



European Economic  
and Social Committee

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# Diversity Europe Newsletter



**TOWARDS A MORE  
INCLUSIVE EUROPE**

# FOREWORD

**Séamus BOLAND (IE)**

*President, Diversity Europe Group*

## For a more inclusive Europe, Civil Society needs recognition.



In the last ten years, students of the European Union have been able to compare two different approaches to managing serious crises.

For the financial crisis, from which there are still legacy issues, the Union managed under a strict austerity umbrella. Countries at the fore front were forced to live with massive cuts across a whole range of services, many of them affecting families whose members had lost jobs and that were deep in personal debt and had to accept the reality that they were adding to the statistics of poverty. Of course many European politicians forgot immediately the previous programme of eradicating poverty by 2021. For the second crisis, the health pandemic, the EU adopted a completely different approach. It was one in which we circumvented some of the governing financial rules. By doing this Europe managed to distribute the vaccines on an equitable basis across Member States, making sure that all countries had the opportunity to implement vaccination programmes. This approach was a demonstration of putting into practice the phrase 'Leave No One Behind' often alluded to by the European Commission President von der Leyen. It also demonstrated the good that the EU can do and in some way restored some hope among EU citizens.

I use these examples because they were referred to at a number of events held in the last weeks and in which I participated. For example, at the superbly organised Connecting EU seminar 2021<sup>1</sup> entitled 'What kind of Europe do you dream of?', recently held by the Committee in Lisbon

or during the ongoing discussions at the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE<sup>2</sup>). It was stimulating to hear from many civil society organisations the message that the EU must remain attached to its founding principles and that fairness, justice and equality must inform all policy formation.

This message also came across at our conference<sup>3</sup> held in partnership with Civil Society Europe on 5 November. Again there was a plea to the EU and to all Member States that they must not leave organised civil society behind. The event struck a chord with the many people who registered. All of them, were extremely worried by the lack of connection between EU policy-makers and people in their communities.

At the last CoFoE plenary session in Strasbourg, there were passionate calls made by the representatives of citizens' panels, to ensure that the important linkages created by the Conference are maintained in a structured way, after the end process has ended.

Structured and regular dialogue and the involvement of civil society organisations, are also very close to the topic of this newsletter. They are the basis for a more inclusive Europe. Be it people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, migrants or the elderly, all groups in society must be listened to. Policy-making needs to be done with all groups of society and not for them.

Finally, over the last month I have managed to meet many of you, despite these difficult times, where many Members have only recently visited Brussels. For new Members I am conscious that you are still acclimatising to the Committee and to all its work.

I am consistently impressed with how you have adapted and are managing the work. My door will always be open to you, so please reach out to me!

Séamus Boland

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1. EESC, Connecting EU seminar 2021, <https://europa.eu/fvjvwm>

2. Conference on the Future of Europe, <https://futureu.europa.eu/?locale=en>

3. EESC, Conference: Civil Society Organisations: Key Actors for the Future of Europe, <https://europa.eu/UkGvfb>

# TOWARDS A MORE INCLUSIVE EUROPE

OP-ED

## A more inclusive Europe

**Bryndís SNÆBJÖRNSDÓTTIR**  
*Vice-President, Inclusion Europe<sup>1</sup>*  
*Former Chairperson, National Association of Intellectual Disabilities, Iceland*



Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir

Deinstitutionalisation is the key to a more inclusive Europe. The countries in Europe that still operate institutions for people with disabilities must put forward an action plan with clear objectives, timelines and resource allocation stating when and how these institutions will be closed. Furthermore, there should be a strict requirement that the community apartments replacing these institutions are small and that there are only a limited number in the same location. These new community apartments must recognise the rights of people with disabilities to lead an independent life, with the support needed to be in control of their own lives and participate in the community. For people with disabilities, being included in the community on an equal basis with

others is a human rights issue, not a welfare concern. All people with disabilities have the right to take part in all aspects of society such as education, employment, participation in cultural life and leisure activities. This can only be achieved through changes that secure appropriate support based on respect for their human rights.

A more inclusive Europe calls for reasonable accommodation and effective support for people with disabilities. Children with disabilities must have the right to attend their neighbourhood school with appropriate assistance, receive the support needed to be included in their local communities and not be sent to institutions or segregated facilities. Adults with disabilities should be supported to take part in the open labour market and not be forced into placements in segregated workshops. Their right to live in the community and to choose where and with whom they live must be respected. Institutions and group homes should be a thing of the past.

When European countries plan their infrastructures, law and policies, they must collaborate with organisations



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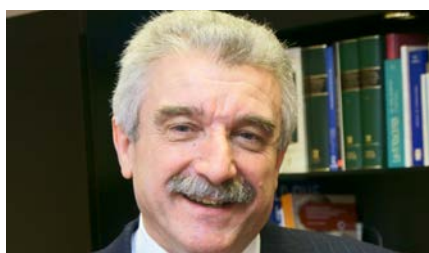
of people with disabilities to make sure they meet the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD<sup>2</sup>). A solid knowledge of the CRPD at each level of society is the basis for implementing it successfully and fulfilling its requirements for housing, transportation, information, education, employment, health, immigration and in all other areas of society and, indeed, making sure that all generic facilities and services are available and accessible to people with disabilities on an equal basis to others. People with disabilities and their organisations have extensive experience and expertise when it comes to disability matters. It is essential that authorities across Europe harness this valuable resource to create a more inclusive Europe.

1. Inclusion Europe, <https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/>

2. United Nations, CRPD, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

## The inclusion of people with disabilities: a must for achieving a more inclusive Europe

**PhD Miguel Ángel CABRA DE LUNA (ES)**  
*Member of the Board of Directors and President of the International Relations Commission, Spanish Confederation of Social Enterprises (CEPES)*  
*Director of Alliances and Social and International Relations, Fundación ONCE*



Miguel Ángel Cabra de Luna © ONCE Foundation

One billion people, or **15%** of the **world's population**, experience **some form of disability**. Giving that it is well proven that people with disabilities are more likely to experience adverse socioeconomic outcomes, such as less education, poorer health outcomes, lower

levels of employment, or higher poverty rates, the correct **inclusion** of people with disabilities in European society is not optional, but **a top priority**.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the **importance of the social economy**, which comprises companies that are united around the values of primacy of people and the social objective over capital, democratic governance, solidarity and the reinvestment of most profits to carry out sustainable development objectives. The social economy sector has **traditionally** had a **strong focus on addressing social challenges**, such as helping less favoured groups join the labour market or providing care and support to certain groups at risk of social exclusion, such as the

elderly or people with disabilities. This role seems more relevant than ever, given the social economy sector's proven track record in speeding up the recovery while facing difficult economic situations following major crises. In fact, this capacity has already been recognised in the [European Disability Strategy 2021-2030](#)<sup>1</sup>, adopted earlier this year, following the call made by the EESC.

**Social economy enterprises** are traditionally more committed to the **labour market integration** of people with disabilities, even **employing up to 3 times more workers with disabilities than traditional enterprises**. In line with the European institutions' approach to mainstreaming disability in all

policy areas, the forthcoming [Action Plan on Social Economy](#)<sup>2</sup>, which is expected to be published on 8 December, is a **great opportunity to recognise and boost the visibility of the potential** that the social economy sector has to generate quality employment for people with disabilities and to promote their social and labour inclusion, which is precisely what Europe needs.



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## An equal chance for all

### Tudorel TUPILUȘI (RO)

*President, Romanian Association of People with Visual Impairments*

A more inclusive Europe should be rooted in the **benefits that diversity can bring** across the board. Through the power of example, people with disabilities will be encouraged to **take an active part in every aspect of society**: politics, the economy, education, culture, sports and social matters.

Speaking as a visually impaired person, I feel that people with disabilities will want to get involved in **politics**, initially simply by voting, if they see MEPs with disabilities defending their rights. How many MEPs have disabilities? As far as I know, there's



Tudorel Tupiluși © EESC

a grand total of four! Just four MEPs in this term of office (2019-2024) to defend a hundred million people with disabilities in Europe. So it's not exactly surprising that exercising the right to vote is an obstacle course! A more **accessible electoral system** is still seen as a privilege, not a right.

**Many candidates** for political posts **fail to consider people with disabilities** as potential voters when setting out on the campaign trail, simply because not many of them vote. As a result, there is no interest in promoting their rights during the legislative process.

Making the electoral system accessible to people with all types of disabilities will enable them to vote and encourage them to step forward as candidates. In view of the existing restrictions which will not be easy to sweep aside any time soon, I feel that **assigning a number of European Parliament mandates for people with disabilities** is a good way to **urge the community** of people with disabilities **to take part in political life**.

## A part of society

### Sif HOLST (DK)

*Vice Chairperson, Disabled People's Organisations Denmark (DPOD)*

Another wave of the **COVID pandemic** is currently crashing over Europe. It has affected us all, albeit in different ways. One of the groups most **severely affected** is that of **persons**



Sif Holst

**with disabilities**. This group is not only affected when it comes to health and social issues; we are also seeing a widening **employment gap** between persons with and without a disability.

1. European Commission, Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, <https://europa.eu/IM9rvUu>

2. European Commission, EU action plan for social economy, <https://europa.eu/lyCpRDV>

We need to move towards a more inclusive Europe. A Europe where we recognise strength in diversity and where we recognise persons with a disability as a valuable part of society. We need to invest in education and guarantee an inclusive labour market and a strong civil society.

We need to follow up on the EESC's previous recommendations, such as "The need to guarantee real rights for persons with disabilities to vote in European Parliament elections", "Strengthening non-profit social enterprises" and "A renovation wave for Europe".



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We need to ensure that our **transport systems** are **accessible for all**.

It is not only a matter of human rights, of our obligations in relation to the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)<sup>1</sup> or of our promise to leave no one behind when it comes to the [Sustainable Development Goals](#)<sup>2</sup>.

If we do things right, if we create a more inclusive labour market and develop more accessible transport systems, many more people will benefit. A parent with a baby stroller will find it easier to access a step-free train; a person who cares for their elderly parents might benefit from more flexible working hours and a person with a temporary injury or illness might find it easier to remain active on the labour market.

Persons with disabilities are a part of society and if we do things right, we can create new solutions that will benefit us all.

## Europe cannot afford to keep excluding its largest "minority"

**Ioannis VARDAKASTANIS (EL)**

*Vice-President, Diversity Europe Group  
President, Greek National Confederation of Disabled People (NCDP)*

*President, EDF*

*Treasurer, International Disability Alliance (IDA)*

*Member, Economic and Social Council of Greece (OKE)*

*Member, Greek National Commission of Human Rights (EEDA)*

As public and political consciousness of the need for more inclusive societies grows, the question becomes how to turn this into a reality. While **many people face barriers to inclusion**, these are perhaps most obvious for persons with disabilities.

If we look at EU statistics, **around 100 million people in the EU have a**



Ioannis Vardakastanis © EESC

**disability** that impedes their full and active participation in society. We can therefore speak of persons with disabilities as belonging to **Europe's largest "minority"**. Collectively, our community is larger than the entire population of Germany. Despite our considerable presence throughout the EU, however, too many policy-makers pretend we are invisible.

The **EU and its Member States lack ambitious policies** to

improve employment and inclusive education for persons with disabilities, and to invest in the support and services needed to allow us to be fully included in our communities. We also **lack protection against discrimination** in multiple areas of life, which in some cases comes down to things as basic as having the right to vote.

Surely, if we are to talk about an EU that prioritises inclusion, **we cannot allow the continuation of the current approach**, which pushes persons with disabilities to the sidelines and makes us feel we should be grateful for even the smallest commitment to progress.

Time is of the essence, and not just for us as persons with disabilities. We are a growing group of individuals, in an ageing population. Now more than ever, **Europe must harness the talents and contribution of all of its residents** in an inclusive society where all can take part. Overlooking persons with disabilities in this process would be a huge mistake that could undermine the EU's place in the world.



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1. United Nations, CRPD, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

2. United Nations, SDG, <https://sdgs.un.org/fr/goals>

# COMMENTS ON CURRENT AFFAIRS

## I cannot be disappointed by this COP26

Comment on the COP26 outcomes by Lutz Ribbe, president of the EESC's Sustainable Development Observatory (SDO<sup>1</sup>)

**Lutz RIBBE (DE)**

Director, Department for Nature Conservation Policy, environmental foundation EuroNatur  
President, EESC Sustainable Development Observatory



Lutz Ribbe © EESC

Assessments of the outcome of COP26<sup>2</sup> vary widely. **Politicians** praise the fact that some countries have committed themselves to halting forest destruction, that China or India have now also committed themselves to achieving climate neutrality – in the distant future – or that the issue of phasing out coal has been addressed, at least on the face of it. Some **observers** are also delighted that the promise made at a previous COP to provide EUR 100 billion per year for adaptation measures in developing countries could still become a reality: EUR 100 billion, a considerable sum of money, but still only the same amount

that, according to the International Monetary Fund, is spent globally every week (!) on subsidies for “dirty energy”.

Quite the discrepancy!

**For my own part**, I cannot be disappointed by this COP26 because I did not have any expectations, after the G20 countries failed to reach an agreement on climate policy at their summit, just a few hours before the start of the COP. What are 200 countries supposed to do if just 20 countries cannot manage to find common ground?

In any case, what COP promises have been fulfilled so far? At COP0, i.e. the adoption of the [Framework Convention on Climate Change](#)<sup>3</sup>, it was promised to stabilise greenhouse gas emissions at a level that would avoid adverse effects on the climate. This promise is far from being achieved. The political target set in Paris to limit warming to 1.5 degrees is also likely to be missed. And even if it is achieved, we are now at 1.2 degrees above pre-industrial levels, the polar ice caps are melting, the permafrost is thawing, and floods and droughts are on the increase. It will be even worse when we reach 1.5 degrees! For me, the fact that **this bleak vision for the future gives rise to feelings of disappointment**, especially among young people, is entirely understandable!

## The regulatory framework for forests in the EU must be stable and consistent

Comment on the European Commission's communication on a new EU forest strategy for 2030 by Simo Tiainen, rapporteur for the respective EESC opinion (NAT/831<sup>4</sup>)

**Simo TIAINEN (FI)**

Vice-President, Diversity Europe Group  
Director of International Affairs, Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK)



Simo Tiainen © EESC

Most of us have a close relationship with forests. They cover about 43% of the EU's total land area and vary widely between Member States.

**Forests** play an important role in the **implementation of the Green Deal**, as they are linked to the various building blocks of the deal, i.e. promoting sustainable industries, energy, transport, construction and

food systems, as well as tackling climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental pollution.

Forests **respond to a wide variety of people's everyday needs** by providing raw material for industrial products, space for recreation, health

and well-being and many components for direct household use.

**Sustaining the vitality and health** of forests is **paramount** for environmental and climate reasons, and for enhancing forest-based economic development and people's welfare. In addition to environmental considerations, the economic and social potential of forests must also be tapped.

1. EESC, Sustainable Development Observatory, <https://europa.eu/!Ht88Vb>
2. UN Climate Change Conference UK 2021, <https://ukcop26.org/>
3. UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>
4. EESC opinion NAT/831, New EU forest strategy for 2030, <https://europa.eu/!vHhPMK>

Since the nature and features, ownership and economic significance of forests vary considerably across the EU, it is important to make decisions at the right level. **Forest management planning** and ways to meet common EU objectives can best be addressed at **national level**, in accordance with the subsidiarity principle. An **EU-level framework is necessary** with respect to environmental and climate issues that cannot be solved only through national measures –

and which often require international action as well. It is important to share good practices between Member States and develop cooperation between the Commission and the Member States, based on revised working practices rather than new formal bodies.

The regulatory framework for forests in the EU must be **stable and consistent**. We don't need initiatives that overlap or conflict with existing widely accepted

definitions, principles and criteria for sustainable development. The **protection of property** and the **freedom of enterprise** in relation to forests must also be upheld.

The EESC opinion NAT/831 'New EU forest strategy for 2030' will be put to the vote at the December plenary session. The final opinion will then be available at: <https://europa.eu/vHhPMK>

## NEWS FROM THE DIVERSITY EUROPE GROUP

### Civil Society Organisations call for an EU Civil Society Strategy



Séamus Boland and Jean-Marc Roirant © EESC

At a [conference](#)<sup>1</sup>, organised by the Diversity Europe Group in partnership with [Civil Society Europe](#)<sup>2</sup> and with the support of the EESC's [Liaison Group](#)<sup>3</sup> and [Associational Life Category](#)<sup>4</sup> on 5 November, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and their umbrella organisations reiterated their call for an EU Civil Society Strategy and a European Statute for Associations. Appropriate follow-up to the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE<sup>5</sup>) and a regular and structured dialogue with CSOs were considered key aspects to rebuilding citizens' trust in politics and strengthening European democracy.

Participating organisations and individuals showed determination to strengthen their cooperation in order to

prevent a further shrinking and shifting of the civic space and to make the case for effective civil dialogue. Against a backdrop of increasing political and economic challenges to CSOs, funding, especially for small organisations, effective legal protection, capacity-building and recourse to existing EU complaints procedures will be crucial. Participants called on the European Institutions for support.

Opening the conference, **Séamus Boland**, president of the Diversity Europe Group, emphasised both the extent of the challenges facing European societies at present and the necessity for civil society cooperation in order to overcome these difficulties. **Mr Boland** reiterated the Group's and Committee's call for a structured and regular dialogue between policy-makers and CSOs, equal to the one with social partners. With respect to the future and the **opportunities** provided by the [National Recovery and Resilience Plans](#)<sup>6</sup> and the

Conference on the Future of Europe, he said that "there has to be a greater sense of urgency and boldness by civil society, European Institutions and the Member States", and emphasised the necessity to seize the moment.

In his opening address, **Jean-Marc Roirant**, president of Civil Society Europe, joined in the call to strengthen CSOs' cooperation. He mentioned "the denigration of the role of CSOs as intermediaries in society and the authorities' increasing desire to undermine the independence of CSOs" as current challenges. Red tape, intimidations, police harassment and serious accusations in some countries along with a shrinking civic space and a reduction in or conditionality for funding were others. **Mr Roirant** called for joint action to be taken against these developments as "Civil society organisations are democracy in action and freedom of expression", which he considered are "particularly

1. EESC, Conference: Civil Society Organisations: Key Actors for the Future of Europe, <https://europa.eu/UkGvfb>  
 2. Civil Society Europe, <https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/>  
 3. EESC, Liaison Group, <https://europa.eu/lbcxgtY>  
 4. EESC, Associational Life Category, <https://europa.eu/VD38XB>  
 5. Conference on the Future of Europe, <https://future.europa.eu/?locale=en>  
 6. European Commission, Recovery and Resilience Facility, <https://europa.eu/wYRgjt>



Věra Jourová © EESC

important at a point in time when citizens have the opinion that their voice is never listened to.”

In her video message, **Věra Jourová**, European Commission Vice-President for Values and Transparency, also highlighted the key role of civil society organisations in upholding the common values on which the EU is founded and outlined funding opportunities to empower them. “With these funds, we want to send a clear message: we need civil society organisations to play their role independently and effectively,” **Ms Jourová** said. While funding was key to support these organisations, the Commission had also taken action to protect them against the increasing number of challenges they were facing. The forthcoming initiative on strategic lawsuits against public participation will be another initiative in this context.

EESC president **Christa Schweng** also drew attention to the authoritarian shift and the threats posed to fundamental rights and the rule of law in some Member States. She said: “I consider transparency and the participation of citizens and civil society organisations to be

crucial in upholding fundamental values and in playing the role of so-called ‘watchdog.’” Furthermore, she called on EU institutions to “consider organised civil society as key interlocutors when it comes to designing and implementing reforms to recover from the pandemic and preparing for future” and reiterated the Committee’s call for an adequate follow-up to the CoFoE through an online dashboard. The EESC president also outlined the role of EESC’s Liaison Group to engage with CSOs, also in the context of the CoFoE.

MEP **Niklas Nienieß** spoke amongst others about the CoFoE. He said “The Conference on the Future of Europe has an enormous potential to involve the European citizens in fundamental political questions on the EU. Therefore, we need to ensure that it does not turn into a mere democracy show.”

**Andreas Accardo** from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights explained that threats to civic space are an attack on human rights as they undermine people’s access to rights. “Civil society organisations across the EU provide essential services to the community, raise awareness on rights, advocate on behalf of others and hold authorities to account. The Covid pandemic has shown that a vibrant civil society is vital for our social fabric. Data from the Fundamental Rights Agency shows that civic space has come under strain during Covid-19. Strengthening and supporting civil society therefore needs to be part of

the recovery.” According analysis by the agency, CSOs faced challenges concerning regulation, funding, participation, access to decision-makers, threats and attacks. Various testimonies during the conference confirmed this.

**Karolina Dreszer-Smalec**, vice-president of the European Civic Forum and president of the National Federation of Polish NGOs, said that in the face of the multifaceted societal challenges, society needed new scenarios for the future so that “we come out of these situations stronger. Independent non-governmental organisations must be involved in actively co-deciding about the future of their countries and the whole of Europe. For this to be a place, however, they must be independent of the political decisions of their governments, have the resources needed to act and be involved in every stage of decision-making processes.”

The conference saw the participation of numerous CSOs representatives, who shared their experiences with civil dialogue at national and EU level, and a presentation of the first results of an **EESC study** on ‘The implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on fundamental rights and civic space’, requested by the Diversity Europe Group. The study will be published in the first quarter of 2022.

The **conclusions and recommendations** of the conference will be part of the Group’s contribution to the CoFoE. They are available at: <https://europa.eu/WwXMwG>

## What kind of Europe do you dream of?

The EESC’s press unit recently held its annual *Connecting the EU*<sup>1</sup> seminar under the above title. Lisbon hosted the seminar under the auspices of our partner the Portuguese Social and Economic Council.

This time it was decided to place the seminar in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE<sup>2</sup>).

Over the course of a day and a half, around 70 people on site listened to fascinating speeches and discussions, in which everybody could take part. The seminar was moreover webstreamed. As well as the three moderators and 19 speakers invited from outside the Committee, the president and vice-president of the EESC, Christa

Schweng and Cillian Lohan, as well as the three Group presidents, Stefano Mallia (Employers’ Group), Oliver Röpke (Employees’ Group) and Séamus Boland (Diversity Europe Group) also spoke.

1. EESC, Connecting EU 2021, <https://europa.eu/fvjvwm>  
2. Conference on the Future of Europe, <https://future.europa.eu/?locale=en>





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A delegation of 11 Members from the Diversity Europe Group took part in the seminar, as well as nine communication officers from member organisations. Read here below some **comments from Members of the delegation:**

**Panel I – The health crisis and its impact on the future of Europe**

The Employers’ Group president Stefano Mallia opened the debate with a very interesting selection of panellists. Dealing with a global pandemic has shown the solidarity that can be achieved by the EU when all Member States can clearly see the benefits to them. There are clear lessons to be taken from the nature of discussions at an EU level when it came to responding in unison to COVID-19. Also the strain that the health systems experienced in many Member States highlighted the need for a robust health sector, properly resourced and supported.

The panel included Isabelle Marchais from the Jacques Delors Institute, Małgorzata Bonikowska a political analyst from Poland, Lorenzo Consoli a journalist from Brussels with ASKA News, and Aniek de Ruijter an Associate Professor of Health Law and Policy at the University of Amsterdam.



Cillian Lohan © EESC

**Cillian LOHAN (IE)**  
*EESC Vice-President for Communication*  
*CEO of Green Economy Foundation*

is actually only recently, during the four years since the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#)<sup>1</sup> was adopted, that it has been possible to ask *how* the EU can deliver on social policy, whereas the question before that was always *whether* the EU could do anything in the sphere of social policy. As far as EU-level social policy is concerned, the issue of a European minimum wage is always important, and this naturally came up again in the panel discussion. Michael Sauga, Brussels correspondent for *Der Spiegel*, raised a number of practical aspects in this connection. Substantial differences in tax regimes and social security systems between the Member States would mean that in net terms a European minimum wage would vary considerably between countries. His position was that, unless account is taken of this, it is not really possible to introduce a European minimum wage.

There was a lot of focus on the social dimension of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). Francesco Corti, from the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) in Brussels, had looked at the plans submitted by the Member States for the funds from the RRF. He found substantial applications within the social dimension, but had two important comments. In several countries, these constitute pre-existing plans that are now to be implemented with European money. Secondly, he pointed to the risk of one-off measures. For example, there are several plans to fund childcare for a few years. However, if at the same time no legal framework is introduced

**Panel II – A stronger economy, social justice and jobs - What’s Europe got to do with it?**

Mr Röpke introduced the topic by pointing out that it is

for the right to (partially) funded care, families in a weaker financial position in particular will go back to keeping their children at home once the RRF money runs out. At the same time, we know that good childcare pays for itself later in the form of these children having a better socio-economic position in their adult lives.



Jan Dirx © EESC

**Jan DIRX (NL)**  
*Vice-President, Diversity Europe Group*  
*Liaison Officer, Groene11 (Green11)*

**Panel III – European democracy: how can we buttress press freedom in Europe against looming multiple threats?**

Growing hostility towards public and private media by politicians and the general public, as well as mistrust in it, is unfortunately an EU-wide issue. It was a great pleasure to have an opportunity to discuss current challenges faced by journalism and media outlets and whether there are ways to address them on a policy level. Within the EESC, we talk a lot about media freedom and often focus on political pressure towards the media. It’s an absolute must to ensure that no government can manipulate or silence journalists and the EU must punish offenders accordingly. But I was also



Boland © EESC

1. European Commission, European Pillar of Social Rights, <https://europa.eu/!luV48pD>

shocked at the scale of the pressure, threats and violence journalists are facing from various illegal business interests across Member States. Corruption and negligence have often led to terrible crimes against journalists and there are not enough safety mechanisms in policies to ensure this does not keep reoccurring. I have left the room with the impression that most of us know what

needs to be done: we must invest and financially support both private and public media outlets using national and EU budgets, we must ensure that safety of journalists is taken seriously by law enforcement, and that their rights are being protected. That's the law across the EU but not necessarily the reality, and we need mechanisms to ensure that Member States comply.



Elena Sinkevičiūtė © EESC

**Elena SINKEVIČIŪTĖ**  
(LT)  
Representative,  
Lithuanian Youth  
Council

More information and the recordings of the seminar are available at: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/connecting-eu-2021>

## The Farmers Category discusses CAP impact assessment report and proposals in the framework of the Fit for 55 package

On 28 October, the EESC [Farmers Category](#)<sup>1</sup> held its third meeting of the year where Members discussed environmental regulations and their impact on agriculture and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)<sup>2</sup>, which is set to be renewed in 2023.

The **first part** of the meeting focused on the presentation of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC)<sup>3</sup> **technical report**, entitled 'Modelling environmental and climate ambition in the agricultural sector with the CAPRI model'<sup>4</sup>. It was presented by **Jesus Barreiro-Hurle**, Senior Scientist at the JRC

and **Gijs Schilthuis**, Head of the Policy Perspectives Unit at the European Commission's Directorate-General (DG) for Agriculture and Rural Development.

The **second part** of the meeting featured a presentation of the land use, [land use change and forestry \(LULUCF\) regulation](#)<sup>5</sup> and the revised Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR)<sup>6</sup> proposals of the European Commission in the framework of the [Fit for 55 package](#)<sup>7</sup>. It included contributions from the policy officers **Anna Iara** and **Rene Colditz** working at DG Climate Action. **Ms Iara** mentioned the new approach to

the ESR which targets the three broad principles of fairness, cost efficiency and maintaining flexibility. A timeline has been laid out for each Member State to decrease their emissions by 40%. **Mr Colditz** spoke of the simplification of the LULUCF regulation and compliance framework.

The **third part** of the meeting saw the category Members **Niels Madsen** (DK), **Klaas Johan Osinga** (NL) and **Arnold Puech d'Alissac** (FR) present the different approaches to eco-schemes in their home countries. The presentations were followed by a lively debate among all Members.

## Social Economy Category dedicates meeting to Social Business Initiative

On 27 October, the [Social Economy Category](#)<sup>8</sup> held its third and final meeting for 2021. The meeting focused on the ten-year anniversary of the [Social Business Initiative](#)<sup>9</sup> (SBI, from October 2011 to October 2021) and addressed the issue of whether the SBI has succeeded in sufficiently strengthening the social economy, in order to enable the latter to effectively manage future challenges. Speakers included Ms Toia, MEP (S&D, IT) and Co-Chair of the Social Economy Intergroup and Ms Schweng, President of the EESC, who spoke alongside representatives of DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs and DG Employment, Social Affairs



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and Inclusion. The views of external civil society and academia were expressed by Mr Salvatori, Secretary General of the research centre EURICSE and Prof Fici, author of the study of the European Parliament *A statute for European cross-border associations and non-profit organizations –potential benefits*

*in the current situation*, published on 25 May 2021. The meeting of the Social Economy Category was opened up to European civil society organisations and was registered as an official event on the digital platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

1. EESC, Farmers Category, <https://europa.eu/!gY64Wf>
2. European Commission, CAP, <https://europa.eu/!Hm73rt>
3. European Commission, Joint Research Centre, <https://europa.eu/!wn39Pq>
4. JRC Technical Report, <https://europa.eu/!F37Q3h>
5. European Commission, LULUCF regulation, <https://europa.eu/!y3fTkg>
6. European Commission, Effort Sharing Regulation, <https://europa.eu/!KTu49N>
7. EUR-Lex, Fit for 55 Package, <https://europa.eu/!Yxy44r>
8. EESC, Social Economy Category, <https://europa.eu/!ht47UK>
9. European Commission, Business Initiative, <https://europa.eu/!rbHkQ8>

## An amazing year!

On the eve of the October plenary session, one year after the beginning of the current term of office (2020-2025), **five Members** of the Diversity Europe Group **met to discuss their experiences** of this remarkable **past year**. **Katrina Leitāne** (LV) was present via videoconferencing, reflecting standard practice over the past year. Facing the screen showing Ms Leitāne were **John Comer** (IE), **Lidija Pavić-Rogošić** (HR), **Maurizio Mensi** (IT) and **Jan Dirx** (NL), who moderated the meeting. Ms Pavić-Rogošić and Mr Comer started their second term of office in October 2020, Ms Leitāne and Mr Mensi their first term.



Jan Dirx © EESC

Asked by **Jan Dirx**, vice-president of the Diversity Europe Group, **what they will remember most about the past year**, Ms Leitāne spoke of an “amazing year”. So far, she has not been to Brussels once, but nevertheless found a warm welcome during her early days as a Member of the Committee. Ms Leitāne has participated in several study groups for EESC opinions, led a seminar on [Youth in times of COVID-19](#)<sup>1</sup> and is a Member of the EESC’s ad hoc group for the Conference on the Future of Europe. She also expressed her appreciation for the way staff have supported the Members’ work over the year. The other Members wholeheartedly agreed.



Maurizio Mensi

Similarly, **Mr Mensi** said that he was impressed at the way the organisation acted from the outset of the pandemic in order to keep operating as effectively as possible in this emergency situation. He felt that this has also improved over the course of the year. Mr Mensi has been active as a rapporteur and Member of a number of study groups

and enjoyed being able to attend meetings in person in Brussels since August 2021. He therefore feels fully integrated into the Committee.



Lidija Pavić-Rogošić © EESC

**Ms Pavić-Rogošić** thought it was easier for renewed Members than for new ones to adapt to the exceptional situation, as they “know colleagues and staff and the rules”. She is full of admiration for the many new Members who, despite working at a distance, have quickly become active and played an active role in the work of the Group and the Committee. She also believes that the mix of renewed and new Members in the current term of office is an asset for the Committee’s work.



John Comer © EESC

**Mr Comer** also praised the new Members for how quickly they have been able to find a place for themselves in the Committee’s work. He himself believes that working remotely is problematic for many people, for reasons such as people’s home situation, which does not always make matters easy, technical problems or poor Internet connections in some parts of the EU. Personally, Mr Comer found that, from behind his laptop, he is not able to show the passion he has and feels when in direct personal contact with others.

### Common practices and procedures

Asked about the **lessons learned over the past year**, **Mr Mensi** said that working alone and remotely makes it difficult to get to know the procedures and practices of the institution. By way of example, he mentioned that at the start of the new term, he had stood as a candidate for various positions but should have focused on one or two. If he had been in Brussels from the beginning of the term, he would have first consulted



Katrina Leitāne © EESC

more experienced colleagues about common practices. **Ms Pavić-Rogošić and Mr Comer** added that not knowing the common practices also has a positive side; they believe that many of the new Members have been much more active from the start than, for example, the cohort of newcomers in 2015. It might be easier to show yourself behind your laptop than in a room full of colleagues. **Ms Leitāne** illustrated this with the lesson she had learned. Her experience is that if people are enthusiastic enough, they can get people on board and achieve something, no matter how difficult the circumstances. All four Members endorsed **Ms Pavić-Rogošić’s** recommendation that in future, experienced Members should act as mentors for new Members from their own countries, helping them to find their way quickly in the world of the Committee.

### With a view to the future

Finally, looking to the future, what do the four Members of the Diversity Europe Group want to tackle? **Mr Comer** has set himself the goal of working hard to bring agriculture and the environment closer together; in his view, they should have a symbiotic relationship. **Mr Mensi** wants to use all his knowledge and experience as a lawyer to contribute to the EESC’s core business: delivering good opinions. **Ms Leitāne** shares this view, saying that she also wants to work on ensuring that EESC opinions have a greater impact on EU policy-making. She added that she wants to boost the involvement of young people in the EESC’s work. **Ms Pavić-Rogošić** is also keen to work on increasing the Committee’s impact by improving cooperation with the Committee of the Regions, the European Parliament and European NGOs.

1. EESC, webinar, Age of Inequality: Youth in times of COVID-19, <https://europa.eu/GfHGXG>

# MEMBERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

## The European social economy will be redesigned for a just, green and digital recovery

**Giuseppe GUERINI (IT)**

Spokesperson, Social Economy Category, EESC

President, Cecop-Cicopa Europe

Board Member, Confcooperative, Confederation of Italian Cooperatives

President, Confcooperative Bergamo

The [European Social Economy Week](#)<sup>1</sup> took place in Ljubljana, Slovenia, from 11 to 15 October as part of the Slovenian Presidency's events. The week featured a diverse range of conferences focused on a sustainable social economy and enhanced digitalisation. Diversity Europe Member, **Giuseppe Guerini**, spoke at the session entitled 'Reindustrialising Europe and boosting collective entrepreneurship for just transitions'. The panel also included speakers such as Patrick Klein, Team Leader on the Social Economy at the European Commission's DG GROW, and Jeanne Barseghian, Mayor of Strasbourg.

**Mr Guerini** stated, "The European social economy will be redesigned for a just, green and digital recovery". There would be **four new strategic actions**: the new [Green Deal](#)<sup>2</sup> for the green transition and the fight against climate change; the European strategy for the digital transition; a single market

that worked for people and enterprises; and the new, updated [Industrial Strategy](#)<sup>3</sup>. **Mr Guerini** stated that social and economic enterprises could play a role in each of the four strategies.

Values which inspired the social economy included sustainability, social responsibility, solidarity, resilience, participation, inclusiveness, diversity, democracy and social justice. **Mr Guerini** noted that by changing the global economic and political discourse, sustainability would no longer be seen solely as an environmental matter, and would focus on protecting the future. He called for the new Industrial Strategy to push simultaneously for **progress towards the three pillars** of technological innovation, the green economy and social justice.

**Mr Guerini** concluded, "Social economy organisations remind us, every day, that it is possible to remove inequality [and] put democracy at the heart of the economic and political architecture of the European Union".

1. European Social Economy Week, <https://actse.eu/>  
2. European Commission, A European Green Deal, <https://europa.eu/ld6MyjR>  
3. European Industrial Strategy, <https://europa.eu/lqD43rd>



## ECESP, the joint initiative to foster the debate on the circular economy

The [European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform](#)<sup>1</sup> (ECESP) is a joint initiative of the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee. Launched in 2017, the Platform is a hub for the circular economy community. It is a place for dialogue and a bridge between existing circular economy initiatives.

During the 2020 Platform's [annual conference](#)<sup>2</sup>, Commissioner Virginijus



Sinkevičius officially launched the Platform's **#EUCircularTalks** concept. The idea is to establish a dynamic exchange opportunity and bring together circular economy stakeholders and experts to identify

bottlenecks and opportunities.

In 2021, the Platform organised over twenty [#EUCircularTalks](#)<sup>3</sup> events with high-level representatives from the European Commission, European Parliament and the EESC.

1. European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (ECESP), <https://europa.eu/lpn34UD>  
2. ECESP, Annual Circular Economy Stakeholder Conference, <https://europa.eu/lCq63jg>  
3. ECESP, EU Circular Talks, <https://europa.eu/lxFe64hG>

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LAST PLENARY SESSION

## Harvard expert debates future EU industrial policy with EESC Members

Industrial strategy has been a major focus of the EESC's work in recent times. In July 2020, the Committee flagged up the need to review the Commission's first attempt at revamping the strategy. The EESC's October plenary hosted a debate with **Padmashree Gehl Sampath**, Berkman Klein Fellow at Harvard University, on how industrial strategy can support the green transition and the digital transformation, contribute to Europe's recovery and increase its strategic autonomy and resilience.

"We need an industrial strategy where competitiveness goes hand in hand with sustainability and social justice, boosting Europe's strategic autonomy and resilience", said EESC president **Christa Schweng**, opening the plenary debate.

**Ms Sampath**, leading expert on technology, development and the global political economy, made the case for a new type of public intervention in industrial policy that does not just focus on fixing market failures, but directs technological change in socially productive directions. Ms Sampath suggested building a **new strategy based on three bold propositions**:

1. Acknowledging that there is a greater **interconnectedness between the three megatrends** of the future – healthcare/pandemic preparedness, energy transition/climate action and the



Padmashree Gehl Sampath © EESC



Louise Grabo © EESC

- data economy - and leveraging it;
2. Favouring **dynamism** in the technology sector by focusing on market retention and market performance;
3. Adopting a **real sectoral approach** to industrial policy.

The plenary debate was linked to EESC opinions [INT/935](#)<sup>1</sup> and [CCMI/185](#)<sup>2</sup>, which were presented in the context of the debate and then put to the vote and adopted.

Presenting opinion [CCMI/185](#)<sup>3</sup>, rapporteur and Diversity Europe Group Member **Anastasis Yiapanis** said that "Action is needed to create a stronger, fairer and more efficient and accessible healthcare ecosystem, with effective governance, appropriate diversification of sources of supply and an interoperable and interconnected digital healthcare architecture."

Diversity Europe Group Members **Alain Coheur**, **Kęstutis Kupšys** and **Louise Grabo** also took the floor. EESC [INT section](#)<sup>4</sup> president **Mr Coheur** said

that "It is essential on the one hand to aim for the Union's strategic industrial autonomy and for its technological sovereignty, whilst on the other hand ensuring and achieving a better quality of life for our citizens."

**Mr Kupšys** stressed that EU industrial policy needed to pay attention to MSMEs<sup>5</sup> and spoke about industrial digitalisation. He said it should be "inclusive, preventing digital discrimination, especially against older people, people with disabilities and those living in rural and remote regions."

**Ms Grabo**, president of the EESC's [Observatory of the Digital Transition and the Single Market](#)<sup>6</sup>, spoke about the biggest challenge to the growth of tech companies: "The lack of high skilled workers", such as computer engineers and developers. She explained that potential productivity gains from new technology were hence not exploited and urged policy-makers to address this.

The plenary debate is available at: <https://fb.watch/9vw6rX4c1k/>.

## Sustainable trade policies are the way forward for the EU and the WTO

The pandemic has greatly affected international and European trade. "**The Future of EU Trade Policy in a Changing Global Reality**" was a topic for debate at the October EESC plenary session and was linked to the own-initiative opinion [REX/535](#)<sup>7</sup>, 'Next Generation Trade and Sustainable Development -Reviewing the 15-point

action plan'<sup>1</sup>. The clear message from the debate was that the only trade that would deliver a resilient recovery and bring prosperity to businesses and people is trade which is open, fair, inclusive and sustainable.

EESC president **Christa Schweng** opened the debate by indicating three possible scenarios for the World Trade

1. EESC opinion INT/935, Updating the new industrial strategy, <https://europa.eu/!nb63BJ>  
2. EESC opinion CCMI/185, Updating the new industrial strategy - Impacts on the health industrial ecosystem, <https://europa.eu/!vkBknp>  
3. EESC opinion CCMI/185, <https://europa.eu/!alykBknp>  
4. EESC, Section for Single Market, Production and Consumption, <https://europa.eu/!pk46ky>  
5. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises  
6. EESC, Observatory of the Digital Transition and the Single Market, <https://europa.eu/!vV99mU>  
7. EESC opinion REX/535, <https://europa.eu/!NxcbCF>

Organisation ([WTO](#))<sup>1</sup>. The WTO could either be revived, disintegrate or regress. Ms Schweng considered the latter the most probable and indicated that the WTO could learn from EU trade agreements.

**Jean-Marie Paugam**, Deputy Director-General of the WTO, spoke about the increase in the cost of customs tariffs which come with broader globalisation. He indicated that the WTO needs to be reformed to fulfil its basic functions of implementing, managing and negotiating trade agreements. The WTO representative said there had been a real effort to modernise the work of the WTO, and that its reconstruction is needed



Jarmila Dubravská © EESC

in order to rebuild a minimum level of trust in the system. He indicated that consultations with EESC Members could improve multilateral trade and centre the discussion on sustainable trade.

Three Members of the Diversity Europe Group took the floor during the debate. **Arnaud Schwartz** called for the need to persevere with efforts to achieve sustainable development and protect the environment and human rights when it comes to trade, and asked **Mr Paugam** what civil society organisations can do to help the WTO more with its reformation. **Jarmila Dubravská** stressed the importance of buyers and sellers abiding by the same trade rules, regardless of their country.



Jean-Marie Paugam © EESC

## Members call for a comprehensive and holistic strategy for rural and urban development



Janusz Wojciechowski © EESC

The rural-urban development gap has long been the subject of heated debate amongst policymakers. A long-term strategy for rural areas was the focus of one of the plenary debates in October. The debate included a statement by the European Commissioner for Agriculture, **Janusz Wojciechowski**. It was linked to the own-initiative opinion [NAT/820](#)<sup>3</sup> on 'Towards a holistic strategy on sustainable rural/urban development'.

A comprehensive and holistic strategy for balanced, cohesive, equitable

and sustainable rural and urban development was a common theme throughout the debate. The EESC president, **Christa Schweng**, spoke about the irregular development of European rural areas, pointing out that they are still lagging behind. In order to develop a stronger and more resilient post-COVID Europe, the digital and green transitions need to be mainstreamed and new infrastructure such as good quality public transport, should be built in these areas. **Ms Schweng** said that more cooperation between rural and urban areas is needed to ensure sustainable development and to make rural areas attractive places for EU citizens to live and work.

**Commissioner Wojciechowski** stressed that rural areas are vital for social, economic and environmental reasons. He praised their natural resources which are necessary assets

**Juraj Sipko** highlighted that a well-functioning institutional framework was needed to develop trade relations.

**Mr Paugam** indicated that discussions would be held with the [ILO](#)<sup>2</sup> to work together on issues such as the future of work and employment in developing countries. Work will be done on the global carbon price to avoid the fragmentation of multilateralism. He urged the EESC to engage with developing countries to level the economic playing field and focus on sustainable development.

**Ms Schweng** concluded the debate by saying that: "The active involvement and buy-in from organised civil society, in all its components is a core element of a sustainable trading system that delivers for people".

The full debate can be watched here: <https://fb.watch/9medbAptBf/>.

for a sustainable and prosperous future. A Rural Pact, as suggested in the Commission's communication on a [long-term vision for the EU's rural areas up to 2040](#)<sup>4</sup>, will provide a framework for cooperation where stakeholders including the Committee can exchange ideas and best practices to act on the needs and aspirations of rural residents.

The Diversity Europe Group president, **Séamus Boland** declared that the future of Europe will depend on how rural areas are handled. **Mr Boland** referred to an increase in food prices which will affect the poorest communities and stressed the need to ensure that rural communities and European farmers can transition towards sustainability without leaving anybody behind.

1. World Trade Organization, <https://www.wto.org/>  
2. International Labour Organization, <https://www.ilo.org/global/lang-en/index.htm>  
3. EESC opinion NAT/820, <https://europa.eu/!64YfJR>  
4. European Commission, A long-term vision for Europe's rural areas, <https://europa.eu/!3rGXhP>



Séamus Boland © EESC

Complementarity and consistency between European agricultural food and rural policies and more sustainable food chains are needed.

Four Diversity Europe Group Members took the floor to contribute to the

debate. **José Manuel Roche Ramo** addressed the issue of depopulation in rural areas, stressing that policies need to improve access to fundamental health and education services. **Arnaud Schwartz** stressed the need to avoid unfair competition between regions and distortion of competition. In this context, he said that governments should do more to enable people to produce their own renewable energy. **Ricardo Serra Arias** highlighted the need for EU strategies to bring representatives of rural areas on board. **Ágnes Cser** called for rural incentives to ensure equality across rural and urban areas.

The full debate can be viewed here: <https://fb.watch/9jujKEP9Bd/>.



José Manuel Roche Ramo © EESC

## OVERVIEW OF RECENT WORK

The last EESC plenary session took place on 20 and 21 October, in a hybrid format. The EESC plenary adopted 29 opinions and information reports, 12 of which were drafted by Members of the Diversity Europe Group. A list of the recent work can be found below.

**Anastasis YIAPANIS (CY)**, rapporteur, [CCMI/185](#)<sup>1</sup> Industrial Strategy

**Arnaud SCHWARTZ (FR)**, rapporteur, [CCMI/181](#)<sup>2</sup> Automotive eco-systems

**Ioannis VARDAKASTANIS (EL)**, rapporteur, [SOC/639](#)<sup>3</sup> European statute for associations and NGOs

**Ionuț SIBIAN (RO)**, rapporteur, [SOC/697](#)<sup>4</sup> Communication on a Strategy for the future of Schengen and Amendment of the Regulation establishing the Schengen Evaluation Mechanism

**Klaas Johan OSINGA (NL)**, rapporteur, [NAT/822](#)<sup>5</sup> Strategic autonomy and food security and sustainability

**Maurizio MENSI (IT)**, rapporteur, [INT/954](#)<sup>6</sup> Foreign subsidies distorting the internal market

**Michael MCLOUGHLIN (IE)**, rapporteur-general, [SOC/701](#)<sup>7</sup> Blended learning

**Mordechaj Martin SALAMON (DK)**, rapporteur, [INT/957](#)<sup>8</sup> Product safety directive / Revision

**Neža REPANŠEK (SI)**, rapporteur, [INT/941](#)<sup>9</sup> Global approach to R&I

**Thierry LIBAERT (FR)**, rapporteur, [INT/948](#)<sup>10</sup> Modern, responsible advertising/consumption

**Tymoteusz Adam ZYCH (PL)**, rapporteur, [INT/951](#)<sup>11</sup> eID

**Tymoteusz Adam ZYCH (PL)**, rapporteur-general, [INT/963](#)<sup>12</sup> Temporary suspension of autonomous duties/Canary Islands

The **complete texts** of all EESC opinions are available in various language versions on the Committee's website<sup>13</sup>.

The **next EESC plenary session** will take place on **19 and 20 January 2022**. For more information on the upcoming plenary session please visit our [website](#)<sup>14</sup>.

A list including all **new work appointments** of Diversity Europe Group Members is available on the Committee's [website](#)<sup>15</sup>.

1. EESC opinion CCMI/185, <https://europa.eu/vk8knp>

2. EESC opinion CCMI/181, <https://europa.eu/KT83BBY>

3. EESC opinion SOC/639, <https://europa.eu/lv7FwNV>

4. EESC opinion SOC/697, <https://europa.eu/lPKvb6X>

5. EESC opinion NAT/822, <https://europa.eu/lKf78rq>

6. EESC opinion INT/954, <https://europa.eu/tfFjqvZ>

7. EESC opinion SOC/701, <https://europa.eu/lmQmwUj>

8. EESC opinion INT/957, <https://europa.eu/lF3O7mg>

9. EESC opinion INT/941, <https://europa.eu/lqxBYUy>

10. EESC opinion INT/948, <https://europa.eu/l8TuGvM>

11. EESC opinion INT/951, <https://europa.eu/lbrCTWf>

12. EESC opinion INT/963, <https://europa.eu/lfJR4q4>

13. EESC opinions, <https://europa.eu/lwF86wY>

14. EESC plenary sessions, <https://europa.eu/lDg84q>

15. EESC, New work appointments – October 2021, <https://europa.eu/lUPytHp>

## UPCOMING EVENTS



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**16/12/2021** – Meeting of the Consumers and Environment Category

**11/01/2022** – Extraordinary meeting of the Group's Members of the EESC Bureau

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