence high on the agenda, with the adoption of an exploratory opinion entitled 'General purpose AI: way forward after the AI Act' and thus actively contributing to the implementation of the AI Act
- Putting forward recommendations on how to effectively harness the research and innovation potential of the EU, while evaluating the outcomes and lessons learned from measures and initiatives aimed at narrowing the research and innovation gap within the EU
- Advocating for a sustainable and responsible consumer policy and its enforcement, with a particular focus on the online environment, through the organisation of the annual European Consumer Day



Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society – TEN

- For a closer EU Health Union: calling for an EU Action Plan on Rare Diseases
- Creating an energy union that enables EU consumers to access safe, clean and affordable energy: the case of hydrogen
- The housing crisis in Europe – promoting access to affordable, decent, energy-saving housing for all
- Conveying civil society proposals for a look into electricity supply and prices
- Building an efficient, integrated and green European transport system
- Connectivity: civil society's demands for digital networks and universal access to electronic communications
- Promoting a global and secure strategy for an EU space policy
- Radioactive Waste Management: facilitating a broad civil society consultation



Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship – SOC

- Promoting the further implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan
- Looking into the social challenges and opportunities arising from the growing use of artificial intelligence and issuing recommendations regarding public services, the organisation of work and workers' rights
- Identifying ways to achieve a balance in social protection systems, for workers in all forms of work
- Examining the impact of demographic change, including the link between demography and AI, the labour market and social systems
- Encouraging youth engagement and increasing transparency and accountability of the EU Youth Dialogue
- Combating violence against children and especially child sexual abuse
- Promoting gender equality, tackling violence against women and girls and enhancing work-life balance for all individuals, with a particular focus on supporting women and promoting intergenerational solidarity
- Advancing health and care policies, including community-based services in mental health, EU action on rare diseases and calling for a flagship initiative for EU health policy
- Defending disability rights, including the social integration and accommodation of persons with disabilities and persons with changed working capacity
- Promoting lifelong learning, looking into the quality of traineeships, the proposal for a joint European degree and the role of culture in community-building
- Furthering the socio-economic inclusion of migrants and refugees, through their fairer distribution, and their improved access to the EU labour market
- Monitoring progress in implementing the recommendations of the new Roma strategic framework
- Upholding the rule of law and fundamental rights in the EU and evaluating the European Commission's annual reports on the rule of law in the European Union
- Strengthening participatory democracy and civil dialogue, taking note of the recommendations of the Conference on the Future of Europe



Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment – NAT

- Accelerating the implementation of the SDGs
- Promoting climate neutrality and appropriate climate finance
- 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, and aligning circular economy and bioeconomy
- Fostering the transformation towards fairer and more sustainable agriculture and food systems, including through the future CAP post 2027 and with EU enlargement
- 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' (ECMs) 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, potentially also at a civil society contribution to EU-UK Cooperation on Security and Defence
- 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, and in the EU-Africa Partnership
- Further supporting civil society involvement in the EU trade policy, as well as stronger links between international trade and overarching EU policies like economic security, strategic autonomy and sustainable development
- Enhancing dialogue between European and Latin American civil society on issues of common interest, such as promoting efforts to combat climate change and deforestation while ensuring a just transition for all
- 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

- Following up on the EESC call for an EU Blue Deal, the CCMI will continue to lead this EESC flagship initiative and advocate to adopt a comprehensive water strategy for Europe as a priority for the next legislative mandate
- Enhancing the global competitiveness of EU industry, focusing in particular on the importance of sectoral industrial initiatives to build an industrial leadership and taking stock of Prof. Draghi's forthcoming report to contribute to the development of a revised industrial policy, addressing in a consolidated manner and with the corresponding financial and human means the different industrial changes at stake (twin transition, CRM and water in particular)
- Enhancing the strategic autonomy of the EU, notably by pursuing the long-standing work on defence, by addressing the industrial policies supporting greater strategic autonomy, but also the industrial changes in the health sector in the face of multiplying crises, and the potential of the robotics metaverse in the medical sector
- Advancing the Presidency work on industrial policy by adopting and following-up several key opinions: Industry 5.0, the clean transition dialogues, EU biotech and biomanufacturing, from waste plants to resource plants to cite a few. In focusing on the shift towards a greener European industry, the CCMI will also tackle the question of low-carbon and renewable fuels and of building capacity for the European industry to decarbonise the aviation and maritime sector



A word from the Hungarian Presidency



János Bóka, Minister for European Union Affairs

Hungary will take over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union at particularly challenging times for the second time since we joined the EU 20 years ago. The Hungarian Presidency is committed to manage the whole term as an honest broker in the spirit of sincere cooperation with Member States and institutions.

Currently, the EU is facing multiple challenges. The central priority of Hungary's presidency of the European Union will be to strengthen the global competitiveness of the Union. In this context, Hungary wishes to deal with the shortcomings of the European internal market, as well as industrial policy issues. During the Hungarian presidency, the mid-term review of the cohesion programmes also takes place, which gives us an opportunity to discuss the future of the cohesion policy in the next seven-year budget. The Common Agricultural Policy is facing one of the most important challenges in its history due to the green transition as well as recent market openings. The Hungarian Presidency is expected to tackle this issue.

In the shadows of the war in our immediate neighbourhood, the European Union should guarantee peace and security in Europe. The Hungarian presidency will address the migration crisis as well, focusing on the protection of the EU's external borders. In addition, Hungary is committed to a predictable, credible and merit-based enlargement process.

It is necessary to create forms of cooperation that have real added value, that make Member States stronger together, and aim at strengthening them rather than reducing their capabilities.

I believe that the EESC will contribute with its expertise and experience to finding common answers to the above mentioned issues. Through the exploratory opinions, we will be able to take the views and insights of the institution into account, thus provide effective representation to the economic and social actors of our Union.

I am looking forward to working with the EESC during Hungary's Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

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EESC opinions requested by the Hungarian Presidency

1. Paving the way to EU accession for the Western Balkans
2. What EU policies are needed for enterprises/business to become competitive in a fair, sustainable, stronger and more resilient way to realise the European Green Deal
3. Sectoral initiatives and overall competitiveness of the EU
4. The results and experiences of efforts to close the innovation gap in the EU in the light of Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe programme
5. A secure technology for the future: Artificial Intelligence
6. Fostering sustainable and resilient food systems at times of growing crises
7. Leaving No One Behind: European Commitment to Rare Diseases
8. Promoting the social integration of persons with disabilities and persons with changed working capacity
9. Ensuring a needs-based work-life balance for all: How adequate flexible working conditions can support intergenerational solidarity and the empowerment of women
10. Ensuring equal opportunities and social inclusion in access to culture, lifelong learning and the role of public cultural institutions in this process



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