



# The **EESC**'s activities during the **Spanish Presidency**

July – December 2023

  
SPANISH PRESIDENCY  
COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



European Economic  
and Social Committee



# A word from the President

*Oliver Röpke, EESC President*

The Spanish Presidency of the EU comes in a crucial time for Europe. The time to strengthen EU's resilience.

In June 2024, EU citizens will participate in the **greatest democratic exercise** of this continent – European Parliament elections. It will be of utmost importance that we put in place the necessary safeguards in time so that we can effectively defend our democracy, in particular from foreign interference. Without those safeguards, the elections could provide a fertile ground for the spread of disinformation, propaganda and cyberattacks.

The multiple crises that hit Europe in the past years have caused unprecedented disruption and exposed our vulnerabilities. They underscored the urgent need for the EU to be better in scanning the policy horizon as well as developing its own strategic autonomy. The Spanish Presidency will focus on **open strategic autonomy** as key elements for adding resilience to the EU's objectives of a greener, more digital and social Europe. In this context, I look forward to the EU leaders informal meeting in Granada in October, where an ambitious plan for Europe's strategic autonomy is to be adopted.

These are just some of the issues that are of importance to the European Economic and Social Committee, and I am pleased to see that the Spanish Presidency shares our vision and priorities. Our Committee will further delve into the most urgent and pertinent priorities of the Presidency, by organising topical events and conferences, including for example on social economy, rare diseases and energy poverty.

I also welcome the fact that the Presidency has already asked the Committee to prepare an unprecedented number of **22 exploratory opinions** on a range of issues, including the green and digital transitions, the social dimension of the EU, and the future of Europe. I would like to thank the Spanish Presidency for their trust and commitment to include the voice of the civil society in shaping the EU's agenda.

In the coming months, the Spanish Presidency will have a crucial role to play at Europe's helm. The European Economic and Social Committee will work closely with the Presidency in building a more resilient, inclusive and safer Europe, one that delivers for its citizens and effectively tackles the challenges ahead.

# The EESC's activities during the Spanish Presidency



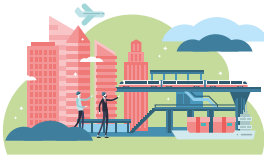
## Economic and Monetary Union, Economic and Social Cohesion – ECO

- Actively working on the involvement of organised civil society in the implementation and the monitoring of national recovery and resilience plans, contributing to the mid-term review of the Recovery and Resilience Facility, and the reshaping of the European Semester process in order to optimise the economic recovery from the negative impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and the war in Ukraine
- Revising and implementing a new economic governance framework for a sustainable recovery and a just transition
- Exploring the possibilities and potential of a digital euro
- Contributing to the mid-term review of the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework to ensure that it and the recovery plan embedded in it can contribute to a sustainable and resilient economic recovery
- Actively working on proposals aiming to introduce a second set of genuine own resources
- Ensuring the stability, integration and resilience of European financial markets, and redirecting investment flows to support sustainable growth; this includes recommendations on the reform of the bank crisis management and deposit insurance framework, as well as on a regulation on environmental, social and governance ratings
- Exploring how to better assess and evaluate EU policies affecting financial markets, to ensure that regulation and supervision leads to their proper functioning
- Contributing to the discussions on the future of cohesion policy after 2027 and closely monitoring the implementation of the new territorial and urban agenda and assessing the challenges in regions and areas with specific difficulties (sparsely populated areas, EU islands and mountain areas)
- Combating tax fraud, tax avoidance, money laundering and tax havens; preparing policy proposals on the taxation of cross-border teleworkers globally and the impact on the EU, as well as making recommendations on low-income households and the green transition
- Contributing to the EESC's call for an EU Blue Deal with policy proposals for water-related investment needs



## Single Market, Production and Consumption – INT

- Competitiveness, a sustainable industrial policy and open strategic autonomy, with a special focus on the Green Deal Industrial Plan for the Net-Zero Age
- Digital and green transitions, accompanied by an effectively enforced regulatory framework
- Strategic foresight as a tool to equip administrations to deal with irregular events
- Entrepreneurship and SMEs, in particular the SME Relief Package and business transfers
- The social economy as an important pillar of the European economy and the development of social economy framework conditions
- Modern and responsible consumer policy and its enforcement, with a focus on the impact of the green and digital transitions on consumers
- Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform and the Circular Cities and Regions Initiative, as well as the international dimension of the circular economy



## Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society – TEN

- Creating an energy union that enables EU consumers to access safe, clean and affordable energy
- Conveying grassroots civil society proposals for combating energy poverty
- Building an efficient, integrated and green European transport system
- Raising awareness of civil society's demands for housing policies across the EU
- Supporting a comprehensive European strategy for services of general interest
- Fostering economic and social cohesion in the transition to a digital economy
- Promoting a global and secure strategy for cybersecurity and space communications

## Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship – SOC

- Economic and social recovery from the impact, particularly on families and welfare systems, of the pandemic and the Russian attack on Ukraine and the resulting increase in energy prices and the cost of living
- Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and monitoring the targets set in the EPSR Action Plan and the national recovery and resilience plans
- Future of work, new forms of work, the platform economy, working conditions, collective rights, social dialogue and democracy at work
- Social challenges and opportunities arising from the growing use of artificial intelligence
- Occupational health and safety, well-being at work, and effective health and care policies
- Combating poverty and social exclusion
- Lifelong learning, employee training, and digital and green skills
- Gender equality, disability rights (including the European Disability Card) and equal opportunities
- Youth employment, youth participation and youth engagement
- Strengthening the rule of law and fundamental rights in the EU
- Supporting civil society and democracy
- Social priorities in the European elections
- Socio-economic inclusion of migrants and refugees



## Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment – NAT

- Accelerating the implementation of the SDGs
- Promoting climate neutrality as part of the European Green Deal
- Fostering the circular economy (European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, ECESP)
- Fostering the transformation towards fairer and more sustainable agriculture and food systems
- Restoring and preserving natural capital – a healthy planet for healthy people (biodiversity, environmental protection, the right to a healthy environment)
- Promoting a holistic strategy for sustainable rural/urban development and the Rural Pact
- Youth engagement in sustainability and the climate
- Developing the social dimension of the transition towards a well-being economy – for a just transition



## **External Relations – REX**

- Supporting Ukrainian civil society struck by the war and stepping up dialogue with civil society from Moldova, Georgia and Armenia; specifically supporting independent civil society in Russia and Belarus
- Active contribution of civil society to the EU enlargement process and democratisation in the Western Balkans, focusing on the 2023 European Year of Skills
- Working towards appointing honorary enlargement members from civil society in the candidate countries, who will contribute to the drafting process of key opinions
- Strengthening relations between EU and UK civil society, promoting activities aimed primarily at youth mobility issues and citizens' rights, as well as other activities that are considered to enhance the relationship between the EU and the UK
- Working with civil society from the Euro-Mediterranean region on promoting civil and social dialogue and on issues of interest, such as water diplomacy and the energy transition
- Supporting the implementation of a stakeholder engagement mechanism under the Post-Cotonou Agreement and actively cooperating with African, Caribbean and Pacific States on issues of interest such as youth, sustainable development, critical raw materials and the circular economy
- Continuing to support civil society involvement in the EU trade policy and stronger links between international trade and sustainable development
- Encouraging the swift conclusion of the ongoing trade negotiations, with particular emphasis on key Latin America issues like Mercosur and Chile
- Continuously engaging in activities promoting democratic values, civic space and social and civil dialogue in the EU's partner countries, including contributing to the EU's efforts to combat disinformation in the EU Member States and in third countries
- A new perspective on the Arctic region, in view of its special geostrategic position and future environmental and other challenges as well as economic opportunities
- Revitalising dialogue with Chinese and Turkish partners on economic, social, environmental and human rights issues



## Consultative Commission on Industrial Change – CCMI

- Analysing and mitigating the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on key EU industrial sectors
- Post-COVID-19 recovery plan and the EU's industrial sectors
- Enhancing the global competitiveness of EU industry
- Updated EU Industrial Strategy and transition pathways
- A green and digital transition for European industry
- Call for an EU Blue Deal: a comprehensive water strategy for Europe – a cross-sectoral initiative of the EESC, led by the CCMI
- Water-intensive industries and water-efficient technologies
- European Critical Raw Materials Act, shortages, strategic autonomy
- Metaverse and virtual worlds
- Boosting the EU market for green products in resource and energy-intensive industries (REEIs)
- The decarbonisation of European industry and the role of innovation and digitalisation in driving it
- EU Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability
- Strategy for the EU wood industry
- Structural shortages and strategic autonomy in the pharmaceutical industry
- EU cyber defence policy
- Cyber Solidarity Act
- Synergies and complementarities in the defence sector between Member States and industries
- EU space strategy for security and defence

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## EESC opinions requested by the Spanish Presidency

1. Democracy at work
2. Precarious work and mental health
3. Social Imbalances Procedures (SIP)
4. Green collective bargaining
5. Measures to fight stigma against HIV
6. Cooperation on youth
7. Social Progress Protocol
8. Measures to improve mental health
9. Monitoring the EU's extraordinary measures and resilience in the field of energy
10. Banking union: Eurogroup proposal from June 2022 on crisis management and deposit insurance
11. Measures to reduce child obesity
12. The decarbonisation of European industry and the role of innovation and digitalisation in driving it
13. European Strategy for Older persons
14. Decarbonisation of the fishing fleet
15. Advertising through influencers and its impact on consumers
16. A digital euro and the scope and effects of the legal tender status of banknotes and coins
17. The future of cohesion policy after 2027
18. Competitiveness and Industry
19. EU and Agenda 2030: strengthening the implementation of the SDGs



**European Economic  
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