



Brussels, 13 December 2024

MINUTES
of the 592nd plenary session
of the European Economic and Social Committee,
held in Brussels

4 and 5 December 2024

List of members:

| Mr/Ms | Present | Absent | Apologies |
|------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| AALTONEN, Kristina | X | | |
| ANDERSEN, Dorthe | | | X |
| ANDERSSON, Jan Torsten | X | | |
| ANDERSSON, Krister | X | | |
| ANGELOVA, Milena | | | X |
| ANTONIOU, Michalis | X | | |
| ARDHE, Christian | X | | |
| ARVIDSSON, Tomas | X | | |
| ATS, Kerli | X | | |
| BABRAUSKIENĖ, Tatjana | X | | |
| BALDZĒNS, Egils | X | | |
| BÁLEŠ, Vladimír | X | | |
| BALON, Krzysztof | X | | |
| BARBIERI, Pietro Vittorio | X | | |
| BARBUCCI, Giulia | X | | |
| BARCELÓ DELGADO, Andrés | X | | |
| BARRERA CHAMORRO, Maria del Carmen | X | | |
| BARROS VALE, Paulo | X | | |
| BARTELS, Holger | X | | |
| BÄUMLER, Christian | X | | |
| BERCEA, Florin | X | | |
| BERGRATH, Dirk | X | | |
| BERNIS CASTELLS, Jaume | X | | |
| BERTIN, Catherine | X | | |
| BERTOLINI, Silvestre | X | | |
| BIEGON, Dominika | X | | |
| BLANC, Patricia | | X | |
| BLIJLEVENS, René | X | | |
| BOGUSZ, Małgorzata Anna | X | | |
| BÖHME, Martin | X | | |
| BOLAND, Séamus | X | | |
| BOLLON, Pierre | X | | |
| BONOMI, Amedeo | | X | |
| BORS, Ionel | | | X |
| BORSANI, Matteo Carlo | X | | |
| BRINNEN, Ola | X | | |
| BRISHOUAL, Rachel | X | | |
| BRONIARZ, Wincenty Sławomir | X | | |

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| BRZOBOHATÁ, Zuzana | X | | |
| BULK, Marjolijn | | X | |
| BUZEK, Tanja | X | | |
| BYRNE, Peter | X | | |
| CABRA DE LUNA, Miguel Ángel | X | | |
| CALISTRU, Elena-Alexandra | X | | |
| CAÑO AGUILAR, Isabel | | X | |
| CATSAMBIS, Constantine | | X | |
| CHAMPAS, Panagiotis | X | | |
| CHARRY, Philippe | X | | |
| CHOIX, Bruno | X | | |
| CLEVER, Peter | | X | |
| COHEUR, Alain | X | | |
| COMER, John | X | | |
| CONTRASTO, Emilio | | X | |
| CORAZZA, Chiara | X | | |
| CSER, Ágnes | X | | |
| CURYLO, Lukáš | | X | |
| DANDEA, Petru Sorin | X | | |
| DANISMAN, Mira-Maria | X | | |
| DEBAY, Pascal | X | | |
| DECOSTER, Marc | X | | |
| DE FELIPE LEHTONEN, Helena | X | | |
| DEGUARA, Jason | X | | |
| DE LEEUW, Rudy | X | | |
| DE LOTTO, Pietro Francesco | X | | |
| DEL RIO, Cinzia | X | | |
| DE MELLO, Vasco | X | | |
| DE MÛELENAERE, Robert | X | | |
| DESIANO, Carole | X | | |
| DESTOM, Joël | | X | |
| DIAMANTOUROS, Konstantinos | X | | |
| DIMITRIADIS, Dimitris | X | | |
| DIMITRIADOU, Stavroula | X | | |
| DIMITROV, Plamen | X | | |
| DIOGO, Edgar | X | | |
| DIRX, Jan | X | | |
| DOZ ORRIT, Javier | X | | |
| DROBINSKI-WEISS, Elvira | X | | |
| DUBRAVSKÁ, Jarmila | | | X |
| DUFEK, Bohumír | X | | |

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| DULEVSKI, Lalko | X | | |
| DUTTO, Diego | X | | |
| EDELÉNYI, András | X | | |
| FELSZEGHI, Sára | X | | |
| FERRARINI, Lisa | | X | |
| FORNEA, Dumitru | X | | |
| FRANK VON FÜRSTENWERTH, Jörg Freiherr | X | | |
| GARAT PÉREZ, Francisco Javier | X | | |
| GARCÍA DEL RIEGO, Antonio | X | | |
| GARCÍA SALGADO, Manuel | X | | |
| GARDIAS, Dorota | X | | |
| GAVRILOVS, Vitālijs | X | | |
| GEISEN, Norbert | X | | |
| GERSTEIN, Antje | X | | |
| GILLOT, Dominique | X | | |
| GKOFAS, Panagiotis | X | | |
| GLORIEUX, Jacques | X | | |
| GOBIŇŠ, Andris | X | | |
| GONDARD-ARGENTI, Marie-Françoise | X | | |
| GÖTZ, Nadja | X | | |
| GRABO, Louise | X | | |
| GUERINI, Giuseppe | X | | |
| HÄGGLUND, Sam | X | | |
| HÄGGMAN, Maria | X | | |
| HAJNOŠ, Miroslav | X | | |
| HANŽEVAČKI, Marija | X | | |
| HARTMAN RADOVÁ, Jana | X | | |
| HAUKANÖMM, Monika | X | | |
| HAUNERT, Nora | X | | |
| HEALY, Joe | X | | |
| HEMMERLING, Udo | X | | |
| HENDRICKX, Luc | X | | |
| HERNÁNDEZ BATALLER, Bernardo | X | | |
| HOFFMANN, Reiner | X | | |
| HOLST, Sif | | | X |
| HOŠTÁK, Martin | X | | |
| INDJOVA, Diana | X | | |
| IOANNIDIS, Athanasios | X | | |
| IVANOV, Evgeniy | X | | |
| IZVERNICEANU DE LA IGLESIA, Ileana | X | | |
| JAHIER, Luca | X | | |

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| JANKOWSKI, Rafał Bogusław | X | | |
| JEAMBRUN, Denis | X | | |
| JELIĆ, Violeta | X | | |
| JOHANSSON, Benny | X | | |
| JONUŠKA, Alfredas | X | | |
| JOÓ, Kinga | X | | |
| JORIS, Olivier | | X | |
| JUODKAITĖ, Dovilė | X | | |
| KÁLLAY, Piroska | X | | |
| KATTNIG, Thomas | X | | |
| KILIM, Irma | | | X |
| KINDBERG, Mette | X | | |
| KIUKAS, Vertti | X | | |
| KLIMEK, Jan | | X | |
| KOKALOV, Ivan | X | | |
| KOLBE, Rudolf | X | | |
| KOLLER, Erika | X | | |
| KOLYVAS, Ioannis | X | | |
| KOMORÓCZKI, István | X | | |
| KOUTSIOUMPELIS, Stavros | X | | |
| KRAWCZYK, Jacek | X | | |
| KROPIL, Rudolf | X | | |
| KROPP, Thomas | | | X |
| KRUPAVIČIENĖ, Kristina | | | X |
| KRUSE, Andreas | X | | |
| KÜKEDI, Zsolt | X | | |
| KUNYSZ, Maciej Dawid | X | | |
| KUPŠYS, Kęstutis | X | | |
| LADEFOGED, Anders | X | | |
| LASZ, Andrej | | | X |
| LE BRETON, Marie-Pierre | X | | |
| LEFÈVRE, Christophe | X | | |
| LEITĀNE, Katrīna | X | | |
| LEMCKE, Freya | | | X |
| LEUCHTERS, Maxi Katharina | X | | |
| LIBAERT, Thierry | X | | |
| LOBO XAVIER, Gonçalo | X | | |
| LOHAN, Cillian | X | | |
| LUSTENHOUWER, Colin | X | | |
| MACHYNA, Emil | X | | |
| MADSEN, Niels | | | X |

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| MAJCHROWICZ, Tadeusz | X | | |
| MAJETIĆ, Davor | X | | |
| MALLIA, Stefano | X | | |
| MANOLOV, Dimitar | X | | |
| MARCANTONIO, Giovanni | X | | |
| MARCHIORI, Alberto | X | | |
| MARIJON, Svjetlana | X | | |
| MARIN, Florian | X | | |
| MARTINOVIĆ DŽAMONJA, Dragica | X | | |
| MASCIA, Sandro | X | | |
| MASTANTUONO, Alena | X | | |
| MATSAS, Andreas | X | | |
| MAVROMMATIS, Manthos | X | | |
| McKEOWN, Patricia | | X | |
| McLOUGHLIN, Michael | X | | |
| MEDINA, Felipe | X | | |
| DA ASCENÇÃO MENDONÇA, António Augusto | | | X |
| MENSI, Maurizio | X | | |
| MERLO, Nicoletta | X | | |
| MESKER, August | X | | |
| MILIĆEVIĆ-PEZELJ, Anica | X | | |
| MILTOVIČA, Baiba | X | | |
| MINCHEVA, Mariya | X | | |
| MIRA, Luís | X | | |
| MISSLBECK-WINBERG, Christiane | | X | |
| MITOV, Veselin | X | | |
| MONE, Andrea | X | | |
| MOOS, Christian | X | | |
| MORENO DÍAZ, José Antonio | X | | |
| MORKIS, Gintaras | X | | |
| MOSTACCIO, Alessandro | X | | |
| MULLER, Catelijne | | X | |
| MURAFÁ BENGÁ, Corina | X | | |
| MUREŞAN, Marinel Dănuţ | X | | |
| MURGUÍA ESTEVE, Aitor | | X | |
| NABAIS DOS SANTOS, João | X | | |
| NEIENDAM, Juliane Marie | X | | |
| NIKOLOPOULOU, Maria | X | | |
| NIKOLOV, Bogomil | X | | |
| NOWACKI, Marcin | X | | |
| NYGREN, Ellen | X | | |

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| O'CONNOR, Jack | X | | |
| OCHEDZAN, Justyna Kalina | X | | |
| ÖNGÖRUR, Berivan | X | | |
| OSINGA, Klaas Johan | X | | |
| OSTROWSKI, Krzysztof | X | | |
| OTTO, Claudine | | X | |
| OVERGAARD, Flemming | | | X |
| PADURE, Decebal-Ștefăniță | X | | |
| PAGLIARA, Angelo | X | | |
| PAIDAS, Ioannis | X | | |
| PALMIERI, Stefano | X | | |
| PANGL, Andreas | X | | |
| PARTHIE, Sandra | X | | |
| PATER, Krzysztof | X | | |
| PAVIĆ-ROGOŠIĆ, Lidija | X | | |
| PELTZER, Fredy | | | X |
| PENTTINEN, Markus | X | | |
| PETRAITIENĖ, Irena | X | | |
| PIERI, Pieris | X | | |
| PIETKIEWICZ, Janusz | X | | |
| PILAWSKI, Lech | X | | |
| PINTÉR, Michal | X | | |
| PÎRVULESCU, Cristian | X | | |
| PLAT, Jacob | X | | |
| PLOSCEANU, Aurel Laurențiu | X | | |
| PLUTA, Marcin | X | | |
| POČIVAVŠEK, Jakob Krištof | X | | |
| PODRUŽSIK, Szilárd | X | | |
| POPELKOVÁ, Hana | X | | |
| POTTIER, Jean-Michel | X | | |
| POTYRAŁA, Dariusz | X | | |
| PREDA, Bogdan | X | | |
| PROUZET, Emilie | X | | |
| PUECH d'ALISSAC, Arnold | X | | |
| PUXEU ROCAMORA, Josep | X | | |
| QUAEDVLIEG, Winand | | X | |
| QUAREZ, Christophe | | | X |
| QUIST, Marjolein | | | X |
| RAMMO, Alari | X | | |
| RAVNIK, Branko | X | | |
| REALE, Maurizio | X | | |

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|--|---|---|---|
| REDING, Jean-Claude | | X | |
| REISECKER, Sophia | X | | |
| RELIĆ, Danko | X | | |
| REPANŠEK, Neža | X | | |
| RIBBE, Lutz | X | | |
| RIBIĆ, Vilim | X | | |
| RISTELÄ, Pekka | X | | |
| RIZZO, Benjamin | | | X |
| ROBYNS DE SCHNEIDAUER, Wautier | X | | |
| ROCHE RAMO, José Manuel | X | | |
| RODERT, Ariane | X | | |
| ROLIN, Claude | X | | |
| ROMELE, Linda | X | | |
| RÖPKE, Oliver | X | | |
| ROTH, Jürgen | | X | |
| ROTTIGNI, Marco Elio | | | X |
| RÜBIG, Paul | X | | |
| RUSU, Sabin | X | | |
| RUŽELĚ, Emilis | X | | |
| SAKAŘOVÁ, Dana | X | | |
| SÄKKINEN, Teppo | X | | |
| SALAFRANCA SANCHEZ-NEYRA, José Ignacio | X | | |
| SALIS-MADINIER, Franca | X | | |
| SAMMUT BONNICI, Dolores | X | | |
| SCHAFFENRATH, Martin | X | | |
| SCHLÜTER, Bernd | X | | |
| SCHMIDT, Peter | X | | |
| SCHWANNECKE, Holger | | X | |
| SCHWARTZ, Arnaud | X | | |
| SCHWENG, Christa | X | | |
| SELLOS, Laurence | | X | |
| SERRA ARIAS, Ricardo | X | | |
| SIBIAN, Ionuț | X | | |
| SILVA, Carlos | X | | |
| SILVA, Francisco | X | | |
| SILVA, João | X | | |
| SINKEVIČIŪTĖ, Elena | X | | |
| SIPKO, Juraj | X | | |
| ŠIRHALOVÁ, Martina | X | | |
| SITÁROVÁ, Monika | X | | |
| SMOLE, Jože | | X | |

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| SÕBER, Kristi | X | | |
| SOETE, Paul | X | | |
| SOJČ, Urška | | | X |
| STOEV, Georgi | X | | |
| STUDNIČNÁ, Lucie | X | | |
| SÜLE, Katalin Elza | X | | |
| SVENTEK, David | X | | |
| SZALAY, Anton | X | | |
| SZYMAŃSKI, Mateusz | X | | |
| TCHOUKANOV, Stoyan | X | | |
| TEDER, Reet | X | | |
| THURNER, Andreas | X | | |
| TIAINEN, Simo | X | | |
| TOPOLÁNSZKY, Ákos | X | | |
| TRINDADE, Carlos Manuel | X | | |
| TUPILUŠI, Tudorel | X | | |
| TZOTZE-LANARA, Zoe | X | | |
| ULENS, Miranda | X | | |
| ULGIATI, Luigi | X | | |
| UNGERMAN, Jaroslav | X | | |
| VADÁSZ, Borbála | X | | |
| VALENTIN, Olivier | | | X |
| VAN KELLE, Lottie | | X | |
| VARDAKASTANIS, Ioannis | X | | |
| VASK, Kaia | X | | |
| VERNICOS, George | X | | |
| VIIES, Mare | X | | |
| VON BROCKDORFF, Philip | X | | |
| VORBACH, Judith | X | | |
| VYYRYLÄINEN, Tiina Johanna | | X | |
| WAGENER, Marco | X | | |
| WAGNSONNER, Thomas | X | | |
| WALKER, Neil | X | | |
| WILLEMS, Heiko | X | | |
| WILLEMS, Josiane | X | | |
| WOLFF, Romain | X | | |
| WOOD, Päivi | X | | |
| WRÓBLEWSKI, Tomasz Andrzej | | X | |
| WYCKMANS, Ferre | X | | |
| YGLESIAS, Isabel | X | | |
| YIAPANIS, Anastasis | X | | |

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|----------------------------|---|--|--|
| YILDIRIM, Ozlem | X | | |
| ZARIŃA, Katrīna | X | | |
| ZIELENIECKI, Marcin Antoni | X | | |
| ZORKO, Andrej | X | | |
| ZVOLSKÁ, Marie | X | | |
| ZYCH, Tymoteusz Adam | X | | |

| The following members delegated their voting rights to: | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Wednesday 4 December 2024 | |
| Member | Delegated |
| ANDERSEN, Dorthe | AALTONEN, Kristina |
| ANGELOVA, Milena | MAVROMMATIS, Manthos |
| BOLLON, Pierre | MESKER, August Pierre |
| BORSANI, Matteo Carlo | CHOIX, Bruno |
| BUZEK, Tanja | REISECKER, Sophia |
| CAÑO AGUILAR, Isabel | NYGREN, Ellen |
| CLEVER, Peter | SCHWENG, Christa |
| CONTRASTO, Emilio | MONE, Andrea |
| DUBRAVSKÁ, Jarmila | BÁLEŠ, Vladimír |
| GUERINI, Giuseppe | BARBIERI, Pietro Vittorio |
| HANŽEVAČKI, Marija | MILIĆEVIĆ-PEZELJ, Anica |
| HOLST, Sif | JUODKAITĖ, Dovilė |
| KATTNIG, Thomas | STUDNIČNÁ, Lucie |
| KILIM, Irma | ANDERSSON, Jan Torsten |
| KOLLER, Erika | ÖNGÖRUR, Berivan |
| KROPP, Thomas | KRAWCZYK, Jacek |
| KRUPAVIČIENĖ, Kristina | BABRAUSKIENĖ, Tatjana |
| LADEFOGED, Anders | PILAWSKI, Lech |
| LASZ, Andrej | ZVOLSKÁ, Marie |
| LE BRETON, Marie-Pierre | MINCHEVA, Mariya |
| LEMCKE, Freya | SVENTEK, David |
| MACHYNA, Emil | HAJNOŠ, Miroslav |
| MADSEN, Niels | STOEV, Georgi |
| MAJETIĆ, Davor | MARTINOVIĆ DŽAMONJA, Dragica |
| McKEOWN, Patricia | O'CONNOR, Jack |
| MULLER, Catelijne | POPELKOVÁ, Hana |
| MURGUÍA ESTEVE, Aitor | NIKOLOPOULOU, Maria |
| OVERGAARD, Flemming | ROLIN, Claude |
| PELTZER, Fredy | JOHANSSON, Benny |
| PLAT, Jacob | MARIN, Florian |
| POČIVAVŠEK, Jakob Krištof | GÖTZ, Nadja |
| QUAREZ, Christophe | SALIS-MADINIER, Franca |
| REDING, Jean-Claude | CHARRY, Philippe |
| RIZZO, Benjamin | RODERT, Ariane |

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| ROTTIGNI, Marco Elio | REALE, Maurizio |
| SOJČ, Urška | OSTROWSKI, Krzysztof |
| ULENS, Miranda | DE LEEUW, Rudy |
| VALENTIN, Olivier | PALMIERI, Stefano |
| VAN KELLE, Lottie | SAKAŘOVÁ, Dana |
| WOLFF, Romain | WAGENER, Marco |

| Thursday 5 December 2024 | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Member | Delegated |
| ANDERSEN, Dorthé | AALTONEN, Kristina |
| ANGELOVA, Milena | STOEV, Georgi |
| ARVIDSSON, Tomas | ANDERSSON, Krister |
| BERTOLINI, Silvestre | HÄGGLUND, Sam |
| BORS, Ionel | PADURE Decebal-Ștefăniță, |
| BULK, Marjolijn | REISECKER, Sophia |
| CALISTRU, Elena-Alexandra | SIBIAN, Ionuț |
| CAÑO AGUILAR, Isabel | STUDNIČNÁ, Lucie |
| CONTRASTO, Emilio | MONE, Andrea |
| DE FELIPE LEHTONEN, Helena | MAVROMMATIS, Manthos |
| DOZ ORRIT, Javier | PALMIERI, Stefano |
| DUBRAVSKÁ, Jarmila | BÁLEŠ, Vladimír |
| DUFEK, Bohumír | SZALAY, Anton |
| GARDIAS, Dorota | JANKOWSKI, Rafał Bogusław |
| GILLOT, Dominique | GOBIŅŠ, Andris |
| HANŽEVAČKI, Marija | NYGREN, Ellen |
| IVANOV, Evgeniy | PIETKIEWICZ, Janusz |
| JOÓ, Kinga | TOPOLÁNSZKY, Ákos |
| KÁLLAY, Piroska | SCHMIDT, Peter |
| KILIM, Irma | ANDERSSON, Jan Torsten |
| KOKALOV, Ivan | LEFÈVRE, Christophe |
| KROPP, Thomas | GERSTEIN, Antje Sabine |
| KRUPAVIČIENĖ, Kristina | BABRAUSKIENĖ, Tatjana |
| KUPŠYS, Kęstutis | JUODKAITĖ, Dovilė |
| LASZ, Andrej | ŠIRHALOVÁ, Martina |
| LEMCKE, Freya | SCHWENG, Christa |
| LEUCHTERS, Maxi | KATTNIG, Thomas |
| MADSEN, Niels | ROBYNS, Wautier |
| MANOLOV, Dimitar | MITOV, Veselin |
| MARIN, Florian | BERGRATH, Dirk |
| McKEOWN, Patricia | O'CONNOR, Jack |
| MESKER, August Pierre | BLIJLEVENS, René |
| MINCHEVA, Mariya | PREDA, Bogdan |
| MULLER, Catelijne | ÖNGÖRÜR, Berivan |
| MURAFU BENGHA, Corina Andrea | NEIENDAM, Juliane Marie |
| MURGUÍA ESTEVE, Aitor | NIKOLOPOULOU, Maria |

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| OVERGAARD, Flemming | POČIVAVŠEK, Jakob Krištof |
| PELTZER, Fredy | PLAT, Jacob |
| PETRAITIENĖ, Irena | KOLLER, Erika |
| PIERI, Pieris | TRINDADE, Carlos Manuel |
| PILAWSKI, Lech | MARTINOVIĆ DŽAMONJA, Dragica |
| POPELKOVÁ, Hana | VIIES, Mare |
| POTYRAŁA, Dariusz Mirosław | BRONIARZ, Wincenty Sławomir |
| PROUZET, Emilie | PARTHIE, Sandra |
| PUECH d'ALISSAC, Arnold | MASTANTUONO, Alena |
| QUAREZ, Christophe | SALIS-MADINIER, Franca |
| REDING, Jean-Claude | JOHANSSON, Benny |
| RISTELÄ, Pekka | HAJNOŠ, Mirosław |
| RIZZO, Benjamin | ROBERT, Ariane |
| ROLIN, Claude | WAGNSONNER, Thomas |
| ROMELE, Linda | HÄGGMAN, Maria |
| ROTTIGNI, Marco Elio | MASCIA, Sandro |
| RUSU, Sabin | DANDEA, Petru Sorin |
| SAKAŘOVÁ, Dana | SZYMAŃSKI, Mateusz |
| SCHAFFENRATH, Martin | KOLBE, Rudolf |
| SŐBER, Kristi | VADÁSZ, Borbála |
| SOJČ, Urška | MAJETIĆ, Davor |
| TZOTZE-LANARA, Zoe | MERLO, Nicoletta |
| ULENS, Miranda | DE LEEUW, Rudy |
| VALENTIN, Olivier | WYCKMANS, Ferdinand |
| VORBACH, Judith | BÄUMLER, Christian |
| WOLFF, Romain | WAGENER, Marco |
| YGLESIAS JULIÀ, Isabel | TEDER, Reet |
| YILDIRIM, Ozlem | BUZEK, Tanja |
| ZORKO, Andrej | GÖTZ, Nadja |

The European Economic and Social Committee held its 592nd plenary session in Brussels on 4 and 5 December 2024. **Oliver Röpke**, President of the EESC and **Aurel Laurențiu Plosceanu**, Vice-President of the EESC for Communication chaired the session.

Meeting times

Wednesday, 4 December 2024 14:31 – 18:31
Thursday, 5 December 2024 9:00 – 13:04

1) PRESENCE OF A QUORUM

The President of the EESC opened the session and announced that the quorum had been reached.

A minute of silence was observed to honour the memory of the victims of the floods in Spain.

2) ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted.

3) APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 591st PLENARY SESSION, HELD ON 23 AND 24 OCTOBER 2024

The minutes of the 591st plenary session were approved.

4) STATEMENT BY THE EESC PRESIDENT

The EESC President Oliver Röpke began by commenting on the recent elections in Europe, which demonstrated the growing appeal of populist and extremist movements. He highlighted the significant role social media played in these election campaigns, noting both its potential to engage with young voters and the risks posed by the spread of unverified claims. Mr Röpke emphasised the urgent need to reshape political communication methods, referring to the European Parliament's efforts to regulate social media platforms, as well as to the recent high-level conference in Athens on combating fake news and disinformation. He underscored the importance of disseminating verified content during critical democratic events, mentioning the current situation in Moldova. He also highlighted the role of information campaigns, strongly supported by the EESC, in promoting transparency and trust during such processes.

Turning to inter-institutional cooperation, Mr Röpke started by addressing the newly appointed Commission and reaffirmed the EESC's crucial role in supporting the main priorities for the next five years, especially the UN SDGs, and the Draghi, Letta and Niinistö Reports. He emphasised the Committee's commitment to be actively engaged, citing the recent request from the Parliament for an exploratory opinion, and pointed out that the newly appointed President of the European Council was attending this plenary session.

Mr Röpke went on to reflect on his recent participation in the G20 Social Summit in Brazil, emphasising the value of the EESC's input in the discussions held. He highlighted the summit's final

declaration, which reflected shared priorities including fair and global taxation, addressing climate change, green transformation, ensuring access to water and combating hunger and poverty. Mr Röpke also provided assurance of the EESC’s continued engagement with Brazilian partners.

Mr Röpke then mentioned the successful 18th EU-Serbia JCC meeting held in Belgrade, underlining the critical role of civil society in fostering democratic dialogue, particularly in the light of recent challenges faced by this country. He referred to an alarming report on the newly proposed Serbian Law on Foreign Agents and called on Serbian authorities to consider its implications, describing the draft law as a direct threat to civil society organisations.

Lastly, Mr Röpke spoke about the 9th European Migration Forum held last week, where the critical role of civil society in implementing the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum was reaffirmed. The Forum also served as an opportunity to thank the outgoing Commissioner, Ylva Johansson, for her close cooperation with the EESC in trying to ensure the effective and human-centred implementation of the Pact.

5) **CATEGORY C OPINION**

Under Rule 47(3), vice-president Plosceanu asked the assembly to vote on the category C opinion on the agenda.

NAT/943

Amendment – Forest reproductive material: “tested” category, its labelling and the names of the authorities responsible for the approval and control of the production (category C opinion)

Amended proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Decision 2008/971/EC as regards the forest reproductive material of the “tested” category, its labelling and the names of the authorities responsible for the approval and control of the production

COM(2024) 517 final - 2024/0214 COD

EESC-2024-04230-00-00-AC-TRA

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 187 | 0 | 1 |

6) **COMMITTEE OPINIONS WITHOUT DEBATE**

According to Rule 67 of the Rules of Procedure, vice-president Plosceanu asked the assembly to vote on six opinions put straight to the vote, without a debate. All opinions were adopted.

CCMI/233

Sector-specific industrial policies supporting greater strategic autonomy (own-initiative opinion)

EESC-2024-02005-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur: Alain COHEUR (BE-III)

Co-rapporteur: Antonello PEZZINI (IT-cat. 1)

EESC-2024-04018-00-01-PV-TRA (EN) 14/23

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 189 | 3 | 3 |

CCMI/235

Industrial changes in the health sector in the face of multiplying crises

(own-initiative opinion)

EESC-2024-02033-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur: Florian MARIN (RO-II)

Co-rapporteur: Antonello PEZZINI (IT-cat. 1)

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 199 | 0 | 0 |

CCMI/231

Professional services in the green transition

(own-initiative opinion)

EESC-2024-01953-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur: Violeta JELIĆ (HR-I)

Co-rapporteur: Gaetano STELLA (IT-cat. 3)

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 197 | 0 | 5 |

INT/1058

Single Market / future enlargement of the Union

(own-initiative opinion)

EESC-2024-02187-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur: Stoyan TCHOUKANOV (BG-III)

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 193 | 1 | 2 |

REX/593

Decision on the interpretation and application of the Energy Charter Treaty

Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the adoption by the Union of the Agreement on the interpretation and application of the Energy Charter Treaty between the European Union, the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States

COM(2024) 257 final - 2024/0148 COD

EESC-2024-03646-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur: Christophe QUAREZ (FR-II)

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 187 | 2 | 4 |

REX/585

Water politics: Empowering youth, women, and indigenous and local communities (own-initiative opinion)

EESC-2024-00874-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur: Milena ANGELOVA (BG-I)

Co-rapporteur: Ioannis VARDAKASTANIS (EL-III)

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 189 | 2 | 6 |

DEBATE

- 7) **Priorities of the upcoming presidency of the European Council: presentation and exchange of views**, with **António Costa**, President of the European Council

A summary of the debate is set out in Appendix I - EESC-2024-04018-01-00-PV-TRA.

OPINIONS WITH DEBATE

8) **Resolution**

The European Economic and Social Committee's contribution to the 2025 European Commission's work programme

EESC-2024-03700-00-00-RES-TRA

Rapporteurs: Christa SCHWENG (AT-I), Cinzia DEL RIO (IT-II), Ioannis VARDAKASTANIS (EL-III)

The president asked the rapporteurs, **Christa Schweng, Cinzia del Rio and Ioannis Vardakastanis**, to present the resolution.

Their statements and a record of the Committee's proceedings on this matter are set out in EESC-2024-03700-00-00-CR-REF.

| Resolution adopted | | |
|--------------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 163 | 2 | 9 |

- 9) **Democracy in Africa** with **Kyeretwie Osei**, Head of Programs at the African Union Economic Social and Cultural Council (AU ECOSOCC); **Louis Cheick Sissoko**, Chair of the ECOSOCC Cluster on Political Affairs; and **Sifa Chiyoqe Buchekabiri**, Regional Director and CEO of the International Co-operative Alliance-Africa (ICA-Africa), linked to the adoption of the opinion REX/584 *Democracy in Africa – current situation and future perspectives. What role for the EESC?*

A summary of the debate is set out in Appendix II – EESC-2024-04018-02-00-PV-TRA.

10) **REX/584**

Democracy in Africa – current situation and future perspectives. What role for the EESC? (own-initiative opinion)

EESC-2024-01631-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur: Carlos Manuel TRINDADE (PT-II)

The rapporteur, **Carlos Manuel Trindade**, presented the opinion during the previous debate.

His statement and a record of the Committee’s proceedings on this matter are set out in EESC-2024-01631-00-00-CR-REF.

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 167 | 0 | 2 |

11) **ECO/658**

Regional Emergency Support - RESTORE

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council RESTORE “Regional Emergency Support to Reconstruction” amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 and Regulation (EU) 2021/1057

COM(2024) 496 final - 2024/0275 COD

EESC-2024-03939-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur-General: Ioannis VARDAKASTANIS (EL-III)

The assembly appointed Ioannis Vardakastanis as rapporteur-general (Rule 79, Art. 2 of the Rules of Procedure).

The president asked the rapporteur-general, **Ioannis Vardakastanis**, to present the opinion.

His statement and a record of the Committee’s proceedings on this matter are set out in EESC-2024-03939-00-00-CR-REF.

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 138 | 0 | 0 |

12) **NAT/942**

Amendment to EAFRD to provide additional assistance to Member States affected by natural disasters

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2020/2220 as regards specific measures under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to provide additional assistance to Member States affected by natural disasters

COM(2024) 495 final - 2024/0274 COD

EESC-2024-04085-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur-General: Peter SCHMIDT (DE-II)

The assembly appointed Peter Schmidt as rapporteur-general (Rule 79, Art. 2 of the Rules of Procedure).

The president asked the rapporteur-general, **Peter Schmidt**, to present the opinion.

His statement and a record of the Committee's proceedings on this matter are set out in EESC-2024-04085-00-00-CR-REF.

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 138 | 2 | 6 |

13) **ECO/644**

**Review of the legal framework for securitisation in the EU
(own-initiative opinion)**

EESC-2024-00531-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur: Philip VON BROCKDORFF (MT-II)

Co-rapporteur: Antonio GARCÍA DEL RIEGO (ES-I)

The president asked the rapporteur, **Philip von Brockdorff**, and the co-rapporteur, **Antonio García del Riego**, to present the opinion.

Their statements and a record of the Committee's proceedings on this matter are set out in EESC-2024-00531-00-00-CR-REF.

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 145 | 0 | 3 |

14) **SOC/794**

**Factual and legislative analysis of the migration flows' integration in the EU labour market
(own-initiative opinion)**

EESC-2024-01017-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur: Panagiotis GKOFAS (EL-III)

Co-rapporteur: José Antonio MORENO DÍAZ (ES-II)

The president asked the rapporteur, **Panagiotis Gkofas**, and the co-rapporteur, **José Antonio Moreno Díaz**, to present the opinion.

Their statements and a record of the Committee's proceedings on this matter are set out in EESC-2024-01017-00-00-CR-REF.

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 137 | 2 | 7 |

15) **INT/1064**

**The cost of non-Schengen for the single market / Bulgaria and Romania
(own-initiative opinion)**

EESC-2024-01449-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur: Mariya MINCHEVA (BG-I)

The president asked the rapporteur, **Mariya Mincheva**, to present the opinion.

Her statement and a record of the Committee's proceedings on this matter are set out in EESC-2024-01449-00-00-CR-REF.

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 142 | 0 | 7 |

Adjournment

Thursday, 5 December 2024

Resumption

16) International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and celebration of the Olympic spirit

A summary of the debate is set out in Appendix III – EESC-2024-04018-03-00-PV-TRA.

OPINIONS WITH DEBATE

17) NAT/933

Towards a just transition legislative proposal and EU policy tools that enable a more social European Green Deal

(own-initiative opinion)

EESC-2024-01077-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur: Dirk BERGRATH (DE-II)

The president asked the rapporteur, **Dirk Bergrath**, to present the opinion.

His statement and a record of the Committee's proceedings on this matter are set out in EESC-2024-01077-00-00-CR-REF.

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 179 | 1 | 6 |

18) TEN/836

Labour and skills shortages in transport, energy, infrastructure and the digital sector

(own-initiative opinion)

EESC-2024-01463-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur: Thomas KATTNIG (AT-II)

The president asked the rapporteur, **Thomas Kattnig**, to present the opinion.

His statement and a record of the Committee's proceedings on this matter are set out in EESC-2024-01463-00-00-CR-REF.

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 166 | 1 | 4 |

19) **ECO/640**

Revision of the Territorial Agenda 2030

(own-initiative opinion)

EESC-2024-01368-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur: Stefano PALMIERI (IT-II)

The president asked the rapporteur, **Stefano Palmieri**, to present the opinion.

His statement and a record of the Committee's proceedings on this matter are set out in EESC-2024-01368-00-00-CR-REF.

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 176 | 0 | 2 |

DEBATE

20) **EESC Housing Forum** linked to the adoption of the opinion TEN/841 *Social housing in the EU – decent, sustainable and affordable* moderated by **Jennifer Baker**, reporter and presenter

A summary of the Forum is set out in Appendix IV – EESC-2024-04018-04-00-PV-TRA.

21) **TEN/841**

Social housing in the EU – decent, sustainable and affordable

(own-initiative opinion)

EESC-2024-01187-00-00-AC-TRA

Rapporteur: Thomas KATTNIG (AT-II)

Co-rapporteur: Rudolf KOLBE (AT-III)

The rapporteur, **Thomas Kattnig**, and the co-rapporteur, **Rudolf Kolbe**, presented the opinion during the previous debate.

Their statements and a record of the Committee's proceedings on this matter are set out in EESC-2024-01187-00-00-CR-REF.

| Opinion adopted | | |
|-----------------|----|-----|
| Yes | No | Abs |
| 134 | 5 | 13 |

22) DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE ASSEMBLY

I. Changes in section membership (Rule 23 of the Rules of Procedure)

The assembly approved the following changes in membership:

| MEMBER | GROUP/ NATIONALITY | TO LEAVE SECTION | TO JOIN SECTION |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Pascal DEBAY | FR-II | – | INT-SOC |
| Marco Elio ROTTIGNI | IT-I | – | INT-ECO |

II. Committee's own-initiative opinions (Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure)

The assembly approved the following requests to prepare own-initiative opinions:

Group II

1. New Action Plan on the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights
(SOC) (A-12) (June)

SOC

2. Enhancing legal migration corridors to the EU
(SOC) (A-9) (April)

Transversal own-initiative opinions on the cost-of-living crisis:

3. Fragmentation of supply chains and impact on the cost-of-living
(A-9) (REX) (April 2025)
4. Price hikes in transport, energy and housing: the role of quality public services in tackling the high cost-of-living
(A-9) (TEN) (April 2025)
5. Phasing out fossil fuel subsidies while ensuring European competitiveness, mitigating the cost-of-living crisis, and promoting a just transition
(A-9) (NAT) (April 2025)
6. How to address the loss of purchasing power and the risk of rising inequalities, exclusion and marginalization
(A-9) (SOC) (April 2025)
7. How single market dysfunctions contribute to the rising cost-of-living
(A-9) (INT) (April 2025)

8. Leaving the crises behind – Measures for a resilient, cohesive and inclusive European economy
(A-9) (ECO) (April 2025)
9. Reindustrialisation of Europe – opportunity for businesses, employees and citizens in the context of the cost-of-living crisis
(A-6+6) (CCMI) (April 2025)
10. Recommendations of organised civil society to address the cost-of-living crisis
(A-12+1) (Umbrella opinion - ECO) (July 2025)

23) **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

24) **DATE OF THE NEXT PLENARY SESSION**

The next plenary session will be held on 22 and 23 January 2025 in the Anna Lindh meeting room, József Antall building of the European Parliament in Brussels. The first part of the session will begin at 14:30 on Wednesday 22 January. Proceedings will resume at 9:00 on Thursday 23 January. Exact timings are to be confirmed.

The assembly approved these dates.

Isabelle LE GALO FLORES

Secretary-General



ANNEX I
to the minutes of the
December plenary
session

Brussels, 4 December 2024

ANNEX I
to the
MINUTES
of the 592nd plenary session
of the
European Economic and Social Committee,
held in Brussels
on 4 and 5 December 2024

Meeting of 4 December 2024

Agenda item 7

Priorities of the upcoming presidency of the European Council: presentation and exchange of views, with **António Costa**, President of the European Council

The president moved on to agenda item 7 **Priorities of the upcoming presidency of the European Council: presentation and exchange of views**, with **António Costa**, President of the European Council and addressed the agenda item by expressing what a privilege it was to welcome Mr Costa to the plenary session and invited members to take advantage of Mr Costa's presence at the very beginning of his mandate.

Mr Röpke took the floor to welcome Mr Costa. He thanked the President of the European Council for accepting the invitation to the plenary session, and recalled his meeting with Mr Costa in October, when the two leaders had a productive exchange of views on the challenges and opportunities of the upcoming political cycle. He highlighted the geopolitical tensions that were putting a strain on the current mandate, and cited Mr Costa's recent visit to Kyiv, Ukraine, as a testimony to the challenges faced by the European Union. He noted Mr Costa's commitment to join forces with other European leaders to define the political direction of the EU and its role on the global stage. He emphasised that the President of the European Council was tasked with leading the European project: to this end, he must remain close to the citizens, an objective towards which, as Mr Röpke stated, the EESC could contribute, as it is the voice of organised civil society in the EU. He pointed out that competitiveness was not an end goal in itself – social rights in the EU point to the importance of the synergy between sustainable competitiveness and social progress for a people-centred and just transition. He noted the EESC's continuous contributions to ongoing debates, sustainable growth and social cohesion. He also recognised the need for investments in key social areas as a response to challenges in the EU, such as education, health and affordable housing. He noted that the EESC had received a request for exploratory opinions from the European Parliament, which was an opportunity for enhanced cooperation. He stressed that the gradual path towards enlargement was a priority shared by the EU institutions. He pointed out the EESC's decision to become the first body to welcome civil society organisations from the candidate countries. He expressed hope for all parties involved to recognise the importance of such actions and follow the EESC's lead towards gradual integration wherever possible and appropriate. Mr Röpke then gave the floor to Mr Costa.

Mr Costa began his speech by expressing his gratitude for the invitation to attend the EESC's plenary session. He stressed the importance of the EESC's role in the EU, as it embodies the European model in bringing social partners of various backgrounds together. He highlighted social dialogue as the bedrock of the EU, which distinguished the EESC from other organisations. He recognised that to face current challenges, such as climate change, the EU's position on the world stage or the enlargement process, all stakeholders within civil society need to be involved – which is a valuable part of the EESC's mission. He expressed the need to involve young people in the decision-making process, and for their voices and concerns, such as climate or housing, to be addressed. He noted that while the EU was built on the shared promise of prosperity for its citizens, the main challenge currently was to uphold that promise. He highlighted the main points necessary to fulfil that: reforming the single market and decreasing its administrative burdens for citizens and companies; boosting productivity and effectiveness within the EU, identifying priorities and quick ways of eradicating barriers to growth; finally, boosting both private and public investment to make the EU more competitive. Nevertheless, he concurred with Mr Röpke's calls for sustainable competitiveness on the basis of the European Pillar of Social Rights. He called for the EESC's help to renew and reinforce the social contract in the face of today's challenges, focusing on skills, quality of jobs, social safety nets, training and education. Lastly, he underlined the urgency of the need for long-term actions on the basis of already identified issues, for the next generations' sake.

Mr Röpke took the floor to thank Mr Costa and open the general debate with EESC members.

Mr Mallia (MT-I) underlined that boosting competitiveness was one of the main priorities of his group. Mentioning past strategies, he expressed the feeling of undelivered promises, year in year out, and urged Mr Costa to increase interinstitutional efforts towards more tangible action plans, which he believed were missing.

Ms Studničná (CZ-II) asked Mr Costa for a more in-depth presentation of the European Council's priorities during his presidency. She pointed out current challenges faced by the EU and stated that the EU's leadership was malfunctioning amidst growing political polarisation among the EU citizens, many of whom tend to be drawn to extreme right-wing solutions – which, she believed, was reflected in the European Council's composition as well. She reaffirmed the importance of addressing the citizens' voices and reflecting them in their work, especially in the context of pressing inequalities, climate change and a sustainable, just and inclusive Europe. She recalled the latest Eurobarometer data presenting citizens' strong trust and faith in a strong and independent EU. She asked Mr Costa about his plans to unite the Member States and the EU bodies and institutions, especially the EESC.

Mr Boland (IE-III) began by recognising the growing mistrust within the EU, fuelled by citizens' concerns about the cost of living, freedoms and ability to live in ever-changing societies. He called for ensuring a tangible just transition. He asked Mr Costa about including civil society organisations during his mandate, in the context of pressing trade, democracy and security issues. He reaffirmed civil society's will to contribute to the policy-making and called for Mr Costa to ensure that citizens' voices are reflected at the core of work during his mandate.

Ms Hartman Radová (CZ-I) reaffirmed the sense of urgency mentioned by Mr Costa. She called for boosting innovation and investment within the EU in order to increase its position as a powerful global player. She recognised that unity and a strong economy were necessary to achieve this. She expressed the need for quick adoption of a horizontal initiatives with clear schedules and more comprehensive industrial strategies to complete the single market project and called for a reform in a regulatory approach towards a more pragmatic outcome.

Mr Simões Da Silva (PT-II) called for increased protection of civil society and noted Mr Costa's successes in combatting social inequalities during his mandate as Prime Minister of Portugal. He expressed hope for the European Council to implement new measures, integrating young people into the labour market and ensuring effective housing policies, especially for the younger generations.

Mr Barbieri (IT-III) pointed out that the network of European civil society organisations was calling for a structured dialogue. He reaffirmed those organisations' commitment to effective cooperation with the EU institutions and stressed that they were ready and willing to play their part.

Mr Linhares De Lima Álvares De Mello (PT-I) praised Mr Costa's achievements as Prime Minister of Portugal and expressed confidence in his ability to face the challenges ahead during his mandate as President of the European Council.

Mr Trindade (PT-II) reaffirmed the previous speaker's remarks on Mr Costa's experience in Portugal and expressed confidence in his strategic and political abilities to ensure cohesion among European political leaders. He called for solutions to problems arising from the complex geopolitical situation, which included the increased far-right influence on EU citizens.

Ms Izverniceanu De La Iglesia (ES-III) expressed concerns about cybercrime, which was reducing citizens' trust in the single market. She called for strengthening security of companies and financial institutions' online platforms to ensure customers' protection. She stated that the responsibility must be shifted away from customers to the companies.

Mr Lobo (PT-I) underlined Mr Costa's experience and leadership skills, which would allow for strengthening the European project, particularly in the context of challenges and opportunities arising from current transformations. He reckoned that the strength of the EU would translate into the wellbeing of its citizens.

Mr Jahier (IT-III) called for Mr Costa to allow for even closer structural cooperation between the EESC and the European Council. He highlighted Mr Costa's dedication to peace and called for peace to be at the core of the EU's work and policies.

Mr Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (ES-I) underscored the need for fewer regulations and more business in the EU to boost competitiveness, based on productivity and security. He called for more socio-economic cohesion as well, given that social needs can only be met in conditions of prosperity. He referred to Canada as an example of swiftly implemented trade relief regulations and expressed hope for Mr Costa's pragmatism.

Ms Murafa Benga (RO-III) reaffirmed the EESC and civil society organisations' commitment to remain truthful, and noted the damage caused by foreign interference in Romania. She recognised social media platforms and tech companies' role in enabling manipulation of the public debate, including towards anti-European forces. She pointed out the solidarity between the Member States and the EU bodies and institutions and asked for the European Council's plans to strengthen freedom and democracy in all of the EU Member States.

Mr Balon (PL-III) referred to the upcoming Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU with security as an overarching priority topic, but as a representative of civil society, he stressed the importance of resilient society. He expressed hope for Mr Costa's support for a resilient civil society in the EU.

Mr Costa took the floor to respond to the members' remarks. Firstly, he expressed understanding towards the members' concerns, but stated that the EU has made progress during the last decades, despite various crises arising during that time. He noted the strategies and plans already approved and assured continuous progress and the will to deliver on promises. He highlighted preserving democracy as the key issue, above all others. He underlined the need to have proper foundations in place to address other issues, such as cybersecurity. He reaffirmed the role of the EESC within current transitions. He then addressed fair and sustainable peace, to be achieved through support for Ukraine as long as it was needed. Lastly, he called for exploring the EU's position on the global stage, as the world, including the South, keeps diversifying, and stated trade as one of the tools to enhance it.

Mr Röpke took the floor to conclude the debate. He thanked Mr Costa for showcasing his ability to include diverse voices in the debate and present a joint perspective. He reaffirmed Mr Costa's remarks on reinforcing and defending the EU's economic and social model, guarding fundamental rights and integrating the candidate countries as a signal of the shared will to spread the European model. He concluded by expressing the EESC's support for Mr Costa during his mandate as President of the European Council.



ANNEX II
to the minutes of the
December plenary
session

Brussels, 15 January 2024

ANNEX II
to the
MINUTES
of the 592nd plenary session
of the
European Economic and Social Committee,
held in Brussels
on 4 and 5 December 2024

Meeting of 4 December 2024

Agenda item 9

Democracy in Africa, with **Kyeretwie Osei**, Head of Programmes at the African Union Economic Social and Cultural Council (AU ECOSOCC); **Louis Cheick Sissoko**, Chair of the AU ECOSOCC Cluster on Political Affairs; and **Sifa Chiyoge Buchekabiri**, Regional Director and CEO of the International Cooperative Alliance-Africa (ICA-Africa), linked to the adoption of opinion REX/584 *Democracy in Africa – current situation and future perspectives. What role for the EESC?*

EESC President Oliver Röpke asked the Committee to turn to agenda item 9 – the debate on **Democracy in Africa** with **Kyeretwie Osei**, Head of Programmes at the African Union Economic Social and Cultural Council (AU ECOSOCC); **Louis Cheick Sissoko**, Chair of the AU ECOSOCC Cluster on Political Affairs; and **Sifa Chiyoge Buchekabiri**, Regional Director and CEO of the International Cooperative Alliance-Africa (ICA-Africa), linked to the adoption of opinion REX/584 *Democracy in Africa – current situation and future perspectives. What role for the EESC?*

Mr Röpke started by thanking all guests and highlighting the significance of this debate on democracy in Africa. The first topic he brought up was the memorandum of understanding (MoU) that was signed with the African Union ECOSOCC in July, which was aimed at strengthening the partnership between the two institutions and emphasising their shared commitment to economic and social engagement and sustainable development. He noted that this debate was part of the follow-up to the signing of the MoU.

He went on to reiterate that the EESC championed democracy, human rights and the rule of law in its work – core values of the EU – and collaborated with global partners to advance these principles. He said that there were challenges to democracy everywhere, and that the EESC opinion on democracy in Africa emphasised the role of civil society in fostering coherent dialogue and strengthening democratic processes.

He spoke briefly of the EU/Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Follow-up Committee that had been set up under the Cotonou Agreement between the EU and ACP countries. The successor to the Cotonou Agreement, the Samoa Agreement sought to enhance cooperation while addressing global challenges together. Democracy and human development were two of its central pillars. Mr Röpk e reiterated the EESC's willingness to contribute expertise and support in setting up stakeholder engagement mechanisms under this new agreement. He also reiterated the EESC and AU ECOSOCC's readiness to support the Africa-EU Partnership in establishing a permanent, inclusive and representative mechanism for civil society engagement. He stressed the critical role of civil society in advancing democracy, human rights, climate action, migration policy and sustainable development, calling for the active involvement of civil society in decision-making.

He then invited Mr Osei to speak on behalf of AU ECOSOCC Presiding Officer Mr Khalid Boudali.

Mr Osei highlighted Africa's democratic journey, which had been marked by an uncertain start after independence, decades of coups and a shift toward multiparty democracy. While democracy in practice had not been perfect, unconstitutional changes in government (UCG) and coups had seemed to be receding until their recent resurgence in the Sahel, raising concerns about a potential democratic regression.

Despite frustrations with governance, Mr Osei emphasised that citizens were not rejecting democracy itself, but were instead disillusioned by its lack of tangible benefits. To address this, democratic processes needed to be strengthened, governance improved (including eliminating corruption), and spaces for civic expression created. Civil society would play a central role in this effort.

He highlighted the role of ongoing partnerships, such as the MoU with the EESC, in facilitating dialogue and achieving shared goals. He also underscored the importance of the joint EESC-AU

ECOSOCC work on a civil society engagement mechanism for the Africa-EU Partnership and under the Samoa Agreement.

Mr Sissoko then spoke, emphasising the crucial importance of democracy for Africa and praising the inclusive approach taken by the EESC in developing its opinion. He acknowledged both internal and external challenges to democracy, including the need for African States to uphold their commitments under the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance. He pointed out that for populations facing hunger, unemployment, insecurity and lack of basic needs, democracy could not be the primary concern.

External threats to democracy included inequality in international relations and indifference to the real needs of African populations. The Sahel region was highlighted as an example where countries facing terrorism had requested international support, but received only a limited global response. He identified corruption as a key threat to democratic progress.

He criticized the Africa-EU Partnership for not being sufficiently inclusive or based on equal relationships. He stressed the importance of educating people about democracy, their rights and their responsibilities. Young people in particular were noted as a force for change, actively mobilising and demanding a say in decision-making. Examples from Senegal and Kenya had illustrated how young people were fighting to uphold democratic values despite challenges.

Mr Sissoko warned that young people would not accept solutions imposed by external partners without consultation. He stressed the need to lead by example on democracy, particularly as young people were closely following developments through social media. African countries called for partnerships that respected African sovereignty and addressed the continent's actual needs.

He insisted on the need to support civil society organisations through funding and advocacy, noting that the EU should take a participatory approach to funding and make sure that African voices were heard in project proposals. He welcomed the signing of the MoU between the AU ECOSOCC and the EESC, a step towards creating a conducive environment for active participation, especially within frameworks like the Samoa Agreement and the Africa-EU Partnership.

Dr Sifa then took the floor, emphasising that democracy must deliver tangible benefits to avoid generating social discontent. She called for the EU to support CSOs and highlighted the role of cooperatives in fostering socio-economic development and strengthening democratic practices.

She spoke of how cooperatives aligned economic goals with the needs and aspirations of communities, and how by increasing citizens' ability to participate in democratic spaces, cooperatives promoted decentralisation, transparency and accountability in governance.

She also underscored the importance of women's empowerment, noting that when women were supported, they strengthened households and communities as a whole. Despite their disproportionate disadvantages, economic empowerment and representation in leadership were critical for achieving gender equity.

Lastly, she mentioned that cooperatives played a crucial role in grassroots development by pooling resources, providing access to markets and fostering solidarity and collective action, especially in agriculture. She affirmed that they ensured every member had an equal voice, promoting democratic values at community level.

Carlos Trindade (PT-II), rapporteur for opinion REX/584 on Democracy in Africa, emphasised the importance of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, accountability and non-discrimination. He praised the African Union's role in promoting democratic principles, referencing key frameworks such as the African Charter and Agenda 2063. He underlined the intrinsic connection between democracy and economic and social progress.

Quoting Afrobarometer data, Mr Trindade noted that African citizens expressed higher levels of support for democracy than in other regions. He stressed that supporting democracy required a partnership based on equals, taking into consideration the continent's diversity and complexity.

He identified corruption as the most significant internal threat to democracy, while externally, he noted, global powers uninterested in promoting democracy posed challenges. He highlighted the importance of the EU's Global Gateway initiative, aimed at strengthening economic and political ties between the EU and Africa, particularly by supporting critical infrastructure essential for development.

Mr Trindade finished by saying that civil society was a vital actor in promoting democracy and human rights, underlining the EESC's expertise, with over 20 years of collaboration with African organisations and structures. He called for financial mechanisms to support African civil society organisations and social partners, ensuring they had the resources and capacities to advance democratic values and governance.

Ozlem Yildirim (FR-II) underlined that social justice was essential to democracy, peace and security. She stressed the importance of equality, equity and inclusion, also noting the just transition, inclusive growth and the fight against structural inequalities as key for defending democracy.

Josiane Willems (LU-III) stressed the link between the rule of law, democracy and social and economic development. She also spoke of the need for strong and resilient institutions and of the essential role that civil society played in policy-making, stressing the need to improve the effective participation of all stakeholders, in particular women and young people. She also mentioned that the EESC should promote the geopolitical role of Africa and the importance of the Africa-EU Partnership, and help civil society reinforce its action to increase trust with governing bodies.

Arnold Puech d'Alissac (FR-I) raised the issue of corruption, which was often the cause of dissatisfaction and prevented sustainability. He spoke of all the resources Africa had (space, raw materials, youth), noting that wealth should be shared. He noted also that freedom and land ownership were crucial for increasing farmers' production.

Stefano Palmieri (IT-II) underlined the important role of the EU Global Gateway in Africa in building infrastructures necessary for development. The Global Gateway needed good governance involving partner countries, civil society, trade unions, cooperatives and other stakeholders so that the

projects benefited the people of Africa. He stressed that projects must be subject to social, economic and environmental impact assessments.

Michael McLoughlin (IE-III) referred to the role of regional economic communities such as ECOWAS in protecting and promoting democracy. He mentioned the need for more people to people contacts. Regarding youth policies, he stated that there was room for mutual learning (for example the African Union Youth Charter), and finished by saying that the EU approach should not be dominated by migration issues, as this would not lead to right decisions.

Vasco de Mello (PT-I) mentioned the difficulties in organising free elections, and the lack of transparency. Democratic development should go hand in hand with economic and social development.

Berivan Öngörür (SE-II) underlined that there were more autocracies than democracies around the world (referring to the work of the University of Gothenburg), and that we must always fight for democracy. She said that we needed to step up our work and cooperation with civil society organisations, trade unions and other forces for democracy, in order to defend and promote the rule of law, human rights and democracy.

Juliane Marie Neiiendam (DK-III) focused on women's rights and on the diversity of situations with regard to gender equality across Africa. She mentioned several good examples, such as the high rate of female entrepreneurs in some countries, or the fact that female refugees were granted land in Uganda. Conversely, female genital mutilations and child marriage remained widespread in some countries, despite being illegal in almost all.

Thomas Wagnsonner (AT-II) underlined the common values shared by the EU and Africa, based on the universal declaration of human rights. This included social rights. In this respect, he insisted on the importance of implementing the ILO conventions.

Mr Trindade insisted on the EESC's know-how and its willingness to continue working with CSOs in ACP countries. He underlined the total symbiosis between the promotion of civil, political, social and cultural rights, and economic and social progress.

Dr Sifa emphasised the strong desire for democracy and the need for inclusive, multi-stakeholder and meaningful cooperation in policy dialogue, which could lead to democratic processes. She stressed that equal and fair representation (especially for women, young people and vulnerable groups) must be ensured and media must be free and responsible in disseminating information.

Mr Sissoko stressed that democracy was an internal process, fed from the interior by engaged citizens and strong institutions and supported by international partnerships based on equals. He noted that Africa was at a turning point and that the EU needed to be part of this dynamic, finishing by saying that young people asked for equality, justice and mutual respect.

Mr Osei underlined the opportunities that had become available by the signing of the MoU. He also mentioned that the African Union had in place various policy frameworks to tackle the various issues

mentioned during the debate (e.g. the rule of law, corruption and gender), and that the key issue was how to implement them.

Mr Röpke concluded by reiterating some of the EESC-AU ECOSOCC common priorities, such as gender and youth involvement, and highlighted the fact that joining forces could make our voices stronger. In this respect, he referred to the EESC-AU ECOSOCC joint declaration at the UN Summit of the Future, covering many common goals such as gender-responsive policies, SDG implementation and global financial reform. He concluded by saying that cooperation with the AU ECOSOCC needed to become stronger in order to bring the MoU to life, and that collaboration with the UN ECOSOC should also be pursued.



ANNEX III
to the minutes of the
December plenary
session

Brussels, 15 January 2024

ANNEX III
to the
MINUTES
of the 592nd plenary session
of the
European Economic and Social Committee,
held in Brussels
on 4 and 5 December 2024

Meeting of 4 December 2024

Agenda item 16

International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and celebration of the Olympic spirit

EESC president Oliver Röpke asked the Committee to turn to agenda item 16 – the debate on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and celebration of the Olympic spirit.

Mr Röpke welcomed attendees and opened the debate by highlighting how parasport and Paralympic games symbolised the values of respect for diversity, resilience and the celebration of human potential.

Anne d'Ieteren, president of the French-Speaking League for Disability Sports, stressed that sport meant more than competition, inspiring and uniting people and offering athletes with disabilities the possibility to showcase their determination and resilience. Paralympic sport had the power to draw attention to the need to ensure accessibility for all. To this end, she felt that education had an important role to play to overcome prejudice and obstacles. For this reason, the French-Speaking League for Disability Sports was offering training targeting doctors, physiotherapists, coaches and volunteers, to raise awareness on the value of inclusion and how it could be promoted through sport. She concluded her speech by stressing that action was needed both at government and civil society level to break down barriers and embrace diversity.

Joachim Gérard, Belgian athlete, shared his experience with the audience. He felt he could see real progress in the Paralympic sport sector, especially over the past few years. However, he also mentioned that more needed to be done, especially to make venues accessible.

Aurel Laurențiu Plosceanu, EESC vice-president in charge of communication, briefly presented the EESC's work on disability rights (including that carried out through the Permanent Group on Disability Rights) and on sport, mentioning two relevant opinions which underlined the power of sport as means to promote social cohesion and inclusion. He also talked about the EESC's summer campaign on the Olympic games, and the cycling event which had taken place in May to encourage people to vote in the European Parliament elections.

Marie Zvolská, member of the EESC's Permanent Group on Disability Rights from Group I, spoke about how sport could be an instrument for inclusion for those with disabilities, but also for enhancing rehabilitation and facilitating social interactions.

Christophe Lefèvre, president of the EESC's permanent group on disability rights from Group II, expressed his hope that the progress that had been achieved thus far in the EU would continue under the new Commission and new Parliament.

Pietro Barbieri, member of the EESC Permanent Group on Disability Rights from Group III, broadened the discussion to the barriers that still hindered the full participation of persons with disabilities in society, namely regarding the conditions of women and of people living in situation of war (referring to Gaza and Ukraine).

A general debate with EESC members followed. **Dovilė Juodkaitė**, **Martina Širhalová**, **Ágnes Cser**, **Alberto Marchiori** and **Sára Felszeghi** took the floor. Among the points raised, members reminded the audience that those in parasport represented a small percentage of the population of persons with disabilities, and that a majority of those with disabilities lived in situations of poverty, without access to inclusive education or quality employment. They also stressed that more than one million people were still living segregated lives in institutions and denied the right to vote if under guardianship. In

some EU Member States, forced sterilisations were still taking place. It was also highlighted that the achievements of persons with disabilities in the Paralympics represented an inspiration and an opportunity to embrace diversity, determination and talent, but that more action was needed to improve infrastructure accessibility and to fight stereotypes against persons with disabilities.

Mr Lefèvre, Mr Plosceanu, Mr Gérard and **Ms d'Ieteren** replied to the comments received.
Mr Röpke thanked the speakers and concluded the debate.



ANNEX IV
to the minutes of the
December plenary
session

Brussels, 15 January 2024

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MINUTES
of the 592nd plenary session
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Meeting of 5 December 2024

Agenda item 20

EESC Housing Forum linked to the adoption of the opinion TEN/841 *Social housing in the EU – decent, sustainable and affordable*

EESC President Oliver Röpke asked the Committee to turn to agenda item 20 – the debate on **EESC Housing Forum**, linked to the adoption of the opinion TEN/841 *Social housing in the EU – decent, sustainable and affordable*.

Mr Röpke introduced the debate by welcoming the appointment of the new responsible Commissioner, Mr Dan Jørgensen, tasked to implement strong measures for affordable, sustainable and decent housing in Europe. The President also saluted Deputy-Director General of DG ENER, Mr Matthew Baldwin, present in the audience to listen to this debate.

Mr Röpke pointed out the steady rise in house prices and rent and made reference to all social groups affected, notably young people. Highlighting that the crisis has many facets, including energy and transport poverty, he reiterated the EESC's demands for a comprehensive EU action plan, for an EU-wide housing summit and for increased EU investment in affordable housing. This endeavour will require granting and simplifying the provision of appropriate funding.

The President then gave the floor to the Forum Moderator Jennifer Baker who opened the first panel devoted to *Building an EU-wide strategy for affordable and decent housing*.

Bent Madsen, President of Housing Europe, illustrated the main obstacles to increasing the supply of affordable housing across different EU Member States. He stressed the presence of both an industrial and housing crisis, and the need to not look only at social housing but also at affordable housing in general. This requires implementing a systemic and comprehensive approach taking the fundamentals into account.

Carlotta Ferri, Vice-President of the European Youth Energy Network (EYEN), explained how the EU should address the unique housing challenges faced by different vulnerable groups such as young people, and stressed the importance of ensuring an inclusive approach. She advocated for all EU institutions to empower young people by applying the EU Youth Test, following the EESC's example.

Pablo Panzer, Mortgage Victims' Platform (PAH), mentioned what strategies could help achieve better neighborhood systems integration through housing policy and urban planning by putting forward the paradigmatic situation of the housing market in Spain. He described the shortcomings of the private rental economy influenced by the pressure of tourism. He urged avoiding that the weakest groups in society keep paying the highest price of the current crises.

Thomas Kattnig (AT-II), rapporteur of the opinion TEN/841 *Social housing in the EU – decent, sustainable and affordable*, deepened the discussion by considering the best way the EU could help to effectively balance the principle of housing as a social right with market-driven housing policies. He notably pointed to the need for improving framework conditions like data, coordination, approval procedures and land use planning rules, establishing a fundamental right to housing, providing sufficient funding, implementing the 'Housing First' approach for homeless people and focusing more on the needs of young people and sustainability. This could indeed happen while respecting the subsidiarity principle. From the new Commission he would expect appropriate investment measures ensuring inclusion, stability and growth, as well as good cooperation with the EESC.

The following Members intervened in the debate: **Georgi Stoev (BG-I)**, **Carlos Manuel Trindade, Dovilė Juodkaitė (LT-III)**, **Baiba Miltoviča (LV-III)** and **João Nabais dos Santos (PT-III)**, mentioning these issues:

- the EESC has been relentlessly engaging on housing matters in the permanent group on Services of General Interest. Housing policy is essential and needs to be supported by reliable data;
- the extent of the housing crisis and the worsening situation (construction, rent and energy costs and overcrowded accommodation) require a European Strategy for Social Housing as soon as possible. The Right to Decent Housing should be recognised in primary law;
- persons with disabilities deserve particular attention, finding a solution to the housing problem must include putting an end to discrimination in the market for disabled people;
- the EESC and the European Committee of the regions (CoR) are working together closely in this domain and the TEN Section President recently signed a Joint Declaration with the CoR Rapporteur on this subject;
- Member States should reserve more land to non-profit housing projects, coupling this with measures to reduce construction costs.

In conclusion, the Rapporteur Mr Kattinig underscores the importance of giving access to affordable housing to people with disabilities.

Moderator Jennifer Baker then opened the second panel dedicated to *Increasing funding for housing*.

Tanguy Desrousseaux, Head of Housing, Cities and Regions department, European Investment Bank (EIB), illustrated the role of the EIB in promoting a better approach to the complex housing issue by interacting with key stakeholders and shareholders, scaling up financing as well as supporting innovation. The EIB plays an advisory role aimed to help develop the right regulatory framework in Europe.

Marcos Ros Sempere, Member of the European Parliament, S&D coordinator in the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development, congratulated the EESC for its opinion on the topical subject of housing and stressed the Parliament's views on how EU policies can better integrate housing, energy efficiency, and poverty reduction strategies. In view of pursuing progress, the European Parliament is creating a special committee which will provide an overall assessment and supervise the elaboration of Commission initiatives concerning funding and regulation.

Miles Raguz, Head of the European Relations Office, Council of Europe Development Bank, developed the previous considerations, focusing on encouraging innovative financing models to boost the supply of social housing and building renovations. He highlighted the need to move forward on innovation and investments in energy efficiency while also addressing the problem of homelessness by increasing initiatives on social housing.

Andres Jaadla, rapporteur on housing, European Committee of the Regions, outlined the lessons which can be learned from successful housing policies/projects in certain EU cities. The CoR has been pushing the EU, in close cooperation with the EESC, to do more on affordable housing, an issue concerning broader groups of society including the middle-class. Civil society, cities and regions are at the forefront of these efforts.

Ioana Vlad, Housing Policy Officer, FEANTSA, specifically referred to the European Platform for Combating Homelessness in which FEANTSA is very active and advocates for a more detailed and targeted approach by the EU Institutions to the benefit of people suffering from precarious housing conditions.

Rudolf Kolbe (AT-III), co-rapporteur of the TEN/841 *Social housing in the EU – decent, sustainable and affordable* underlines that housing is a fundamental right. He recalled the New European Bauhaus combining social and environmental criteria as well as the importance of helping to reduce housing costs through renovations that also ensure long-term sustainability.

The following Members intervened in the debate **Jakob Krištof Počivavšek (SI-II)**, **Giuseppe Guerini (IT-III)**, **Alberto Marchiori (IT-I)** raising these issues:

- housing is a dire issue and we must to promote a long-term economic vision that promotes the development of local communities, counters speculation and alleviates demographic pressures, including low natality;
- in the housing sector, there have been the major market failures, houses should not be considered just as financial assets. Private and public action should be combined in order to promote citizenship and guarantee the level of investment which is urgently needed;
- the utilisation of residential building for tourist accommodation risks leading to the desertification of city centres. Special attention should be devoted to the situation of the elderly and young people.

In conclusion of the second round, co-rapporteur Mr Kolbe pointed to the importance of identifying best practices and of disseminating them across Europe.

President Röpke then moved to the vote on Opinion TEN/841 *Social housing in the EU – decent, sustainable and affordable*.
