



# Civil Society Organisations' Group at the EESC



European Economic  
and Social Committee

# > EESC

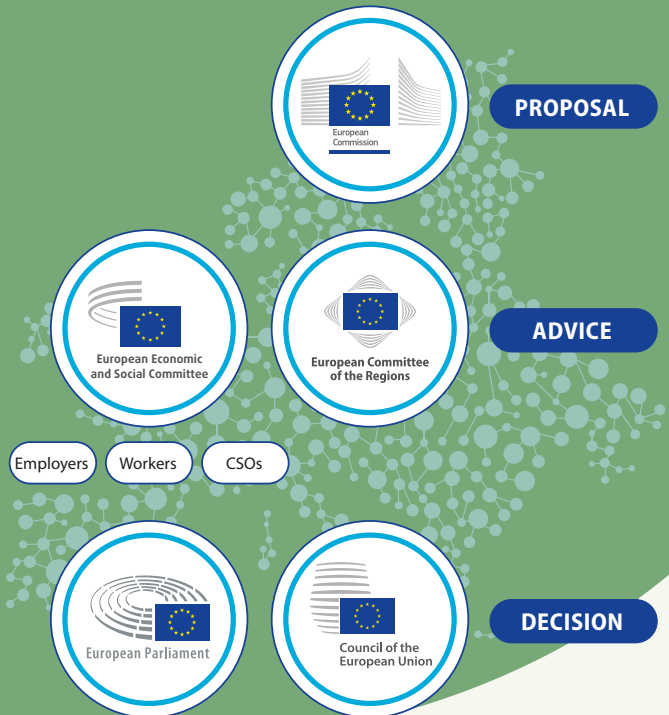
The Civil Society Organisations' Group is one of the three groups that make up the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).

The Committee is an integral part of the EU: it was set up in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome – a founding document of the European Union – to advise EU decision-makers and ensure that civil society organisations and networks across the EU have a say in Europe's development.

The EESC is a unique forum for consultation, dialogue and consensus. Its 329 members from the 27 EU Member States come from all the different sectors of 'organised civil society', and have a vast range of knowledge and experience. They organise themselves into groups, which seek consensus on EESC opinions, most of which relate to EU legislative proposals from the European Commission.

The Committee's aim is to help ensure that EU policy-making and legislation is more democratic and effective and genuinely reflects people's needs. It has three key tasks:

- to advise the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission;
- to make sure the views of civil society organisations are heard in Brussels and to increase their awareness of the impact of EU legislation;
- to support and strengthen organised civil society both inside and outside the EU.





## > ABOUT US

The presence of the Civil Society Organisations' Group, alongside the Employers' Group and the Workers' Group, ensures that the EESC is a dynamic force and is empowered to give full voice to the concerns of the various economic, social, occupational and civic organisations that make up civil society in the Member States.

In line with the changes introduced in the Lisbon Treaty, an international agreement that reformed the EU, the Group is made up of 'other representatives and stakeholders of civil society, particularly in the economic, civic, professional and cultural field':

Its members come from organisations representing the following fields:

- academia (natural scientists, economists, sociologists, etc.)
- citizens' participation and empowerment
- civil society development
- consumers
- environment, heritage and sustainable development
- farming, fisheries and coastal communities, forestry
- human rights protection (issues concerning children, older people, families, gender equality, marginalised and underprivileged groups, migrants and refugees, minorities, persons with disabilities, women and young people)
- liberal professions (lawyers, doctors, engineers, etc.)
- small and medium-sized enterprises and crafts
- social economy (charities, cooperatives, foundations, mutual societies and social enterprises)

# STRIVING FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES, AND DEMOCRACY

## The Presidency of the Group for the 2025-2028 term of office

*From left to right:*

**Krzysztof Stanislaw BALON**  
(Vice-President, Poland)

**Juliane Marie NEIENDAM**  
(Vice-President, Denmark)

**Lidija PAVIĆ-ROGOŠIĆ**  
(Vice-President, Croatia)

**Pietro Vittorio BARBIERI**  
(Vice-President, Italy)

**Cillian LOHAN**  
(President, Ireland)


**Ariane RODERT**  
(Vice-President, Sweden)

**Rudolf KOLBE**  
(Vice-President, Austria)


**Katrīna LEITĀNE**  
(Vice-President, Latvia)



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# THE BEATING HEART OF CIVIL SOCIETY

## Lived participatory democracy from the local to the European level

In democratic governance, it is the people who determine what direction they want to go in, and what role their representatives and government should have in getting them there.

The overall aim of the Civil Society Organisations' Group is to truly strengthen participatory democracy across the European Union and to make sure that EESC opinions on EU legislative proposals reflect the interests of all people.

The Group consists of 110 members from all 27 Member States of the European Union. Its members are proposed by their national governments and formally appointed by the Council of the European Union for a renewable five-year term of office. In their EESC activities members work independently in the interests of all EU citizens. They are not based full-time in Brussels: most continue to do their own jobs in their home countries, ensuring that they maintain direct contact with their constituencies.

The members of the Group take discussions on EU legislative proposals home to their organisations and networks at both national and European level. They reach out to civil society organisations in their communities, regions and countries, listen to their views and ideas, and involve them in discussions. They then incorporate the results of these discussions into their work at the EESC. This is the added value that members bring to EU policy-making.

Nevertheless, regular exchanges with other European civil society organisations are particularly important to the Group, and it therefore cultivates working relationships with the members of the EESC Liaison Group and with other European civil society networks that have broad representation at European level. The Group tries to involve them in its activities to establish effective civil dialogue and advance its own priorities and common interests. It also offers them logistical support for their meetings at the Committee's headquarters in Brussels.

## Our support for five EESC categories

Via its secretariat, the Group supports the activities of some EESC categories. Categories are informal internal discussion forums that bring together EESC members who represent a particular sector or community and its interests. Their role is to add value to the Committee's consultative work through the high level of expertise they offer in their respective fields.

- ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE
- CONSUMERS & ENVIRONMENT
- FARMERS
- LIBERAL PROFESSIONS
- SOCIAL ECONOMY

# Priorities for the 2025-2028 term

## Empowering resilient communities by:

- amplifying community voices and increasing the democratic legitimacy of the EU;
- supporting bottom-up approaches;
- advocating a just demographic transition and intergenerational fairness;
- supporting an inclusive labour market and reinforcing the social economy

as a key model of inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurship.

## Defending democracy by:

- promoting participatory democracy and civil society engagement in EU policy-making in all policy areas, with a particular focus on youth engagement. This means working towards open, transparent, regular and structured civil dialogue, as set out in Article 11 of the Treaty on EU;
- ensuring that civil society is fully embedded in the EU agenda and can act as an early-warning voice in a rapidly changing world;
- stepping up outreach to young people and continuing to cooperate with civil society organisations at both European and national level;
  - encouraging intergenerational cooperation.

## Contributing to peace and a resilient civil society by:

- promoting EU values as enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union;
- working towards the integration of civil society into preparedness, prevention and crisis-response strategies so that civil society organisations are equal partners in the civil preparedness framework;
- supporting efforts on civil defence, reconstruction and reconciliation;
- countering hybrid threats, disinformation and attempts to undermine democratic institutions.



### Promoting a sustainable agenda by:

- advocating putting the United Nations' Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and its sustainable development goals, as well as the European Green Deal, back towards the top of the EU's policy agenda;
- committing to the sustainable agenda since this is the Europe's best recipe for staying true to its commitments and values while enhancing prosperity, solidarity, equality, democracy and inclusiveness;
- supporting the European Commission's efforts to address major gaps in environmental policy, particularly in water resilience, chemicals and the circular economy;
- championing an EU that leaves nobody behind, and working towards efficient solutions for the cost-of-living crisis, including the first-ever European Anti-Poverty Strategy;
- calling for the resubmission of the Directive on European Cross-Border Associations, which is essential to strengthening the European civic space.



### Standing up for an EU 2028-2034 budget aligned with a clear European ambition, delivering for democracy, civil society and social inclusion, by:

- monitoring, contributing to and engaging with the discussions on the EU's next long-term budget;
- promoting adequate and future-proof EU funding that supports core European policies for current and future generations;
- advocating dedicated funding streams that recognise civil society organisations as partners;
- ensuring the rigorous application of the partnership principle throughout the funding lifecycle.



## Outreach to the European institutions and other institutional players

The Civil Society Organisations' Group engages strategically and proactively with the European institutions, particularly the European Commission, the European Parliament and the presidencies of the Council of the EU. The overall aim is to promote its priorities and to cooperate on key initiatives. The Group's own-initiative opinions and the studies it requests, EESC resolutions, Group events and position papers all provide opportunities for establishing these contacts.

Its outreach activities towards the European Parliament target MEPs, relevant inter-groups, political groups and committees. For each presidency of the Council of the EU, the Group aims to establish contact several months before the presidency starts, for example in order to influence their priorities and prepare for Group activities in the context of the presidency.

With its outreach activities, the Group continuously tries to strengthen its working relations with relevant institutional third parties, e.g. in the context of EU-UK civil society relations.



European Economic  
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