

Public debate

European Public Goods

5.6.2025, 14h30-16h30

Introductory Speech by Ioannis Vardakastanis

President of the ECO section

Dear distinguished guests in the room and online,

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to this timely and important discussion on **European public goods**—a topic that goes to the very heart of the European project and of our shared future.

Let me begin by underlining the moment we are in. Europe today is navigating a series of overlapping crises—economic, environmental, geopolitical, and social. From the war on our continent to the urgent imperative of climate action, from digital vulnerabilities to the lasting effects of the pandemic, we are constantly reminded that many of the most pressing challenges we face know no borders. They are **European**, if not **global**, in nature—and they require **European**, not just national, responses.

This is precisely why the concept of **European public goods** is so important. These are goods whose benefits extend across Member States and generations—ranging from peace and stability, to health resilience, clean energy, digital security, and social cohesion. They are **necessary** for ensuring the well-being of all Europeans.

But let's also be honest: while the European Treaties outline a bold vision for what the Union should provide its citizens, the tools and especially the financial means to fully deliver on these promises remain insufficient.

This is why today's debate is especially timely: the legislative proposals for the next Multiannual Financial Framework for the EU will be presented in July this year, and they will entail intense and difficult discussions. The decisions on what and how we fund with the EU budget in the coming years will ultimately be crucial.

This requires to agree on a core set of **institutional European public goods**—such as the single market, environmental protection, health security—as well as **strategic priorities**, from defence and energy to digital sovereignty – and to allocate commensurate financial means to all of these.

In order to come in timely with concrete policy proposals, the EESC taken the decision to draw up an **own initiative opinion on European Public Goods**. Today's debate, with distinguished academic experts, will provide valuable insights to our rapporteur Stefano Palmieri and to the members of the study group, who will still come together for deliberations twice, before submitting a draft opinion for adoption to the ECO section and the EESC plenary in September this year.

Before we start our debate, some housekeeping: The debate is webstreamed. Our remote participants can ask questions to the panelists via slido. The slido link is embedded in the webstream. Alternatively, you can go to sli.do and use the hashtag #EUPublicGoods (in one word).

Dear colleagues,

Today's debate is not just about defining a concept—it is about **shaping the future of Europe**. Let us use this **opportunity to be bold, constructive, and clear in our recommendations**. The European project has always advanced in response to shared challenges.

Thank you—and I look forward to a rich and forward-looking discussion. After our colleague and rapporteur Stefano Palmieri I will give the floor to our distinguished speakers. Stefano, the floor is yours, please kickstart our debate.
