



**European Economic
and Social Committee**
Civil Society Organisations' Group

Debate 'Charting the EU's democratic progress: a resolution for the next legislative mandate', with **Brikena Xhomaqi**, *co-chair of the EESC Liaison Group and President of the Ad Hoc Group on the EESC Resolution*, **Véronique Willems**, *Secretary-General, SME United*, **Claes-Mikael Stahl**, *Deputy Secretary General of the European Trade Union Confederation (remotely)*, **Jessica Machacova**, *Policy and Advocacy Coordinator at the European Anti-Poverty Network*, **Lotte Prins**, *President of the Dutch National Youth Council, YEYS representative* and the rapporteurs of the resolution on *Charting the EU's democratic progress: a resolution for the next legislative mandate:* **Christa Schweng, Cinzia Del Rio and Ioannis Vardakastanis**

Speech by Civil Society Organisations' Group President Séamus Boland

EESC plenary session, 18 September 2024

Dear guests and colleagues,

- I would like to join you in **welcoming this ambitious resolution**;
- It has been a lengthy process and not always easy;
- But we can be proud of the **quality** and **quantity** of the **recommendations** to be addressed to the new European Institutions;
- And I would like to sincerely **thank the three rapporteurs**, the Section/CCMI Presidents, Group experts and Committee staff, who were extensively involved in drafting and revising of this document.

- The **Group III rapporteur**, Yannis Vardakastanis, has already outlined a number of **policy areas prioritised within the resolution**, namely: the health sector, respect for the Rule of Law, active inclusion policies, respect for diversity, equality, inter-generational solidarity and of course, the pivotal role of civil society and civic dialogue;
- To complement those remarks, I would like to focus on **three issues**.

- **Firstly**, this resolution makes very clear that despite the relative wealth within the EU, our Union is faced with **extremely high levels of poverty**, something which is totally unacceptable;
- **Poverty, inequalities and the perceived absence of opportunities**, are breeding grounds for extremist political views of the left and the right, as we have seen in recent elections in Member States;
- Put simply: we will not be able to quieten the angry political disconnect and distrust of voters, without focussing on resolving this fundamental issue;
- And I am not speaking about reducing the levels of equality. We should be aiming at totally **eliminating poverty** within the EU!

- **Secondly**, as is stated in the resolution, "...*the EESC has a pivotal role in fostering a robust civic space...providing a platform for consensus building and dialogue...supporting the development of inclusive policies that reflect the needs and aspirations of citizens*";
- The process by which this resolution was drafted, involving so many internal and external actors and including the recommendations of the Civil Society Week and of YEYs, is a living proof of the **value added of this Committee**;
- I am confident in saying that no other European level body would be able to bring together such a variety of actors in consensus, as this House has done.

- **Thirdly**, I would like to highlight the timeliness of this resolution, coming just a few after the **EC President elect published her priorities** for the next legislative mandate;
- As you will note, several of the items that we request are included within her priorities, e.g. an **EU Anti-Poverty Strategy** and an **EU action plan to address the housing crisis**;
- Other requests made by us were not included, e.g. a **European Strategy for Older Persons**;
- Hence, our role in the next few months and years, is to accompany the European Institutions in **delivering these promises and in being even more ambitious!**
- And to go even further, taking action on
- And that implies each and every one of us taking **individual responsibility** at the local, national and European levels! We all have much work to do!

Thank you for your attention.