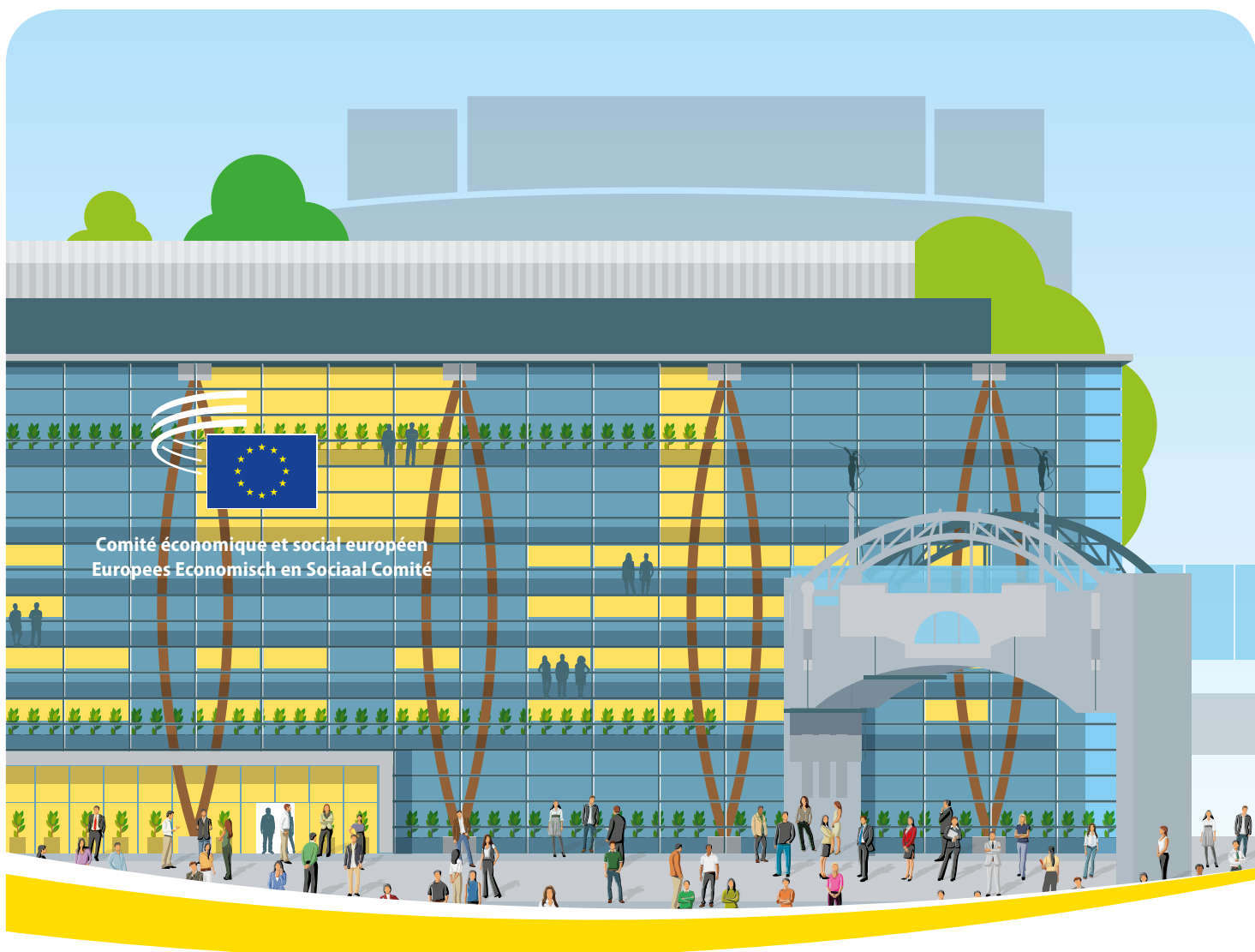




The European Economic and Social Committee's contribution to the 2027 European Commission's work programme

18 June 2026



European Economic
and Social Committee



RESOLUTION

European Economic and Social Committee

Contribution to the European Commission's 2027 work programme

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The EU should strengthen its competitiveness, resilience and capacity for sustainable growth by fostering a strong, innovative and business-friendly economy that enables companies to invest, innovate and create quality jobs across Europe. In so doing, the EU should place people at the centre of change by reinforcing the European social model, promoting social and civil dialogue and inclusion, and ensuring fair digital, energy and green transitions based on workers' rights, skills, social and civil dialogue and equal opportunities. The 2027 work programme should advance these priorities through measures supporting innovation, productivity, investment and regulatory simplification, alongside the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, fair mobility, digital workers' rights and skills and social conditionality¹ in EU funding, and procurement.
- 1.2 To maintain its global green technology leadership, the EU needs a competitiveness agenda based on industrial policy, innovation, investment and just digital and green transitions, as well as a deeper single market with simpler rules, less fragmentation and stronger enforcement.
- 1.3 Europe's industrial policy must support affordable energy, secure supply chains and better cross-border connections in energy, transport, telecoms and delivery systems to secure critical raw materials and water resilience while ensuring a fair transition that safeguards quality jobs and Europe's industrial base.
- 1.4 The EESC asks for the 2027 work programme to ensure full absorption and targeted, flexible reprogramming of all multiannual financial framework (MFF) instruments. The 2027 preparatory work must build the evidence base, governance frameworks, and partnership structures that will underpin the next MFF. No strategic priority – competitiveness, cohesion, social progress, or green or defence objectives – should be structurally subordinated to another. Furthermore, all of the priorities indicated in this EESC contribution should benefit from dedicated financial support through the MFF, ensuring a fair geographical distribution.
- 1.5 Common EU priorities for preparedness, defence and security must include stronger defence capabilities, joint procurement, military mobility, cybersecurity and protection of critical and civilian infrastructure, as well as investment in civil preparedness for resilient communities, while ensuring transparency and democratic oversight with an objective of achieving peace.
- 1.6 The EU should strengthen its global role by aligning strategic autonomy with foreign, trade, industrial and enlargement policies, while supporting Ukraine and expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people, deepening cooperation with partners and enhancing resilience in critical sectors. The 2027 work programme should advance these priorities through support for candidate countries, stronger external action, economic security, and better use of the Global Gateway and the common security and defence policy.
- 1.7 The EU should treat quality of life as a pillar of social and democratic resilience. The 2027 work programme should link health, care, mental wellbeing, equality, inclusion, antiracism and

¹ In compliance with the applicable working conditions, health and safety and social and labour rights.

access to essential services in a people-centred agenda addressing persistent inequalities and vulnerabilities. GDP tracking must be complemented by sustainability and quality-of-life indicators.

- 1.8 As poverty is equivalent to democratic exclusion, the EU's response to housing, energy, water and food poverty should form a coherent agenda of affordability and fairness.
- 1.9 The European Democracy Shield and Civil Society Strategy should strengthen civic space, independent media, the rule of law, equality, women's rights, and protection against gender-based violence.

The EESC makes the following proposals/requests:

2. A new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness

- 2.1 In reference to the Draghi and Letta reports, deepen the single market for services through efforts to revise and modernise the EU framework for services, reducing fragmentation through regulatory simplification and cross-border administrative procedures and strengthening enforcement tools.
- 2.2 Continue the Commission's simplification efforts through Omnibus packages aimed at reducing administrative burdens and costs, without weakening social, environmental and labour standards. The Commission should also ensure the rapid and consistent implementation of the Industrial Accelerator Act.
- 2.3 Ensure the swift adoption of the EU Delivery Act as a key single market enabler, while modernising the EU framework for postal and parcel services, including those that are services of general interest, strengthen cross-border delivery, improve reliability and affordability. and reduce barriers for SMEs.
- 2.4 Accelerate efforts to phase out fossil fuels through electrification and modernised energy systems, refocusing attention on heating and cooling, and by providing stronger cross-border interconnections.
- 2.5 Address key strategic gaps by reassessing the feasibility of the EU Hydrogen Strategy targets, clarifying preparedness for hydrogen and renewable gas deployment, and strengthening existing EU cleantech and battery industrial frameworks through dedicated clean technology roadmaps.
- 2.6 Reduce dependencies on critical raw materials and energy, monitor the implementation of the Critical Raw Materials Act and set up the European Critical Raw Materials Centre.
- 2.7 Consider establishing a European health innovation hub to speed up innovation and hospitals' cyber-resilience. Agreements also need to be reached on the Critical Medicines Act.

- 2.8 Ensure energy affordability through a further review of the EU electricity market design, reinforcing market governance, the Energy Efficiency First principle and protecting critical infrastructure to strengthen security of supply for further just transition financing.
- 2.9 Integrate a cybersecurity dimension into the European supply chain package, particularly for critical sectors and risk management.
- 2.10 Maintain competitiveness and the EU's industrial agenda, including space investments, while ensuring fair geographical distribution of support across the Union.
- 2.11 Complete the Capital Markets Union and the Savings and Investments Union and consider a Strategic Investment Fund for European Competitiveness.
- 2.12 Accelerate the digital single market for telecoms by reducing regulatory fragmentation and enabling high-capacity connectivity.
- 2.13 Strengthen cross-border transport links, with support for the smooth and reliable movement of goods within the single market, including efforts to accelerate the completion of the TEN-T Core Network and to develop a high-speed rail network linking all capitals and major cities.
- 2.14 Strengthen public investment in strategic infrastructure and services of general interest to ensure quality, affordability, equitable access and greater social and territorial cohesion.
- 2.15 Ensure that the emissions trading system for buildings, road transport and additional sectors (ETS2) supports Europe's cost-effective decarbonisation and competitiveness and preserves energy price predictability for industry and households, and that its revenues are directed to the Social Climate Fund and to a fair green industrial transformation.
- 2.16 Ensure that the Circular Economy Act is implemented in a coherent and proportionate manner, providing legal certainty while promoting efficient secondary raw materials markets.
- 2.17 Maintain a strong cohesion policy that supports competitiveness, social progress and territorial resilience, with particular attention to the EU's easternmost regions affected by the war against Ukraine. Ensure that national recovery and resilience plans are prepared in close cooperation with regional and local stakeholders.
- 3. **A new era for preparedness, including European defence and security**
 - 3.1 Deliver European defence capabilities at scale by implementing EU-level flagship projects in a timely manner, while leveraging dual-use innovation to strengthen Europe's civilian and defence capabilities.
 - 3.2 Create a comprehensive defence package to form the basis for building a European Defence Union to improve interoperability, readiness and resilience by harmonising joint and cross-border procurement processes while facilitating military mobility, strengthening cybersecurity and establishing a structured mechanism to protect critical and civilian infrastructure. These

efforts should be based on a clearer definition of critical infrastructure and the role played by private operators, which act in both a complementary and a subordinate capacity to public authorities.

- 3.3 Develop a European supply chain package, incorporating sectoral stress tests assessing critical vulnerabilities, supply chain risks and progress in mitigation, while ensuring adequate financing and consistency with the EU's trade policy through diversification and resilient partnerships.
- 3.4 Support the European defence technological and industrial base through increased funding in the form of grants and loans with the principle of European preference and social conditionalities². Joint public-private ventures should also be promoted and private capital mobilised through dedicated funding and blended finance mechanisms to strengthen investment in European defence, ensuring democratic oversight and avoiding any weakening of the Union's social commitments.

4. Supporting people, strengthening our societies and our social model

- 4.1 Implement the new action plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights to promote equality, improve employment and social inclusion and, in line with the Joint Declaration of the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on the EU legislative priorities for 2026, promote high-quality jobs.
- 4.2 Adopt a policy package to accompany and support the digital, energy and green transitions by anticipating and managing change, with social and civil dialogue and collective bargaining as leading principles, while respecting the autonomy of social partners and civil society.
- 4.3 Adequately involve social partners and civil society organisations in social measures, EU funds and in monitoring the Commission's action plan.
- 4.4 Ensure that any new potential future legislative acts, as well as the implementation of existing legislation, protect workers' rights and keep humans in control of human-machine interactions, while promoting innovation and the adoption of new technologies.
- 4.5 Implement the forthcoming Quality Jobs Act.
- 4.6 Address the European Parliament's request for a legal framework for algorithmic management systems.
- 4.7 Once adopted, implement the fair labour mobility package, with regards to the European Social Security Pass, the appropriate functioning of the European Labour Authority and the implementation of the skills portability initiative.
- 4.8 Follow up on the report on the implementation of the OSH Framework Directive.

²

In compliance with the applicable working conditions, health and safety and social and labour rights.

- 4.9 Ensure that skills remain a priority and ensure inclusive participation in the European Skills High-Level Board to implement the Union of Skills, with specific funding allocated. The European Strategy for Vocational Education and Training should also be implemented ensuring gender-balanced participation, and skills intelligence enhanced through the European Skills Intelligence Observatory. The EESC should be member of both bodies.
- 4.10 With regard to the just transition, advance a comprehensive policy package for the world of work. The just transition should be a priority within the EU institutions, integrating it into EPSR Action Plan implementation and European Semester reforms. Incentives should be created for companies upskilling employees and increasing apprenticeship and initial training.
- 4.11 Align European funds, State aid and public procurement to support quality jobs and skills investment, by strictly enforcing existing rules and excluding non-compliant companies from funding.

5. Sustaining our quality of life: food security, water and nature

- 5.1 Give stronger operational visibility to health, care and mental well-being in 2027, in a One Health approach that acknowledges the triple planetary crisis (pollution, climate, biodiversity). This should include follow-up on online safety, the mental health of children, young people and older people and the impact of AI, digitalisation and the ‘always on’ culture, investing in climate adaptation and nature-based solutions to reduce health risks. The European care strategy should be reviewed and a European care deal developed with civil society and social partners, paying attention to gender inequalities such as unpaid care work.
- 5.2 Ensure that anti-racism, LGBTQI+ rights, minority protection and inclusion, and support for endangered languages remain at the heart of the Union of equality agenda. The Commission should also implement simplified tools for all EU citizens to interact with public authorities at all levels of governance.
- 5.3 As poverty is a form of democratic exclusion, implement the EU Anti-Poverty strategy for reducing extreme, housing, energy, mobility, child, and in-work poverty. The EU Social Economy Action Plan must be operational and acted on by 2027 at the latest.
- 5.4 Link housing, energy and essential services to fossil-fuel phase-out to address the cost-of-living crisis by prioritising vulnerable households and energy communities. The European Affordable Housing Plan must accelerate its focus on affordable housing for all generations and on increasing the housing supply including in limited-profit public housing, while speeding up permitting, upskilling the workforce involved and ensuring that new housing projects fully respect existing environmental standards.
- 5.5 Strengthen youth inclusion and intergenerational fairness through the Youth Check, Youth Guarantee, ALMA, a more robust Child Guarantee, ambitious Erasmus+ and Solidarity Corps programmes, and a post-2027 EU Youth Strategy.

- 5.6 Implement a rights-based water resilience strategy, treating water as a public good, in line with the EESC call for an EU Blue Deal. Apply a ‘Water Test’ for new and revised EU legislation and MFF prioritisation to address the water dimension in all EU policies. Urban policy must follow suit, based on participatory processes and city-to-city cooperation.
- 5.7 Promote renewable energies and decarbonisation in the fisheries and agri-food sector in the post-2027 CFP and CAP to advance resilient production and food systems, aligning with fair farmer incomes, transparency and traceability all along the market chain, decent working conditions, and preventing excessive market concentration, while supporting biodiversity education and organic agriculture.
- 5.8 Target rural, coastal, and remote areas to address depopulation, ageing populations, gender disparities, limited access to services and social divides, while strengthening rural-urban partnerships, local governance and territorial cohesion.

6. Upholding liberal democratic values

- 6.1 The Commission should fully implement the EU Strategy for Civil Society through the meaningful involvement of civil society organisations, grassroots actors and cross-border networks. The Commission should also strengthen civic space monitoring and early warning mechanisms, support national-level independent civil society hubs, including through the AgoraEU programme, and advance the ECBA Directive and the Directive on the protection of the environment through criminal law.
- 6.2 In line with the European Democracy Shield, ensure stronger local participatory democracy through operational tools for democratic intermediation, regional information ecosystems, citizenship and media literacy, anti-disinformation and pro-EU campaigns, concrete follow-up to the European Citizens’ Initiative and participatory budgeting, to foster social capital and community resilience.
- 6.3 Through the Shield, tackle shrinking EU civic spaces and act to implement the European democracy action plan, the Defence of Democracy Package and the Digital Services Act, and close political finance loopholes.
- 6.4 Provide decisive support for independent, local and public-interest media, actively pursuing the goals of the European Media Freedom Act, the Anti-SLAPP Directive and the Media Resilience Programme.
- 6.5 Continue to develop the rule-of-law, anti-corruption and anti-fraud architecture, strengthening follow-up on country recommendations and reinforcing the link between the rule of law and EU funds.
- 6.6 Implement the 2026-2030 gender equality strategy and ensure that the Roadmap for Women’s Rights pursues targeted local-level delivery, supported by an EU-wide monitoring framework with standardised indicators. Action against femicide and domestic and gender-based violence, including online, should be formalised across the EU, prioritising sustainable funding for

preventive education, shelters for emergency and long-term support to victims, and survivor reintegration programmes.

7. A global Europe for the future: leveraging our power and partnerships

- 7.1 Uphold international law, multilateralism and diplomacy, respecting the UN Charter and avoiding military escalation and to achieve peace on the current military conflicts.
- 7.2 Adopt an approach to strategic autonomy that links defence with foreign, trade and industrial policy, enhancing strategic cooperation with like-minded countries, prioritising diversification through new trade agreements and accelerating the ratification of concluded agreements while also deepening trade cooperation in a broader framework of a strengthened World Trade Organization (WTO), ensuring its transparency and predictability and a rules-based multilateral trading system that delivers a sustainable and inclusive trade agenda.
- 7.3 Strengthen EU trade policy and economic security at both multilateral and bilateral level.
- 7.4 Maintain solidarity with Ukraine, pursuing a sustainable and just end to the conflict, and express solidarity with Palestinian people and support a negotiated settlement in the Middle East, building on the 1993 Oslo Accords.
- 7.5 Integrate social economy objectives into the NDICI and Global Europe, and earmark funding for human rights defenders, independent media, and civil society organisations in candidate and partner countries, ensuring the effective involvement of local and regional actors and applying a 'best interests of the child' standard to all migration and asylum partnerships.
- 7.6 Conduct a mid-term assessment of the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans and review of investment projects financed under the Western Balkans Investment Framework.
- 7.7 Strengthen the Union's enlargement agenda, supporting candidate countries with targeted assistance. This should include direct support for civil society and a framework for gradual accession based on economic and societal harmonisation. It should also ensure a level playing field in the single market through alignment with EU laws and standards.
- 7.8 Build on the EESC's enlargement candidate member initiative to explore ways to gradually integrate EU candidates and potential candidates into EU legislative processes and structures.
- 7.9 Ensure that the EU-Middle East strategy provides a framework for peacebuilding, building on the EU Pact for the Mediterranean, and ensure that civil society is involved.
- 7.10 Use the EU's climate and water diplomacy to safeguard water security, restore ecosystems and reduce climate-induced displacement.
- 7.11 Leverage the Global Gateway as a more effective instrument, integrating climate, peace and geo-economic diplomacy.

- 7.12 Elevate the common security and defence policy (CSDP) to a strategic EU priority, reflecting its role in crisis prevention, stabilisation, resilience-building and peace-oriented external action. EU CSDP civilian missions must be recognised as key operational tools, with efforts to improve their visibility and engagement with local actors, while supporting bottom-up approaches to sustained civilian resilience.

Brussels, 18 June 2026.

The President of the European Economic and Social Committee
Séamus BOLAND



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