



European Economic and Social Committee | Comité économique et social européen

PERIOD **ACTIVITY REPORT**
2023 **AD HOC GROUP ON THE**
2025 **CONFERENCE OF THE**
PARTIES OF THE UNFCCC

**DIRECTORATE B3 – LEGISLATIVE
WORKS**

CHAIR: PETER SCHMIDT

Introduction

Since 2014, the EESC has actively participated in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In February 2022, the Committee took a significant step forward by establishing the Ad Hoc Group (AHG) on the Conference of the Parties (COP), aiming to develop a more strategic, permanent, and structured engagement process. This initiative seeks to strengthen the voice of civil society and influence European co-legislators on the international climate agenda. Recognising the intrinsic link between biodiversity and climate action, the AHG expanded its mandate in 2023 to include biodiversity, reinforcing the need for a unified approach to environmental challenges.

As highlighted in the resolution prepared by the AHG: "We are the last generation that can stop climate change, and the EESC, as the voice of European civil society, ought to play a leading role in promoting these transformations towards carbon-neutral, inclusive, and socially fair societies."

To achieve this, we must raise our collective ambition; ensuring that decarbonisation goes hand in hand with a just transition and enhanced well-being. The meaningful involvement and broad support of civil society at all levels are essential; without them, the transition to sustainability cannot succeed.

A key feature of the AHG's work has been the inclusion of a EESC Youth Delegate to COP - not only in COP missions but also throughout the preparatory process. This initiative has allowed us to meaningfully integrate the perspectives of young people, enriching our contributions and reinforcing intergenerational dialogue.

I am convinced that the structured approach we have implemented through the AHG has significantly enhanced the EESC's visibility and impact at the COPs. This model of engagement should be maintained and further developed in the years to come.

Peter Schmidt

President of the NAT section and Chair of the Ad Hoc Group

Table of Contents

Introduction (message from the President).....	2
Activities and main findings	3
Appendix I - List of meetings and events	6

Activities & main findings

The **EESC Ad Hoc Group (AHG) on COP** was established in 2022 to ensure a more strategic, inclusive and permanent EESC engagement in the UNFCCC process. By contributing more strategically to the COPs through the AHG, the EESC is able to promote civil society positions at the international stage and have concrete impact. The AHG on COP's mandate was extended in December 2023 to include both climate and biodiversity Conventions, aligning with EESC priorities for a systemic approach.

Following its own-initiative opinion [Towards structured youth engagement on climate and sustainability in the EU decision-making process](#) (NAT/788), the EESC included a youth delegate in its UNFCCC COP delegation since 2021. Given the urgent need to strengthen synergies between the climate and biodiversity crises, the [EESC youth delegate to the COP](#) has the opportunity to contribute to the EESC's work on the UNFCCC and CBD COPs. The EESC Youth Delegate to COP programme highlighted the critical role of meaningful youth involvement in international fora. As the first and only EU institution to include a youth delegate in its delegation, the EESC sets a precedent and serves as a model of best practice. After two successful first mandates with Sophia Wiegand and Diandra Ní Bhuachalla, in 2025 we received 498 applications for the selection of the new youth delegate, and Samira Ben Ali was finally appointed as the new EESC's youth delegate to COP. Samira comes from France, from Mayotte, and has witnessed first-hand the disproportionate impacts of climate change on the island and its marginalised communities.

The AHG met for a total of 20 times during the 2023-2025 mandate and carried out the following tasks:

1. Preparing the EESC COP contributions: Based on conversations with the European Commission, the AHG coordinated the preparation of targeted EESC contributions towards COP28 "[Implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security](#)" and "[the just transition work programme](#)" aligned with the COP's priorities and UNFCCC negotiation processes. The contributions were adopted by the EESC Bureau in 2023.

- On **agriculture and food security**, the EESC is calling for the implementation of three key principles. Firstly, integrate climate considerations into agricultural and food policies. Secondly, democratise agri-food systems and adopt a rights-based approach to governance. Thirdly, ensure equitable and effective allocation of climate finance to agriculture, supporting initiatives that promote resilience, sustainability, and social justice within the sector.
- On **the just transition work programme**, the EESC is calling for the process to have a clear added value, to be based on a right-based approach ensuring social dialogue and to count the active participation of affected communities.

Follow-up meetings were organised with the negotiators of the Commission (DG CLIMA and DG AGRI) on these two files to present the EESC contributions. These were further circulated to negotiators of the Member States and civil society networks and organisations. Regarding the AHG on COP's work on just transition, NAT members have been invited to the EU Just Transition Task Force meetings in 2024 and 2025 to present civil society insights on just transition to technical experts from Member States and the European Commission. A meeting together with the Just Transition Task Force in the context of the AHG on COP is envisaged for 15 September 2025. This clearly shows that the EESC's contributions are highly relevant and help strengthen partnerships with the actors involved in the UNFCCC negotiation process.

2. Discussing relevant EESC own-initiative opinions: Stemming from ideas discussed at the AHG and based on conversations with the European Commission, the EESC prepared three own-initiative opinions relevant to the UNFCCC and CBD processes. In 2024, the EESC adopted the two opinions on [A comprehensive strategy for biodiversity at COP16: bringing all sectors together for a common goal](#) and [Climate finance: a new roadmap to deliver on high climate ambition and the SDGs](#). In 2025, the EESC adopted its own-initiative opinion [Phasing out fossil fuel subsidies while ensuring European](#)

[competitiveness, mitigating the cost-of-living crisis, and promoting a just transition](#), representing the main contribution on COP30.

- 3. Gathering views from stakeholders and civil society:** The AHG provided a space for presentations and interaction with stakeholders and selected experts to feed into the EESC contributions and to prepare the ground for relevant EESC own-initiative opinions. As such, the AHG organised various expert hearings on:
- the implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security (2023),
 - the just transition work programme (2023),
 - investments and financing climate change mitigation (2023),
 - biodiversity at COP16 (2024),
 - how can Europe eliminate fossil fuel subsidies while addressing the socio-economic implications (2024),
 - the role of the EU in global multilateralism of the Rio Conventions (2025).

On 10 July 2025, the AHG on COP is organising an expert hearing on **Climate Adaptation for Resilient Societies** to feed into the AHG on **COP's contribution to UNFCCC COP30 on climate adaptation**, which will also consider the anticipated European Climate Adaptation Plan.

Throughout its mandate, the AHG met with relevant organisations and institutions such as the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions, UN bodies, as well as representatives from the civil society constituencies - young people, businesses, farmers, trade unions and environmental NGOs.

- 4. Coordinating the preparation of the COP delegation (six EESC Members plus youth delegate), including communications:** The AHG contributed to the preparatory work for the COP delegation and the agenda for the mission. At COP16, COP28 and COP29, the EESC organised 8 side events, participated as speakers in several other side events, and held a large number of bilateral meetings in order to exert as much influence on the negotiations as possible. The EESC was also active through its various communications channels, expanding its communication activities to X, LinkedIn and Instagram. Some of the deliverables were:
- [EESC COP29 dedicated webpage](#), including details on the two side-events
 - [EESC COP28 dedicated webpage](#), including details on the four side-events
 - [EESC COP16 dedicated webpage](#), including details on the two side-events

- [COP28 and COP16 video message](#) from Peter Schmidt, Arnaud Schwartz and Diandra Ní Bhuachalla
- Articles on the EESC Youth Delegate to COP; [Diandra Ní Bhuachalla](#) and [Samira Ben Ali](#)
- [X](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) messages on COP16 and COP29
- LinkedIn posts on [COP29](#) and [Samira Ben Ali](#)

5. Ensuring cooperation with other EESC bodies: The AHG ensured a strategic cross-sectoral approach through close cooperation with different EESC groups and bodies, notably the Sustainable Development Observatory. It maintained regular communication with the NAT and EESC Bureaus and relevant EESC bodies (e.g. the REX section) to ensure the centrality of the COP process in the EESC decision-making. For instance, a debate at the NAT section was organised on **Biodiversity & Climate: advancing on a sustainable financial architecture** and at the EESC Plenary in 2024 on [Civil Society to push for more action to save climate](#) after COP28 and on [People-centered climate and biodiversity action for a just and sustainable transition after COP29](#). In addition, the AHG members informed the sections and the groups on the outcomes of COP28 and COP29.

Appendix I – List of meetings and events

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Ad Hoc Group meetings	<p>12 January 2023, COP27 debriefing</p> <p>24 March 2023, inaugural meeting with new EESC Youth Delegate Diandra Ni Bhuachalla, presentation from speaker from Climate Chance</p> <p>18 April 2023, discussion on structure of EESC contributions to COP28</p> <p>31 May 2023, expert hearings EESC contributions to the UNFCCC</p> <p>1) The implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security and 2) The just transition work programme, including the following speakers: (1) Martial Bernoux, Senior Natural Resources Officer, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO); Alba Saray Pérez Teran, Climate Change Policy Officer, Oxfam; Anne-Catherine Dalcq, Vice-President, CEJA Young Farmers; Emil Frison, IPES-Food; Tomaso Ferrando, Research Professor at University of Antwerp and (2) Anabella Rosemberg, Just transition advisor to</p>

the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD); Moustapha Kamal Gueye, Global Coordinator, Green Jobs Programme, International Labour Organization (ILO); Bert de Wel, Climate Policy Officer, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC); Robert Marinkovic, Adviser Climate Change, International Organisation of Employers (IOE); Andrzej Błachowicz, Chief Executive Officer, Climate Strategies.

23 June 2023, preparation for COP28

5 July 2023, expert hearing on Investments and financing climate change mitigation, including the following speakers: Isabelle Chatry, Head Decentralisation, Subnational Finance and Infrastructure Unit, OECD; Andy Kerr, Climate-KIC's Chief Strategy Officer; YOUNGO; Mónica Peña Sastre, responsible for climate action & energy at EIB Brussels office.

4 September 2023, inviting Esther Badiola from the Operations Directorate at the European Investment Bank (EIB)

16 October 2023, preparation for COP28

21 November 2023, inviting Alison Gilliland, Dublin City Councillor and CoR delegate to COP28.

22 February 2024, debrief from the meeting with DG CLIMA and discussion on Convention on Biological Diversity

27 March 2024, discussion on climate finance inviting Liselotte Jensen, European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS); Remco Fischer, Coordinator of activities on climate change, UNEP Finance Initiative; Guntram Wolff, Bruegel think tank.

24 April 2024, debate on biodiversity inviting Ella Wooden, FAO; Alexander Reimers, DG ENV.

15 May 2024, expert hearing on How can Europe eliminate fossil fuel subsidies addressing the socio-economic implications? Inviting DG ENER, Nils Bartsch, Head of Oil & Gas Research (GOGEL); Jakob Skovgaard, Lund University; Maya Perera, Policy Assistant for Climate and Energy, EEB; Peter Newell, Professor of International Relations at the University of Sussex, Presentation of the Fossil Fuel Non- Proliferation Treaty Initiative.

9 September 2024, debrief from COP16, inviting Anne Theo Seinen (DG ENV), and debrief from Bonn inviting Ivone Kaizeler (DG CLIMA), presentation from YFJ and GCE.

14 October 2024, positions of EU institutions and stakeholders inviting Joško Klisović (HR/PES), Committee of Regions Delegation to COP29; Piedad Martín, Deputy Director of the Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and James Trinder (CAN Europe).

10 February 2025, general debrief from COP16 and COP29, as well as exchange on just transition inviting the following speakers from the European Commission: Anne Theo Seinen, Senior Expert, Directorate-General for Environment, Global Environmental Cooperation and Multilateralism (DG ENV); Dimitrios Zevgolis, Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Climate Action, International Affairs and Climate Finance, Multilateral Affairs unit (DG CLIMA); Andreas Fazekas, Policy officer, International mitigation and UNFCCC negotiations, DG CLIMA, and Hanne Van Den Berg, EEA.

22 April 2025, expert hearing on the role of the EU in global multilateralism of the Rio conventions inviting the following speakers: Veronika Hunt Šafránková, UNEP Brussels Office; Alejandro Kilpatrick, UNFCCC Secretariat; Dimitrios Zevgolis, European Commission, Head of Unit Multilateral Affairs, DG CLIMA; Anne Theo Seinen, DG ENV; Marta Torres Gunfaus, IDDRI, Director, Climate Programme on Rio conventions; Antoine Le Bec, Futuribles and Samira Ben Ali, EESC Youth delegate to COP.

23 May 2025, debate on climate adaptation inviting speakers including Philippe Tulkens, Head of Unit, Healthy Planet Directorate – Climate and Planetary Boundaries Unit, DG RTD; Martin Špolc, Adaptation & Resilience to Climate Change, DG CLIMA; Lou Bachelier-Degras, Climate Chance Observatory; Paola Lepori, Senior expert, Biodiversity & Nature-based solutions, ICLEI.

10 July 2025, expert hearing on climate adaptation for resilient societies including the following speakers: DG CLIMA; Christiana Photiadou, EEA; Benedetta Brighenti, expert for the CoR opinion on adaptation in cities and regions and President of AESS, Agenzia per l'Energia e lo Sviluppo Sostenibile; Committee of Regions; Meghan Sapp, European Alliance for Regenerative Agriculture;

	<p>Saoirse Jones, Head of Insurance Development Forum (IDF); Amalia Hammarlund, ITUC; Veronica Ruiz, IUCN. 15 September 2025, inviting the Just Transition Task Force.</p>
<p>AHG activities on social media</p>	<p><u>Youth delegate 2025-27</u></p> <p>COP29:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post <u>following COP29</u> - Importance of <u>youth and education</u> - EESC account on <u>side-events</u> - Announcing <u>From Growth to Sufficiency side-event</u> - <u>Antje Gerstein on finances</u> - <u>Youth delegate at COP29</u> - <u>Climate emergency</u> - Start of COP29 Azerbaijan: <u>NAT</u>, <u>EESC</u> - <u>COP16 and COP29</u> <p>COP28:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beyond Growth side-event <u>1</u>, <u>2</u> - <u>EESC’s vision for COP28</u> - Just Transition side-event <u>1</u>, <u>2</u>, <u>3</u> - <u>EU pavilion side-events</u> - <u>NAT side-events</u> - COP28 Dubai starts <u>tomorrow</u>, <u>today</u>