

Civil society calls for an ambitious sustainable EU agenda

Statement by Cillian Lohan, President of the EESC's Civil Society Organisations' Group

President von der Leyen emphasised in today's [State of the Union address](#) the importance of Europe's competitiveness and independence, as well as its security, climate goals and fundamental values. These **priorities are crucial** for a resilient and prosperous future and address some of the most pressing challenges of our time.

Given both the magnitude and the number of challenges we are facing, **we are calling for an ambitious EU agenda**. Not only is this the only way forward but we would also emphasise that the agenda can only be delivered with strong civil society organisations and empowered communities as partners. The [Civil Society Organisations' Group](#) of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) **stands ready to support such an agenda**, drawing on the expertise and knowledge from the ground of its 109 representatives from the 27 EU Member States. We will continue to challenge the EU institutions to reflect the needs and aspirations of civil society.

We particularly welcome President von der Leyen's commitment to **defending fundamental rights and advancing the green transition**. Engaged citizens and civil society organisations will play a key role in delivering these initiatives. From issues concerning our supply of critical raw materials and defence to insurance: involving civil society organisations can help the EU develop solutions that are truly inclusive and genuinely address the needs of communities all over the EU.

While we welcome President von der Leyen's intention to maintain the EU's climate targets, **we call for a stronger focus on addressing the causes of climate change** – rather than merely on the market opportunities arising from the necessary adaptation actions.

We propose **working towards a dedicated European agenda that fully integrates the 17 Sustainable Development Goals**. Reaffirming the [Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) is essential both at European and international level. With this in mind, the implementation of the [European Green Deal](#) must continue at a sustainable pace that brings everyone along.

We are calling for a **renewed commitment to civil society as a fundamental cornerstone of European democracy**. Europe's democratic infrastructure – of which the EESC is a vital part –

must not only be protected but also strengthened. Active citizens, strong civil society organisations and resilient communities are indispensable for upholding our democratic values, fostering societal cohesion, and delivering sustainable prosperity. This is crucial for the future of the European Union.

Our Union will be stronger and more united when civil society is empowered. As the Civil Society Organisations' Group in the EESC, we are ready to facilitate this. This is how we can further strengthen a Europe that is more democratic, sustainable and closer to its citizens and communities.

Cillian Lohan

President, EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group

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