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**TEN/846**

**Price hikes in transport, energy and housing:**

**the role of quality public services in tackling the high cost of living**

Brussels, 30 April 2025

**RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS**
European Economic and Social Committee

**Price hikes in transport, energy and housing:**

**the role of quality public services in tackling the high cost of living**

(own-initiative opinion)

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596th plenary session

Brussels
29-30 April 2025

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Meeting of 30 April 2025
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Agenda item 16

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**The president** moves that the Committee turn to agenda item 16 - adoption of an opinion on the

*Price hikes in transport, energy and housing: the role of quality public services in tackling the high cost of living*

(own-initiative opinion).

The preliminary work had been carried out by the Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society (president: **Ms Miltoviča**). The rapporteur was **Mr Kattnig**. The section adopted its opinion on 7 April 2025 by 72 votes to one and two abstentions.

**Mr Röpke** gives the floor to the rapporteur **Mr Kattnig**, who introduces the opinion, which is part of a wider package of EESC opinions on the cost-of-living crisis.

**Mr Kattnig** highlighted that rising energy prices and high inflation have significantly increased costs, impacting the cost of living, competitiveness and social expenses. He emphasized that services of general interest are crucial for ensuring access to essential services. He also stressed the need for Member States to have the flexibility and autonomy to organize public services according to their needs and traditions, while maintaining high standards of quality, safety, affordability and universal access. The rapporteur emphasized the importance of public transport in providing high-quality, universal and affordable mobility. He highlighted the need for investments in multimodal and interconnected systems and noted that many citizens suffer from energy and transport poverty. The rapporteur emphasized the need to accelerate grid and renewable energy expansion through streamlined permit processes, encourage major consumers to generate their own renewable energy and develop trans-European networks as critical infrastructure. The rapporteur noted that over the past two decades, rents and housing prices in the EU have risen faster than average disposable income. He emphasized that prioritizing public investment in accessible and affordable housing in the new multiannual financial framework is essential.

**Mr Röpke** then opens the debate. **Mr Wagener** (LU-II) and **Ms Murafa Benga** (RO-III) speak on the following issues:

* The significance of providing high-quality, accessible and affordable services for European citizens.
* Principle 20 of the European Pillar of Social Rights: Access to essential services.
* The problem of widespread energy poverty affecting many citizens.
* The importance of sufficient funding and investment in services of general interest.

Following the debate, the Assembly examines the amendments to the Section opinion.

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| **AMENDMENT 2****TEN/846****Price hikes in transport, energy and housing: The role of quality public services in tackling the high cost of living****Point 3.3****Amend as follows** | **Tabled by:**BERCEA FlorinBUZEK TanjaCAÑO AGUILAR IsabelCHARRY PhilippeDIRX JanDUTTO DiegoFELSZEGHI SáraHAJNOŠ MiroslavKOLBE RudolfKOLYVAS IoannisMURAFA BENGA CorinaNIKOLOPOULOU MariaPAGLIARA AngeloQUAREZ ChristopheRIBBE LutzSCHAFFENRATH MartinSCHMIDT PeterVORBACH JudithWAGENER Marco |

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| ***Section opinion*** | ***Amendment*** |
| Taking a profit-driven approach to SGEIs without sufficient regulations and monitoring often increases vulnerability to crises and reduces management options. There should therefore be a stronger focus on the common good and public benefit. Adequate funding and investment of SGIs are key. ***Therefore***, the EESC ***believes that*** public investment ***in SGIs*** and ***SGEIs might challenge*** the ***fiscal rules under*** the ***Stability*** and ***Growth Pact***. | Taking a profit-driven approach to SGEIs without sufficient regulations and monitoring often increases vulnerability to crises and reduces management options. There should therefore be a stronger focus on the common good and public benefit. Adequate funding and investment of SGIs are key. ***In the face of growing threats, the EU must pursue security, peace, the rule of law, human rights and social progress through a comprehensive security policy. As a first step***, the EESC ***supports the Commission’s efforts to make the EU’s budgetary framework more flexible in this context. The EESC advocates applying this rule in a broader approach to security and defence measures as well as SGI in order to prioritise growth-oriented*** public investment and ***to avoid a trade-off between defence and social spending. Given*** the ***economic downturn in*** the ***euro area as well as in the Union as a whole, flexibility is necessary to safeguard productivity*** and ***the social and environmental foundations for the well-being of future generations, while at the same time ensuring fiscal sustainability***. |

is accepted by the Assembly.

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| **AMENDMENT 1****TEN/846****Price hikes in transport, energy and housing: The role of quality public services in tackling the high cost of living****Point 1.3****Amend as follows** | **Tabled by:**BERCEA FlorinBUZEK TanjaCAÑO AGUILAR IsabelCHARRY PhilippeDIRX JanDUTTO DiegoFELSZEGHI SáraHAJNOŠ MiroslavKOLBE RudolfKOLYVAS IoannisMURAFA BENGA CorinaNIKOLOPOULOU MariaPAGLIARA AngeloQUAREZ ChristopheRIBBE LutzSCHAFFENRATH MartinSCHMIDT PeterVORBACH JudithWAGENER Marco |

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| ***Section opinion*** | ***Amendment*** |
| ***The EESC advocates greater scope for long-term investment in social infrastructure and believes, in*** the light of the recent dramatic geopolitical upheavals, ***that*** public investment ***in SGIs*** and ***services of general economic interest (SGEIs) might challenge the debt rules set out in the fiscal rules under the Stability*** and ***Growth Pact (SGP)***. The reduction of fossil fuel subsidies can provide short-term support for vulnerable households and more durable solutions for decarbonised electricity and heating systems, renovations and access to affordable SGIs. The special rules for SGIs and SGEIs regarding state aid and public procurement must be thoroughly revised. | ***In*** the light of the recent dramatic geopolitical upheavals ***the EESC welcomes the Commission’s efforts to make the EU’s budgetary framework more flexible. At the same time***, ***a broader approach to security and defence measures as well as SGI is needed in order to prioritise growth-oriented*** public investment and ***to avoid a trade-off between defence*** and ***social spending, especially for countries with limited fiscal space***. The reduction of fossil fuel subsidies can provide short-term support for vulnerable households and more durable solutions for decarbonised electricity and heating systems, renovations and access to affordable SGIs. The special rules for SGIs and SGEIs regarding state aid and public procurement must be thoroughly revised. |

is accepted by the Assembly.

The opinion is adopted by 154 votes to 13 and 26 abstentions.

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