



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

**Mid-term review of cohesion policy**, with **Raffaele Fitto**, European Commission Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms; linked to the opinion ECO/676 *Cohesion policy mid-term review (2025)*

**Speech by Civil Society Organisations' Group President Séamus Boland**

*EESC plenary session, 29 April 2025*

Dear Executive Vice-President,

- Thank you for joining us today, you are very welcome;
- I would like to begin by stating my **firm support for a mid-term review** of cohesion policy for the period 2021-27;
- This discussion is timely, as later this afternoon we will be discussing how the EU should manage the ongoing **global geo-political challenges**;
- Of course, these have resulted in very different economic, political and environmental landscapes, to which the EU will have to **adapt, both internally and externally**;
- Consequently, a mid-term review of the EU Cohesion policy, to **complement the revision of the MFF** as a whole, is not only welcome, but necessary.
- I would like to concentrate my comments on two points, both of which relate to the **ESF+**;
- Clearly, it is necessary to invest in **developing skills in strategic sectors** such as defence, digitalisation, decarbonisation and new technologies;
- However, this must not come at the expense of **social inclusion, poverty alleviation** and the promotion of **qualitative employment**;
- Consequently, the amended Regulation on the ESF+ must ensure that **vulnerable groups**, including low-skilled workers, women, as well as **disadvantaged groups**, continue to benefit from this support.
  
- Secondly, it is imperative that any **reflections and decisions** on the reallocation of ESF+ resources directly involve **civil society organisations**;

- **Civil and social dialogue** have a key role to play in shaping the current and future Regulation;
- This is particularly the case, in relation to the **Just Transition Fund**, where we need **bottom-up processes**;
- **Civil society organisations** are **key to delivering the just transition**, through their interactions with local government and by their capacity to bring the topic out of the policy arena and into communities;
- At the same time, **local government** has an essential responsibility to **support the most vulnerable** and those who are less able to adapt to change;
- **Respect, partnership** and **honest communication** with communities on possible future options, must underlie this joint approach, which should aim to **reduce, share** and **manage the risks of the transition in a just and fair way**;

Thank you for your attention.

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