

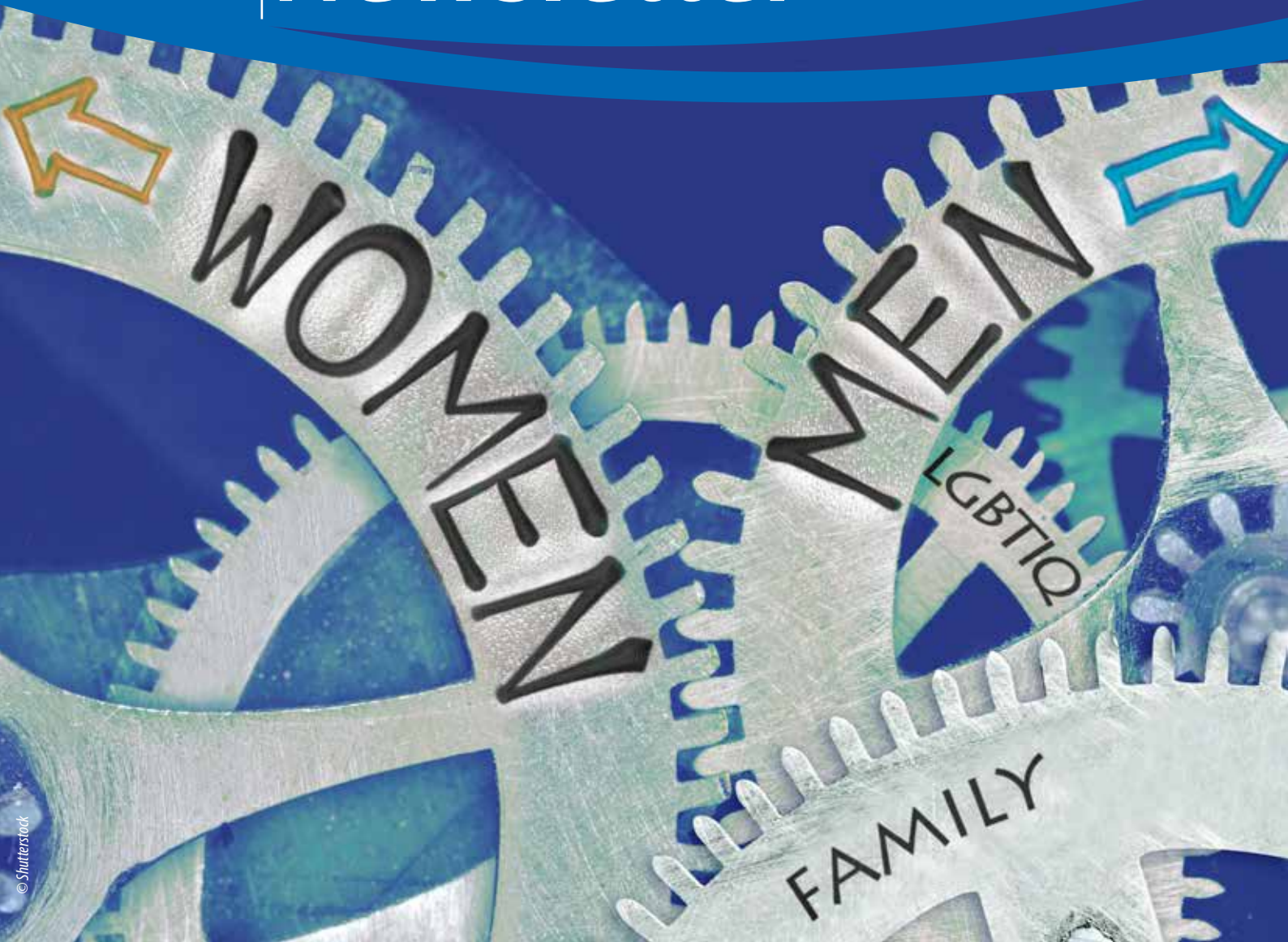
December 2019



European Economic
and Social Committee



Diversity Europe Newsletter



**Diversity Europe
Group's Conference**
on 12 November 2019

**Exploring New
Role Models for
Societies in Europe**

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Foreword

Arno METZLER

President of the Diversity Europe Group



Dear Colleagues,

This month's edition of 'Diversity Europe' focusses on two topics, our conference on 'New Role Models for Societies in Europe' and the EESC resolution on the Western Balkans (Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia). Although thematically unrelated, I decided to showcase these activities because both illustrate the role and added value of the EESC and of wider European civil society. Namely, our ability to be at the forefront of societal change, our determination to find innovative solutions and our courage to promote these solutions vis-à-vis political decision-makers.

It is in this sense that my proposal for establishing an 'EU Family Parliament', that I made during our successful event on 12 November, should be understood. It is not about the structure per se. What matters, is to start a broad process of discussions on the interrelated topics of gender equality, work-life balance, families and carers. It is about investing our creativity, into a topic which is of paramount importance to our societies and economies. It is an area where we can and we must play a key role, promoting mutual understanding and respect

As regards the EESC resolution on Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia, the Committee decided to intervene because through our structured relations with their civil society, we have witnessed first-hand the strong expectations and hopes, which will be frustrated by the decision of the EU Council not to open accession negotiations. I believe that the EESC should continue to lend its ear, to exchange and to instill hope among civil societies in these countries. It is not because the EU Council has taken a negative decision, that we will cease to collaborate with our neighbours! The benefits for the European family will be limitless! It is high time to draw the right conclusions of the misguided process with Turkey. Otherwise, we all pay a price.

Finally, although the end of year festivities are already in sight, the month of December comes with the responsibility to elect the President of our Group for the first half of the next five-year mandate (2020-2025). Here within our Group we are now in the full thrust of election campaigning. I hope that everyone within our Group will abide by the rules of fair play and not stir up rumours and mistrust.

Arno METZLER

President of the Diversity Europe Group

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News from the Diversity Europe Group

Exploring New Role Models for Societies in Europe

On 12 November, the Diversity Europe Group of the EESC held a seminal conference on the topic 'New Role Models for Societies in Europe' which was moderated by Mr Sina, journalist and Director of the WDR/NDR Studio in Brussels. The 180 participants reflected on the vast scope of the subject, which brings together the interconnected themes of gender equality, work-life balance, families and long-term carers. Moreover, issues relating to identity, prejudice, diversity, social norms and attitudes towards change are directly relevant. Indeed, as the new EC President, Ms von der Leyen, will prioritise gender equality during her mandate, the timing of the conference could not have been more appropriate!



Katarina IVANKOVIĆ KNEŽEVIĆ, Director at DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission
Ralph SINA, Director of the WDR/NDR Studio in Brussels
Arno METZLER, President of the Diversity Europe Group

"The EESC can provide a platform for discussions with organised civil society and it is our challenge to begin a discussion on this topic and to deliver the message that civil society should begin reflecting on this subject". With these words, Mr Metzler, President of the Diversity Europe Group, launched the discussions and raised the spectre that social norms, gender roles and expectations are changing, thus reflecting

the increasing diversity within and among European societies. As Ms Langbakk, Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality stated "The role of the EESC is crucial, to draw the picture of diversity. It is for civil society to push decision-makers to acknowledge this diversity".



Virginija LANGBAKK, Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality

Many questions were raised during the conference, such as whether motherhood is still a respected value? Whether Europeans want to take up new models and how to measure the economic contribution of families to societal well-being? However, the discussions also revealed key points of agreement. For example, determining work-life-balance is not only a challenge for women, but also for men, the private sector and governments. As highlighted by Ms Drieskens, President of COFACE Families Europe, it is not enough to close the gender pay gap – we must now also learn to 'Share the Care' and to close the 'Gender Care Gap'. Similarly, Ms Slavova, President of the EESC's REX Section stated that gender equality should be one of the indicators for progress in the accession negotiations with the EU. There was also agreement that having children should not increase the risk of poverty. On the



Annemie DRIESKENS, President of COFACE Families Europe

contrary, children raised in stable and secure family environments constitute a positive investment for future societies.

The day's discussions ended with the President of the Diversity Europe Group stating that organised civil society should not try to convince others on the benefits of particular social models. Quite the opposite: we should strive for tolerance and empathy. The EESC in particular, should take steps towards establishing an 'EU Family Parliament', thus providing a sustainable and visible platform for this crucial topic, which delves into the 'heart' of our diverse European societies.

REFLEXION CORNER

The Western Balkans - Where is their Place?

Dilyana SLAVOVA (BG)

President of the External Relations (REX) Section

Member of the Diversity Europe Group

In October 2019, the European Council **blocked Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia from starting EU membership talks. It was a huge disappointment for these two States.** The failure came despite a recommendation from the European Commission and the European Parliament. The President of the EC, **Mr Jean-Claude Juncker**, said it was “a major historic mistake”. The President of the European Council, **Mr Donald Tusk** said he felt embarrassed. **Mr Johannes Hahn**, the European Commissioner who has led efforts to push both the Republic of North Macedonia and Albania to reform said “To refuse acknowledgement of proven progress will have negative consequences, including the risk of destabilisation of the Western Balkans, with full impact on the EU”.

Yes, there are a lot of shortcomings by the two countries on their way to the EU, but **we should not close our eyes to their achievements.** The **EESC Resolution “Opening accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania: EU credibility and geostrategic interests should be upheld”** adopted at the October plenary, shows without doubt the position of our Committee. We consider that the **EU could take leadership showing that these countries are at least on the right track to the EU.** Through the regular activities of our External Relations Section with our partners from the region – Civil Society Joint Consultative Committees with Montenegro and Serbia, Western

At its October plenary, the EESC adopted the **resolution ‘Opening accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania: EU credibility and geostrategic interests should be upheld’**, which was drafted by **Ms Slavova, President of the EESC’s REX Section** and adopted by the plenary of Committee. The 13-point resolution expresses its **deep disappointment with the EU leaders’ decision to further postpone opening accession negotiations and regrets the failed respect of engagements taken vis-à-vis these two countries.**

To read the **full text of the EESC resolution ‘Opening accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania’**, see here: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/fr/node/74306>

Balkans Civil Society Forums, as well as High Level Civil Society Conferences organized before EU-Western Balkans Summits – we shall continue to be the voice of the civil society of the Western Balkans and act as a bridge towards EU Institutions and their respective governments.

Because we should not forget that the **Western Balkan countries have a shared history and shared common traditions in policy and societal development** and they are in Europe. **It is high time to start to complete the work of reunifying our continent!**



Luca JAHIER, president of the EESC

Lessons from the region teach us that when civic space and democracy are under attack, showing **bigger solidarity on international and global levels might be a game-changer.** Freedom of expression in civil society represents the basic value in civic space, yet it is endangered, especially in time of elections.

According to discussions between **Ms Slavova** and **Ms Rondinelli**, MEP (Italy, Non-attached Member) the latter used parts of the EESC resolution in order to draft amendments to the text of the European Parliament.



OUR GROUP'S STRENGTH

DEBATING THE LIBERAL PROFESSIONS IN THE AGE OF DIGITALISATION



On 13 November 2019, the **Liberal Professions Category** hosted the 5th edition of the **Day of the Liberal Professions**, focusing on **Trust in liberal professions in the age of digitalisation and artificial intelligence**. This edition aimed to gain fresh insight into the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the exercise of professional services and on clients' and patients' rights. The discussions were divided into three thematic panels:

- **Consumer protection, healthcare and digital health**
- **Skills and training**
- **Regulation**

Mr Arno Metzler, President of the EESC Diversity Europe Group, opened the meeting reminding participants on the

importance of trust and quality control in the **definition of the liberal professions (LP)** elaborated in Rome in December 2017 and pointing out the **challenges raised by digitalisation and AI for the provision of professional services**.

The **co-spokesperson of the Category, Mr Rudolf Kolbe** emphasised that "basic values will not become less, but more and more important" and that "**AI started changing liberal professions profoundly**".

Numerous representatives of the liberal professions (LP) at national and European level, as well as academic experts and a representative of the European Commission agreed on the fact that the **com-**

petences, knowledge, specialization, intuition and creativity of the LP are determinant for the quality of result of the AI. "AI cannot weigh money against human life" insisted **Mr Klaus Thürriedl** from the European Council of Engineers and inexplicable automated decision making in health is certainly not the way ahead, underlined the representative of the BEUC **Ms Jelena Malinina**.

Ms Marina Elvira Calderone, co-spokesperson of the liberal professions Category, concluded that this event succeeded in putting together two worlds – AI and LP - that may not speak to each other. It also opened the way to further steps that the EESC could undertake with a possible **own-initiative opinion on the effects and perspectives of AI on professional services in the EU**.

<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/liberal-professions-lever-development-europe-towards-european-manifesto-professionals/documents>

SUPPORTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS ASSOCIATIONS ACROSS EUROPE

On **20 November** the **Voluntary Sector Category** organized a policy debate on EU support for women's rights associations "**How can the EU institutions support the resilience and effectiveness of women's rights associations across Europe?**"

The co-spokesperson of the Category, **Mr Pavel Trantina** opened the meeting that aimed at fostering dialogue between policy makers and women's human rights activists, namely **Mr Predrag Fred Matić**, Croatian MEP and **Ms Monika Ladmanova** from the **Cabinet of Commissioner Věra Jourová**, **Ms Elena Zachrenko** Policy Advisor and Researcher, **Mr Neil Datta** from the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual & Reproductive Rights and **Ms Joanna Maycock**, Secretary General of the European Women's Lobby.

The debate focused on the relevance of policy actions proposed by the European Parliament in February 2019 – the **Resolution on experiencing a backlash**

in women's rights and gender equality in the EU (2018/2684(RSP) and the new Commission's and the new Parliament's working programme, in light of the need for **political, policy and financial support from the grassroots women's rights associations** across the EU, that act on the frontline of the struggle to **preserve the attained standards of gender equality**, currently **under attack** from the radical and clerical populist right across the continent.



Participants agreed on the fact that **women's rights are not to be taken for granted** and that anti-gender trends are independent of far right populism. **Mainstreaming of gender equality** should be **reflected in the EU budget**, for example in the framework of the cohesion fund. **The fight against violence, protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights should also be improved and covered by appropriate regulatory and budgetary measures.**

Monika LADMANOVA, Cabinet of Věra Jourová, current Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality

Predrag Fred MATIĆ, Croatian MEP (S&D), former Minister of War Veterans, and a war veteran himself, substitute member of FEMM

Pavel TRANTINA, Vice-president of the Diversity Europe Group, co-spokesperson of the Voluntary Sector Category

Elena ZACHARENKO, Policy Advisor and Researcher

Neil DATTA, European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual & Reproductive Rights

Joanna MAYCOCK, Secretary General of the European Women's Lobby

OUR GROUP'S STRENGTH

4th EUROPEAN JUSTICE STAKEHOLDERS' FORUM ANNUAL PLENARY – RIGHTS UNDER THREAT?

On 19 November, **Mr Metzler**, President of the Diversity Europe Group of the EESC and the **EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)**, co-hosted at the EESC the 4th annual plenary of the European Justice Stakeholder's Forum (EJSF). Entitled *'Rights under threat – how can the EU Fundamental Rights Charter work better for citizens?'*, the keynote speakers were **Mr Toggenburg**, Policy Coordinator at FRA and **Ms Suurpää**, **Director-General of the Department for Democracy and Public Law of Finland**.

The **EJSF was established in 2016 at the EESC** and its overall objective is **effective law and justice for Europe in a global context**. The EJSF **facilitates engagement and relationship building between legal practitioners and the EU Institutions**, with a view to exploring issues, raising awareness of new challenges and identifying possible solutions on how to enhance policy-making, **protect citizens and uphold the rule of law in Europe**.

In his welcome speech, **Mr Metzler**, informed participants that the meeting constituted the **4th time that the EJSF had been hosted by the Diversity Europe Group** at the EESC. The President highlighted that the Group included Members belonging to the **Liberal Professions** and expressed his **commitment to continued close cooperation with the EJSF in the future**. **Mr Metzler** also informed the audience that the topic of the event was highly relevant to the work of the EESC, notably its **Group on Fundamental Rights and the Rule of Law (FRRL Group)**. The latter has already published the conclusions of exploratory visits to **Romania, Poland, Hungary, France and Austria (2018-2019)** and further missions are foreseen for 2020. The President added that the FRRL Group has faced stern reactions from almost all countries visited and that clearly, the topic remains a sensitive issue in many EU Member States.



Raul RADOI, Secretary General, CNUE – Notaries of Europe
Johanna SUURPÄÄ, Director-General, Department for Democracy and Public Law, Finland
Fiona MURRAY, CEO, Passerelle public affairs
Arno METZLER, President, Diversity Europe Group – EESC
Gabriel TOGGENBURG, Policy Coordinator – EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, European Fundamental Rights Agency
Mirna ROMIC, Legal Secretary, Court of Justice of the European Union,
Jacquelyn MACLENNAN, Partner, White & Case,
Alec BURNSIDE, Dechert LLP

GROUP III MEMBERS working on new opinions

Tommaso DI FAZIO (IT) is the rapporteur of the study group for the opinion "Annual Growth Survey 2020" – **ECO/502**

PRESENTING THE EESC'S EQUALITY INTERGROUP

During the ordinary Group III meeting at the October plenary session, our Members **Ms Morrice** and **Mr Boland**, Group III Vice-President, presented the activities of the new **EESC Equality Intergroup**. They were accompanied by **Ms King from Group I** and **Ms Batut from Group II**.

The speakers explained that **"Equality Intergroup"** was the new name for the former Equality Caucus and that the idea of setting it up had come from **Members of all three Groups**. The main aim of this intergroup is to **promote a culture of equality and transparency within the Committee**. **Ms Morrice** stressed that the new group was not just about gender equality, but also about **all types of discrimination today, including sexuality, age, ethnicity, disability, etc**. **Mr Boland** noted that the intergroup was very much in line with **European values** and stressed the **importance of fairness in any definition of equality**. He added that it would be a considerable challenge for all three Groups at the EESC to find a way to **implement the principles of fairness and equality both in their work and in society**.

THE SOCIAL ECONOMY: MOBILISING CITIES, REGIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY. PACT FOR IMPACT FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

Five years after the Social Economy stakeholders met in **Strasbourg** for the Social Economy event **"Social Entrepreneurs: have your say!"**, the EESC organised its **4th European Day of Social Economy Enterprises in Strasbourg**, gathering well over **200 participants from across Europe**. The event constituted the first public appearance of the newly appointed EC Commissioner, **Mr Nicolas Schmit**.

The EESC was represented by a delegation of 23 members. **Luca Jahier**, **EESC President** and **Ariane Rodert**, **President of the EESC Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption**, intervened during the event, alongside other Group III Members **Messrs Dutto** and **Sibian**.

Moreover, the EESC **hosted one workshop** on the topic **“The EU social market economy: which role for the Social Economy Enterprises?”** and played a **key role in drafting the second Strasbourg Declaration**. This document was handed over to Commissioner **Schmit**. It sets out the **conclusions of the participants** at the event, in addition to **orientations for the next 5 years**. It should be noted that the very successful role of the Committee in promoting the social economy was highlighted by the EC Commissioner and the French High Commissioner for the Social and Solidarity Economy and Social Innovation, Mr Christophe Itier.



Catherine TRAUTMANN, Vice-president of Strasbourg Eurometropole
Christophe ITIER, French High Commissioner for social and solidarity economy and social innovation
Yolanda VALDEOLIVAS, Spanish State Secretary for employment, Ministry for employment and social security
Ariane RODERT, Member of the Diversity Europe Group and President of the INT Section (EESC)
Nicolas SCHMIT, Member of the European Parliament
Henri DREYFUS, Deputy City Counsellor
Roland RIES, Mayor of Strasbourg
Luca JAHIER, President of the EESC
Juan Antonio PEDREÑO, President of Social Economy Europe

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW – TRENDS IN THE EU FROM A CIVIL SOCIETY PERSPECTIVE

On 5 November, the EESC organised the conference **‘Fundamental Rights and the Rule of Law – trends in the EU from a civil society perspective’**. Since 2018, the **Committee has a transversal Group on Fundamental Rights and the Rule of Law (FRRL Group)** and the event on 5 November provided the opportunity to present the principal findings of their visits to **Romania, Poland, Hungary, France and Austria (2018-2019)**. The objectives of the conference also included stimulating a



The Presidents of the EESC’s three Groups
(Jacek KRAWCZYK, Oliver RÖPKE, Arno METZLER)

dialogue with relevant stakeholders, identifying key trends and possible avenues for solutions.

The Presidents of the EESC’s three Groups were invited to comment on the socio-economic perspectives. **Mr Metzler, President of the Diversity Europe Group** of the EESC stressed that it is crucial for the Committee to address these issues, as the **promotion of transparency is one of the fundamental roles of the EESC**. He added that discussing fundamental rights and the rule of law without involving civil society would be unthinkable, despite the fact that the civil society organisations represented within Group III **have little power to defend themselves against organised external pressures**. The President of the Diversity Europe Group highlighted that the **current ‘infection’ of demagoguery** within EU and third countries is considerable and that **citizens are attentive to whether the Committee applies internally the values of Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union**. To this end, Group III has been cooperating closely with the **European Justice Stakeholders’ Forum**, which was launched at the EESC in 2016. Mr Metzler concluded his intervention by stating that **EU values should be reflected in the European way of life** and that no European country should have to live through a repeat of the Nazi dictatorship.



Karolina DRESZLER-SMALEC, Member of the Diversity Europe Group

Ms Dreszler-Smalec, Vice-President of the FRRL Group representing the Diversity Europe Group took the floor to present the work of the FRRL Group. The Vice-President commented that civil society is faced with **very challenging times**, but that they are part of the solution. She urged these actors to **build alliances**, following the example of the EESC and for **the narration of ‘naming and shaming’ to come to an end**.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, ROBOTICS AND DIGITAL SERVICES FOR THE WELLBEING OF CITIZENS

On **21 November 2019**, the **EESC Sections for the Single Market, Production and Consumption (INT)** and for **Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society (TEN)**, in cooperation with the **Finnish EU Presidency and the Finnish Ministries of Social Affairs and Health and Transport and Communications**, organised a high-level conference on **Artificial intelligence, robotics and digital services for the wellbeing of citizens** which took place in Helsinki.



Pierre Jean COULON, President of the TEN Section, Member of the Workers’ Group (EESC)
Ms RODERT, President of the INT Section, Member of the Diversity Europe Group (EESC)

The EESC Members reaffirmed that the **digital revolution must have a human face, be inclusive** and bring about benefits for all European citizens and **people must remain at the core of the new technological developments**.

Ms Ariane Rodert, President of the EESC’s INT Section, underlined that artificial intelligence was one of the main **political priorities of the EESC’s current presidency** and said: **“Artificial intelligence must be developed in a safe and unbiased way and, above all, it must be in line with the values of the EU. We need to ensure that artificial intelligence and its applications promote the wellbeing and empowerment of people with due respect for fundamental rights.”**

One of the three panels was dedicated to AI and robotics for healthcare and well-being and Group III Member **Mr Diego Dutto** stressed that **“Digital tools must be a lever to develop new forms of organisation in health and care systems**. However, they must not to be misinterpreted: they are **not a savings package for healthcare budgets and must not lead to staff cuts or cuts in services”**.

Highlights of the October plenary session

Encouraging dialogue with UK civil society post Brexit

Speaking to the EESC plenary for a third time, **Mr Barnier, EC chief negotiator for Brexit**, updated Members on recent developments and **highlighted the extreme complexity of the negotiations**. Mr Barnier recalled that his mandate is to **negotiate an orderly withdrawal of the UK** and noted that today the **EU is better prepared for Brexit** compared to last year. Nonetheless, he added that significant differences in the levels of preparedness exist between **larger companies and SMEs**. The EC chief negotiator also stressed that the **protection of citizen's rights, maintaining peace and stability and a fair outcome for both sides**, must be the end result of the negotiations. The task of forging a new relationship with the UK will be the next challenging EU priority.



Michel BARNIER, EC Chief negotiator for Brexit with Arno METZLER, President of the Diversity Europe Group – EESC

In the ensuing discussion, **Mr Metzler**, President of the Diversity Europe Group of the EESC congratulated Mr Barnier for his **gold standard in negotiations**, notably as regards European citizens and the question of Ireland. The Group III President stressed that **fruitful relations must be maintained with UK civil society**.

Ms Oldfather referred to the recent **visit of the EESC Brexit Group to Scotland**, when the future relations between Scotland and the EU, as well as the possibility of a **Scottish Citizens' Assembly**, were discussed.



Ms Morrice asked the EC chief negotiator if he could **guarantee acting on behalf of both sides in Ireland**. Secondly, she asked if the UK decided finally to remain in the EU, would the **EU welcome the country back "with open arms"**.

Mr McLoughlin expressed the view that more patience is required but that it is still **possible to reverse Brexit**. Whilst **Mr Jones** informed Mr Barnier that the Committee will visit Cardiff in two weeks and that it is crucial that **civil society reflects the wishes of citizens in both urban and rural areas**.



Mr Boland asked the EC chief negotiator **how much longer would Brexit be negotiated** and for how much longer would Mr Barnier be the **'midwife' of this process**. In turn, **Mr Balon** pointed to the need for a **strong and structured relationship between civil society in the UK and the EU**.



Finally, **Mr Watson** noted that if the UK rediscovers its compass, then **Article 50 may be revoked**, but not if the English vote heavily for the nationalists at the upcoming UK elections. He added that if this is the outcome of the elections, then **civil society in the UK will need the help and creativity of the EESC**.



What cultural vision for Europe?

A stimulating debate took place on the **positive contribution that culture** could make to **European identity**, cohesion and as a stimulus for growth and innovative solutions. Speakers on the panel included **Mr Wilkens**, Director of the European Cultural Foundation, **Mr Sacco**, advisor to Commissioner Navracsics, **Mr Berg**, Artistic Director of the Festival of the Regions and **Ms Kaschl-Mohni**, Director of the Goethe Institute in Brussels.

In the ensuing discussion, **Mr Jones** highlighted that the **potential of culture to unite or to divide**, is considerable. The rapporteur of the **EESC Opinion 'Contribution of Europe's Rural Areas to the 2018 Year of Cultural Heritage'**, stressed that investments are necessary so that crafts people transmit their skills to younger generations and for infrastructure and cultural facilities to be made available in rural areas.



Mr Di Fazio, commented that cultural contacts can help individuals overcome fears and called for **increased funds for culture** in the forthcoming **Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF)**.



Ms Morrice informed that "dove" is the English translation of the name **"Columbanus"**, the Irish pilgrim who is often referred to as the **patron saint of European unity**. Ms Morrice called for an EU building to be named after this Saint. She also urged support for the **creation of a path of peace, a 'WhiteDoveWay', to connect Northern Ireland and Nicosia in the Republic of Cyprus**.

DIVERSITY EUROPE

MEMBERS in the spotlight



Mr Metzler, President of the Diversity Europe Group of the EESC reminded Members that there is an Erasmus programme dedicated to young entrepreneurs and stressed that the future of Culture and of Europe are inseparable. The President highlighted the important role of artists in European identity and called for better remuneration, pensions and the transfer of tax revenues across borders. He noted that the EESC could provide an important impetus to support the sector.

EESC's contribution to the European Commission's 2020 work programme and beyond



The October plenary also saw the adoption by a large majority, of 'The EESC's contribution to the EC 2020 work programme and beyond', for which the Group III rapporteur was Mr Ribbe. The resolution stressed that the EC should focus on climate change, digitalization, the rule of law and globalization, within a new system of EU governance, which strengthens participation by organised civil society. For the full text of the EESC resolution, see here :

<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/publications-other-work/publications/european-economic-and-social-committees-contribution-2020-european-commissions-work-programme-and-beyond>

Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities: a multi-pronged approach

Ioannis VARDAKASTANIS (EL)

President

Greek National Confederation of Disabled People (NCDP)

European Disability Forum (EDF)

Treasurer of the International Disability Alliance (IDA)

Member of the Economic and Social Council of Greece (OKE) and of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights (EEDA)

Vice-President of the Diversity Europe Group

MEETING VICE PRESIDENT SCHINAS

On 29 October, the Vice President of EESC Diversity Group, Mr Ioannis Vardakastanis met with the EC Vice-President designate for 'Promoting our European Way of Life', Mr Schinas. The EDF delegation stressed the importance of achieving equal rights for persons with disabilities, who constitute 15% of the population, and briefed the Vice-President designate on the priorities of the disability movement.



Margaritis SCHINAS (EC Vice-President designate for Promoting our European Way of Life)

Ioannis VARDAKASTANIS (Vice-President of the Diversity Europe Group – EESC)

Mr Vardakastanis commented: "Vice-President designate Schinas will have an essential role to play in advancing our rights for the next 5 years. We need to see hope to see concrete advances, including a strong agenda that protects persons with disabilities, especially those that suffer from mul-

ti-ple discrimination such as women with disabilities, refugees with disabilities and migrants with disabilities."

MEETING FINNISH PRIME MINISTER ANTTI RINNE

On 8 November, Mr Vardakastanis and the Finnish Disability Forum met with the Finnish Prime Minister, Mr Rinne. The Prime Minister was briefed on the priorities of the disability movement, including:

- Achieving full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and in particular ensuring that the Council itself establishes a focal point for the CRPD
- Ensuring a strong European Disability Rights Agenda post 2020. The importance of an ambitious application of accessibility laws, including transposition of the European Accessibility Act and implementation of the Web Accessibility Directive.
- The importance of implementation of the EU Pillar of Social Rights and removing all barriers to employment for persons with disabilities, including through the use of EU funds- the next EU budget should be used to invest in an inclusive accessible Europe.



John Patrick CLARKE, Vice-President of the European Disability Forum

Antti RINNE, Prime Minister of Finland
Ioannis VARDAKASTANIS, Vice-President of the Diversity Europe Group – EESC

Gunta ANČA, EDF Secretary - Member of the Diversity Europe Group – EESC

Sari HANNELE KOKKO, President of the Finnish Disability Forum (FDF)

DIVERSITY EUROPE MEMBERS in the spotlight

Mr Vardakastanis stated that *“Finland is seen as a world leader in many areas concerning social issues. We hope to see disability inclusion added to that list in the near future”*.

MEETING COMMISSIONER DESIGNATE SCHMIT

On 12 November, the Vice President of EESC Diversity Group, **Mr Vardakastanis met** with the **Commissioner-Designate for Jobs, Mr Schmit**. The former stressed the following:

- **Ensuring the Youth Guarantee can properly support young persons with disabilities.**
- **Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, especially principle 17: Inclusion of persons with disabilities.**
- **Removal of obstacles to freedom of movement to work (and live):** persons with disabilities are still being denied their right to live and work in other EU Member States
- Inclusion of persons with disabilities in the open labour market.



Nicolas SCHMIT, Commissioner-Designate for Jobs and partners
Catherine NAUGHTON, EDF Director
Haydn HAMMERSLEY, EDF policy officer
Ioannis VARDAKASTANIS, Vice-President of the Diversity Europe Group – EESC

During the meeting, Mr Vardakastanis stressed that: *“We need equal access to the open labour market and that includes the freedom to work wherever we want in the EU. We count on Commissioner-Designate Schmit to ensure this equal access”*.

EESC IN CYPRUS FOR THE RIGHTS IN EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

A delegation of EESC Members (**Ms Zvolská and Messrs Vardakastanis and Lefebvre**) together with the European Disability Forum (EDF), visited Cyprus on 19 November to learn about the employment of persons with disabilities and the implementation of the UNCRPD. Fruitful meetings were held with **Cypriot Ministers and representatives of local organisations of persons with disabilities**, etc.



Michalis ANTONIOU, Director General and Member of the Employers' Group (Group I – EESC)
George PETROU, president of Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation (OEB)
Marie ZVOLSKA, Member of the Employers' Group (Group I – EESC)
Ioannis VARDAKASTANIS, Vice-President of the Diversity Europe Group (Group III – EESC)
Christakis NICOLAIDIS, president of Confederation of persons with disabilities Cyprus
Christophe LEFÈVRE, Member of the Workers' Group (Group II – EESC)
Konstantinos EFREM, general director of Confederation of persons with disabilities

EUROMED SUMMIT of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions – ‘Going Far and Going Together’

Dilyana SLAVOVA (BG)
President of the External Relations (REX) Section
Member of the Diversity Europe Group

Relations between the EU and its Southern neighbours constitute one of REX's priorities. This year the EESC organized the **2019 Euromed**

Summit in cooperation with the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat, in Barcelona (Spain) on 22-23 October 2019. This year's Summit focused on **“Digitalization and SMEs in the Mediterranean region”**. The EESC is currently preparing a draft report on this topic and it will integrate the outcome of discussions in its final version to ensure an effective follow-up.

A special welcome was given to the **co-organizers and hosts of the forum:**

- **Mr Rachid Maaninou**, Deputy Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat
- **Mr Luca Jahier**, President of the EESC
- **Ms María del Carmen Barrera**, acting President of the Economic and Social Council of Spain

And the **special guests of honour:**

- **Mr Levent Goç**, Vice-president of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey
- **Mr Konrad Mizzi**, Maltese Minister for tourism
- **Mr Mounir Mahjoubi**, former French Secretary of State for digital affairs
- **Mr Ahmed El Wakil**, President of the Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the Mediterranean (ASCAME)

This Summit was a wonderful occasion to underline the **excellent collaboration between the EESC and the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat**. This is already the **second time that the EESC organizes the Euromed Summit in Barcelona**, the city where a Euro-Mediterranean Conference launched the Barcelona process nearly 25 years ago. Cooperation between the EU and its Southern neighbours was revitalised in 2008 in the form of the Union for the Mediterranean. In 2010, the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat was established, to empower regional dialogue among the UfM Member States and stakeholders.



Placing family policy at the heart of civil society dialogue

Ágnes CSER (HU)

*Representative of the Hungarian Alliance for Children and Youth
Member of the Diversity Europe Group*

Kinga JOÓ (HU)

*Vice-President
Hungarian National Association of Large Families (NOE)
Member of the Board of the National Cooperation Fund (NEA)
Member of the Diversity Europe Group*

Three workshops took place during the event in Barcelona:

- 1. The cost of non-digitalization**
- 2. Digital skills and their impact on youth employment**
- 3. Digitalization to counter rural depopulation**

In the second panel **Ms Slavova** shared the experience and good practices of the **Bulgarian Economic and Social Council** in the field of **digitalization** expressed in the three opinions they elaborated on the topic:

- **The Future of Labour: Challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution**
- **Challenges Facing Bulgarian Citizens Due to the Risks of the Global Digital Environment**
- **Challenges facing labour in the context of digitalization of the economy**

On the second day of the Summit, **Mr Arno Metzler, President of the EESC's Diversity Europe Group**, moderated the panel devoted to **development**



*Henri MALOSSE, former president of the EESC
Dilyana SLAVOVA, President of the REX Section of the EESC
Josep SÁNCHEZ LLIBRE, president of Foment del Treball Nacional
Luca JAHIER, president of the EESC
María Helena DE FELIPE LEHTONEN, president of the Euromed Follow-Up Committee of the EESC and member of the Employers' Group (EESC)
Arno METZLER, president of the Diversity Europe Group (EESC)*

policy and presented his draft opinion on the topic. He underlined that EU development policy seeks to foster the sustainable development of developing countries, with the **primary aim of eradicating poverty, stimulating sustainable growth and job creation, promoting peace and security/stability, good governance and human rights.**

Development policy is a cornerstone of EU relations with the outside world and contributes to the objectives of EU external action – alongside foreign, security and trade policy (and international aspects of other policies like environment, agriculture and fisheries). When implementing these aims, the policies should in any case ensure a **“decent life” and enforce the rule of law. To achieve common objectives, strengthening economic collaboration will be crucial,** said **Mr Metzler.** Recent years have witnessed approaches to a new paradigm in **EU-Africa relations** (for example in agriculture), focusing increasingly on policy cooperation and the **promotion of sustainable investment and a stable, responsible and inclusive business environment.** This paradigm has to be successfully developed and must include more local people on the ground. **The EESC recommends the establishment at the EU level of a one-stop-shop policy and an appropriate consultation mechanism for providing information and contacts to those wanting to invest in and collaborate with Africa.**

At the invitation of **Mr Vince Szalay-Bobrovniczky, Deputy State Secretary for Civil Relations, Mr Metzler,** President of the Diversity Europe Group of the EESC visited Budapest on 14 October to meet with the **Presidents of the Hungarian Economic and Social Council** and to be informed on the **new Hungarian family policy,** introduced in the summer of 2019. Norbert Görög, Head of Department of Demography, Family and Youth of the Ministry of Human Resources gave an overview of the current **demographic situation in Hungary** and on the **seven-point Family Protection Action Plan.** The Action Plan mainly targets large families, but also **motivates families without children or with one or two children to increase the size of their family.** By promoting a **labour-based social culture,** the government favours a family support scheme related to employment, including allowances, benefits, tax-cuts. The ratio of these employment-tied benefits has significantly grown since 2010.

After the presentation, **Mr Metzler** commented on the situation of families in Hungary and in Europe and stated that the Diversity Europe Group is planning to establish a **‘Family Parliament’ within the Committee,** in order to discuss topics relating to family

DIVERSITY EUROPE MEMBERS in the spotlight

policy. **Mr Metzler** emphasized that when shaping such policies, it is very important for citizens to be heard. The President added that policy **proposals should be elaborated in such a way that the population can clearly understand them.**

President Metzler also attended a meeting with **representatives of Hungarian family and children organizations** (Three Princes and Three Princesses Movement, Maria Kopp Institute for Demography and Families, National Association of Large Families, Hungarian Children and Youth Association), as well as Group III Members **Ms Ágnes Cser** and **Ms Kinga Joó**. The topic of the discussion was **“Impact analyses and good practices in the light of the Hungarian family policy measures”**. President Metzler acknowledged the policy-shaping impact of civil society actors on Hungarian family policy and introduced again his idea of **European Family Parliament**, which was warmly welcomed by the local organizations.



Eniko UJVARI, Head of “Balance” program

Kinga JOÓ, Vice-President of the Hungarian National Association of Large Families (NOE) – Member of the Board of the National Cooperation Fund (NEA) – Member of the Diversity Europe Group (EESC)

Katalin GYURKO, president of the National Association of Large Families (NOE)

Arno METZLER, president of the Diversity Europe Group

Ágnes CSER, Representative of the Hungarian Children’s and Youth Alliance (NOE)

Balázs MOLNÁR, vice-president of the Maria Kopp Institute for Demography and Families

Convergence - Global Blockchain Congress 2019

Ariane RODERT (SE)

*Senior policy adviser, Church of Sweden
President of the INT Section of the EESC
Member of the Diversity Europe Group*

On **12 November** the European Commission, International Association of Trusted Blockchain Applications (IN-ATBA), EU Blockchain Observatory & Forum and Alastria, gathered stakeholders at the **‘Convergence - the Global Blockchain Congress 2019’** in Malaga. The congress was the first global blockchain conference and highlighted the importance of blockchain technology and the advantages of DLT compared to current systems and the importance of blockchain for the public sector and SMEs.

Ms Ariane Rodert, President of the INT Section of the EESC, was invited to speak in a panel on **“Blockchain for a sustainable society and new business models”**. **Ms Rodert** presented the main recommendations from the recently adopted **EESC opinion on Blockchain and the Single Market** (for the recommendations of this Opinion please see the Section on Overview of our Members’ Work at the EESC). Social impact and sustainable societies, together with **new business models**, were the key topics of the EESC intervention on the panel, highlighting the **importance of blockchain technology for the European single market, European values and coherence, ensuring inclusiveness and sustainable business models.**

Read more here:

<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/convergence-global-blockchain-congress>

Integrating national energy and climate plans

Tommaso DI FAZIO (IT)

*National President
Italian Confederation of Academic Professionals
Member of the Diversity Europe Group*

Europe has no future unless it develops a culture of sustainability, one that can support the energy transition and climate neutrality and **get all sections of society consciously and proactively involved. No one country can address climate change alone**, but by working together, at all levels, we can make a big difference.

In the opinion that I recently drafted and that was adopted at the October plenary session (TEN 700 - Integrated national energy and climate plans), the EESC threw its support behind the **European Commission’s Communication on the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs)** and stressed that success in implementing these will depend on **how much buy-in they have from the population at large, through a bottom-up process of involvement.**

Awareness-raising, especially from an early age, **is essential**. People need to share a belief in the importance of sustainability and to behave accordingly. A vigorous information and communication campaign also needs to be mounted, for example by **capitalising on the network of national economic and social councils. This means a key role for civil society organisations.**

The **new energy system** needs to be **more inclusive, sustainable, cost-effective, fair and safe**. To this end, the Committee thinks the NECPs should include a **human-centric approach to the energy transition**, in



which decisions on global energy and climate challenges are based on **social consensus**, while at the same time **creating value for businesses and society**. On no account should this put at risk the energy triangle of security and access, environmental and social sustainability, and economic development and competitive growth.

Participation of Ms Heinisch in event 'It's not rocket science – closing the gender gap in STEM'

Renate HEINISCH (DE)

Pharmacist

Board Member of the Federal Association of Senior Citizens' Organisation (BAGSO)

Former Member of the European Parliament (1994-99)

Chair of the Baden-Württemberg Parents' Association

Member of the Diversity Europe Group

Women represent half of the world's population, but their representation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) lags behind. Women account for less than 30% of the world's researchers and only 35% of STEM students.

The conference entitled '**It's not rocket science: closing the gender gap in STEM**', held on 12 November, was hosted by the Friends of Europe organisation. During the conference, four panelists took the floor: Olivier Crouzet, head of pedagogy at Ecole 42; Stefan Hermans, director of policy strategy and evaluation at the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture at the EC; Trudy Morgan, technical coordinator at UNOPS; and Lindsay Nefesh-Clarke, founder and President of Women's WorldWide Web and European Young Leader.

The questions and problems raised at the conference included:

- How can the EU help countries to close the gender gap in STEM?
- What barriers must be dismantled so that more girls can attain the education required for high-skilled digital work?
- How can institutions, civil society and businesses work together to reduce the gender imbalance in STEM?



Western Balkans in the Focus - International Conference in Sofia

Dilyana SLAVOVA (BG)

President of the External Relations (REX) Section

Member of the Diversity Europe Group

A conference on '**Knowledge Society and 21st Century Humanism**' is held annually on 1 November at the University of **Library Studies and Information Technologies** and is dedicated to the **Leaders of the Bulgarian Revival**.

In addition to celebrating these historic leaders, the aim of the event is to provide an opportunity for the academic community to acquaint themselves with various thematic topics. The University of Library Studies and Information Technologies presented a number of scientific papers at the '**17th National Scientific Conference with International Participation Knowledge Society and 21st Century Humanism**'.

A number of scientists and students from the region of the Western Balkans were present at the conference and ex-

pressed their concerns regarding the **EU future for the countries in their region**. The President of the Board, **Professor Stoyan Denchev** recommended **strengthening and deepening cooperation among the universities in the region**. He also proposed setting up a specific network embracing scientific capacity in the fields of cyber security and archive maintenance and update.



Dr Vlado BUCKOVSKI, former Prime Minister of North Macedonia

Prof DSc Stoyan DENCHEV, President of the University General Assembly, State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, Sofia

Prof. Irena PETEVA, Rector of the State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, Sofia

Dilyana SLAVOVA, President of the REX Section of the EESC

Ms Slavova delivered a speech at the opening of the Conference, presenting the **EESC Resolution on the delayed opening of the negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania**. Ms Slavova assured participants that the EESC will continue to develop its **bilateral and regional relations with civil society organizations**, in order to strengthen civil society networks and therefore contribute to the consolidation of **democracy**.

Culture crops event

Tom JONES (UK)

Farmer

Vice-President of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)

Member of the Diversity Europe Group

On 23 and 24th of October, **Mr Jones** represented the EESC at **Culture Action Europe's** conference in Konstanz-Kreuslingen. The title of conference was '**Culture Crops**' and delegates shared examples of artists, theatre and musicians working innovately with local communities, bringing **economic and socially inclusive benefits**.

Overview of our Members' Work in the

INT/885 - Blockchain and the EU Single Market: what next?

Ariane RODERT (SE)

Senior policy adviser, Church of Sweden
President of the SOC Section of the EESC
Member of the Diversity Europe Group

The EESC:

- Calls for the **creation of an EU BC Stakeholder platform** to bring together representatives from the EU, industries, consumers, Member States, academics etc., to provide **a space for joint learning and capacity-building, a network of networks and sharing good practices**
- Calls for the enhancement of European knowledge, expertise, which will enable European actors to equally participate when creating blockchain based solutions and contribute to **better quality of work, the well-being of EU citizens and strengthening the European values**
- Encourages the Institutions to facilitate the **involvement of civil society organisations** in the **Observatory, Forum and European Blockchain Partnership**, as the successful development of blockchain and the new digital infrastructures should involve a **fully-fledged process of disruptive social innovation**.



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ECO/496 - VAT and excise duty exemption for defence efforts

Benjamin RIZZO (MT)

Financial and management consultant;
President of the Civil Society Committee within the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD); President of the Malta Federation of Professional Associations
Member of the Diversity Europe Group

The EESC:

- Recognises the Commission's **aim of ensuring equal treatment**, for VAT purposes, for armed forces of Member States **working together within** an EU framework and NATO armed forces employed in the EU, which already benefit from VAT exemption.
- Understands that the two conditions for the exemption set out in the EC proposal are that



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armed forces are deployed outside their own Member States and that they are involved in a **European common defence effort**.

- Accepts that there are some areas not covered by the new exemption. These areas concern, in particular, security purposes, humanitarian rescue tasks and cases in which the solidarity clause is evoked.

SOC/618 - Investor Citizenship and Residence Schemes in the EU

Jean-Marc ROIRANT (FR)

Vice-President of the Education League
President of the European Civic Forum and Civil Society Europe
Member of the Diversity Europe Group

The EESC:

- Echoes the European Parliament's call to phase out all **investor schemes**, and **urges** the Member States to follow this recommendation or provide reasonable arguments and evidence for not doing so.
- Recommends that Member States be urged to **apply a due diligence process without specific duration restrictions and adapted to the high-risk profile of applicants**, i.e. enhanced due diligence standards as detailed in the Fifth Anti-Money Laundering Directive.
- Recommends that the EC establish a **coordination mechanism** that allows Member States to exchange information on successful and rejected applications for citizenship and residence permits.

Video on this opinion:

<https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/093421-000-A/ue-la-fin-des-visas-dores/>



TEN/700 - Integrated national energy and climate plans

Tommaso DI FAZIO (IT)

National President of the Italian Confederation of Academic Professionals
Member of the Diversity Europe Group

The EESC:

- Welcomes the fact that the EU is the first major global economy to adopt, through specific National Energy and Climate Plans, a legally binding framework to deliver on its 2015 commitments under the COP21 Paris Agreement and the UN 2030 Agenda, under which the **Member States** have been called on to draw up proposals for "integrated" **National Energy and Climate Plans**.
- Considers that a human-centric transition must be recommended in the NECPs towards a **more inclusive, sustainable, cost-effective, fair and safe global energy system**.
- Believes that to nurture a **widespread culture of sustainability** it must be broadly disseminated in the education and training systems at all levels from childhood on, and result in the proactive and conscious participation of all parts of society.



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ECO/499 - 2018-2019 European Semester country visits

Reine-Claude MADER (FR)

Member of the Consumption, Housing and Living Conditions Association (CLCV)
Member of the Diversity Europe Group

The EESC:

- Decided to raise awareness on the European Semester process and to **strengthen the involvement of civil society in this process**, as well as to consult it on the content of the country-specific recommendations published by the European Commission.
- Aim is threefold: to provide a contribution to the European Semester exercise on the part of **civil society**; to increase awareness of this process among civil society organisations; and to improve knowledge of the country-specific recommendations decided



on by the Council to make it possible to follow up on them.

- Proposes organising a **European Semester Day** each year in cooperation with Member States to pursue dialogue.



NAT/759 - A more constructive role for civil society in implementing environmental law

Arnaud SCHWARTZ (FR)
National secretary of France Nature Environnement
Member of the Diversity Europe Group

The EESC:

- Stresses the fact that environmental legislation is not properly implemented because of a **lack of political will at all institutional levels**.
- Calls on the EC to develop a **better compliance framework at EU level**. This should happen with more transparent and resolute handling of complaints and infringements, but also by adding greater human and financial resources.
- Supports the Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) process**, which is key to providing a wide range of environmental information on issues such as sustainability, climate change and quality of life in Europe.

NAT/762 - EC Progress Report on the EU Forest Strategy

Andreas THURNER (AT)
Head of the Austrian Agriculture Chamber's Brussels office
Member of the Diversity Europe Group

The EESC:

- Calls for an **updated EU Forest Strategy after 2020**, which could feasibly look ahead to 2050, to ensure coherent implementation of well-recognised political commitments such as the UN Strategic Plan for Forests, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement.
- Underlines the **importance of the multifunctional role of forests** and notes that climate change is a threat to ecosystem services. A solid mix of financial instruments is crucial to ensuring continued investment in



modern technology as well as in climate and environmental measures to strengthen the multifunctional role of forests.

- Recommends a **mapping of the status of the workforce** and a forecasting of labour needs in the European forest-based sector.

NAT/766 - Evaluation of the impact of the CAP on generational renewal

John BRYAN (IE)
Chairman of the EU Commission's Sheep Reflection Group, former IFA (Irish Farmers' Association) President, former Vice-President of COPA Cogeca responsible for trade, Spokesperson of the EESC Farmers' Category
Member of the Diversity Europe Group

The EESC:

- Highlights the importance of the CAP and a properly functioning Single Market to **sustain viable farming** and to attract young farmers into the sector.
- Is in favour of raising the ceiling for **start-up aid for young farmers**, but, before this start-up aid is granted, there is a need for in-depth advice on drawing up a realistic business plan and planning activities.
- Recommends the option of a **pre-retirement scheme** in Member States as part of CAP Pillar II



NAT/770 - Blue bio-economy (exploratory opinion)

Simo TIAINEN (FI)
Director, Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners MTK
Member of the Diversity Europe Group

The EESC:

- Calls for the EU and other actors within the blue bio-economy to come up with urgent action to combat **climate change and its**

impact. Fisheries, aquaculture and algae culture are crucial to increase sustainable aquatic food production in the EU.

- Suggests that the **blue bio-economy become one of the flagship areas of EU policies** and in its cooperation policies with neighbouring countries, as well as in the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the COP 21 Goals of the Paris Agreement.

Interview on the opinion:

<http://www.europost.eu/en/a/view/simo-tiainen-circularity-is-essential-for-blue-bioeconomy-26718>



SC/053 - Leaving no one behind when implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

Lutz RIBBE (DE)
Director of the Department for Nature Conservation Policy at the environmental foundation EuroNatur
Member of the Diversity Europe Group

The EESC:

- Believes that **social concerns should be addressed in full synergy with environmental and economic ones**. The implementation of the SDGs in the EU requires merging the social with the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability, bringing about a systemic change and overcoming the silo thinking prevalent in current EU strategies.
- Calls on the European Commission, Parliament, Council and Member States to: set up a **European Green and Social Deal as part of an overarching "EU 2050 Sustainable Development Strategy"**, make a systematic assessment of the potential side-effects of the transition on Europe's population (especially poor and vulnerable groups) and structurally weak regions, as well as better understand the intergenerational drivers of sustainability and inequality



CONGRATULATIONS!

Mr **Hernández Bataller** was awarded with the Honorary Medal of the LLM in EU Law from the Universidad Carlos III in Madrid. The award was presented in the context of the 30th Edition of the LLM in EU Law at the Universidad Carlos III on 25 October.



CULTURAL EVENING

Following our high-level conference on **'New Role Models for Societies in Europe'** on 12 November, our Group organised a **cultural event**.

It was a dance performance entitled **"Physical poem to Lascia ch'io Pianga"**; based on improvisation techniques. The performance was the **closing act of our flagship autumn event** that explored topics such as **gender equality, Work Life Balance, parenting and contemporary families, ageing and demographics**.

Choreographed by **Anne Pajunen** and performed by a couple of dancers, **Meri Pajunpää** and **Miguel Do Vale**, the show enchanted an audience of approximately 40 participants through **the powerful representation of the life cycle of partners**.



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