

**FOLLOW-UP PROVIDED BY THE COMMISSION TO THE OPINIONS
OF THE**

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

PLENARY SESSION OF DECEMBER 2017

N°	Title	References
SG		
1.	<p>Statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations</p> <p>Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council of 22 October 2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations</p> <p>Rapporteur: Graham WATSON (GRIII-UK) Co-rapporteur: Anne DEMELENNE (GRII-BE) and Stéphane BUFFETAUT (GRI-FR)</p>	<p>COM(2017) 481 final -2017/0219 COD</p> <p>EESC-2017-05706-00-00-PAC-TRA</p> <p>Ad hoc group</p>
LS		
2.	<p>Statistics on rail transport (recast)</p> <p>Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on rail transport statistics (recast)</p> <p>Rapporteur: Raymond HENCKS (GRII-LU)</p>	<p>COM(2017) 353 final -2017/0146 COD</p> <p>EESC-2017-04449-00-01-AC-TRA</p> <p>TEN/644</p>
DG MARE		
3.	<p>Initiative for the sustainable development of the Blue Economy in the Western Mediterranean (communication)</p> <p>Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the western Mediterranean</p> <p>Rapporteur: Dimitris DIMITRIADIS (GRI-EL)</p>	<p>COM(2017) 183 final</p> <p>EESC-2017-03128-00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>REX/493</p>

DG ENV		
4.	<p>An Action Plan for nature, people and the economy (communication)</p> <p>Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – An Action Plan for nature, people and the economy</p> <p>Rapporteur: Lutz RIBBE (GRIII-DE)</p>	<p>COM(2017) 198 final</p> <p>EESC-2017-03013-00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>NAT/717</p>
5.	<p>Access to justice at national level related to measures implementing EU environmental law (communication)</p> <p>Commission Communication of 28 April 2017 – Communication from the Commission on access to justice in environmental matters</p> <p>Rapporteur: Cillian LOHAN (GRIII-IE) Co-rapporteur: Brian CURTIS (GRII-UK)</p>	<p>C(2017) 2616 final</p> <p>EESC-2017-02820-00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>NAT/716</p>
DG REGIO		
6.	<p>Advantages of the Community-led Local Development approach</p> <p>Advantages of the Community-led Local Development (CLLD) approach for integrated local and rural development</p> <p>Rapporteur: Roman HAKEN (GRIII-CZ)</p>	<p>EESC-2017-04384-00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>NAT/724</p> <p>Exploratory opinion requested by the Estonian Presidency</p>
DG EMPL		
7.	<p>Wealth inequality in Europe</p> <p>Wealth inequality in Europe: the profit-labour split between Member States</p> <p>Rapporteur: Plamen DIMITROV (GRII-BG)</p>	<p>EESC-2016-05712-00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>ECO/410</p> <p>Own-initiative opinion</p>

8.	<p>Work-life balance of working parents and caregivers</p> <p>Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: an initiative to support work-life balance for working parents and carers</p> <p>Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU</p> <p>Rapporteur: Erika KOLLER (GRII-HU) Co-rapporteur: Vladimíra DRBALOVÁ (GRI-CZ)</p>	<p>COM(2017) 252 final</p> <p>COM(2017) 253 final -2017/0085 COD</p> <p>EESC-2017-02275-00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>SOC/529</p>
9.	<p>Sustainable social security and social protection systems in the digital era</p> <p>Rapporteur: Petru Sorin DANDEA (GRII-RO)</p>	<p>EESC-2017-01220-00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>SOC/560</p> <p>Own-initiative opinion</p>
DG HOME		
10.	<p>Cooperation with civil society to prevent the radicalisation of young people</p> <p>Rapporteur: Christian Moos (GRIII-DE)</p>	<p>EESC-2017-02650-00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>SOC/565</p> <p>Own-initiative opinion</p>
DG SANTE		
11.	<p>Civil society's contribution to the development of a comprehensive food policy in the EU</p> <p>Rapporteur: Peter SCHMIDT (GRII-DE)</p>	<p>EESC-2017-02234-00-01-AC-TRA</p> <p>NAT/711</p> <p>Own-initiative opinion</p>

DG MOVE		
12.	<p>Vehicles hired without drivers for the carriage of goods by road</p> <p>Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2006/1/EC on the use of vehicles hired without drivers for the carriage of goods by road</p> <p>Rapporteur: Brian CURTIS (GR11-UK)</p>	<p>COM(2017) 282 final -2017/0113 COD</p> <p>EESC-2017-02882- 00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>TEN/638</p>
DG GROW		
13.	<p>European Defence Industrial Development Programme</p> <p>Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Defence Industrial Development Programme aiming at supporting the competitiveness and innovative capacity of the EU defence industry</p> <p>Rapporteur: Antonello PEZZINI (GR1-IT) Co-rapporteur: Éric BRUNE (CAT11-FR)</p>	<p>COM(2017) 294 final -2017/0125 COD</p> <p>EESC-2017-03593- 00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>CCMI/154</p>
14.	<p>Launching the European Defence Fund (communication)</p> <p>Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Launching the European Defence Fund</p> <p>Rapporteur: Mihai IVAȘCU (GR111-RO) Co-rapporteur: Fabien COUDERC (CAT11-FR)</p>	<p>COM(2017) 295 final</p> <p>EESC-2017-03598- 00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>CCMI/155</p>
DG DEVCO		
15.	<p>A renewed partnership with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (communication)</p> <p>Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council - A renewed partnership with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific</p> <p>Rapporteur: Brenda KING (GR1-UK)</p>	<p>JOIN(2016) 52 final</p> <p>EESC-2017-00788- 00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>REX/485</p>

DG TRADE

16.	The core role of trade and investment in meeting and implementing the SDGs Rapporteur: Jonathan PEEL (GRI-UK) Co-rapporteur: Christophe QUAREZ (GRII-FR)	EESC-2017-01072-00-00-AC-TRA REX/486 Own-initiative opinion
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<p>N°1 Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council of 22 October 2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations COM(2017) 481 final</p> <p>EESC 2017/5706 – Ad hoc group</p> <p>530th Plenary Session - December 2017</p> <p>Rapporteur: Sir Graham WATSON (GRIII-UK)</p> <p>Corrapporteurs: Ms Anne DEMELENNE (GRII-BE), Mr Stéphane BUFFETAUT (GRI-FR)</p> <p>SG – First Vice-President TIMMERMANS</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>5. The European Economic and Social Committee welcomes the European Commission’s intention to make the electoral programmes of European-level political parties more easily accessible to citizens. It has some doubts, however, about the proposed new paragraph 3a to Article 18 of the Regulation. This requires that a European political party should include in its application for funding evidence demonstrating that its member parties have continuously published on their websites, during the 12 months preceding the moment at which the application is made, the political programme and logo of the European political party as well as information in relation to each of its member parties on the gender representation among its candidates at the last elections to the European Parliament and among Members of the European Parliament.</p> <p>6. The European Economic and Social</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s broad support for the aims of the proposal and for the tabled changes.</p> <p>The Commission also notes the recommendation made with regard to the new transparency requirements.</p> <p>This proposal was made in September 2017 as part of the Democracy Package announced in President Juncker’s State of the Union address¹. The entire legislative process was completed very quickly, enabling the revised rules to take effect in time for the next elections to the European Parliament in 2019. The revised Regulation is in application since May 2018².</p> <p>Drafting changes made in the course of the legislative process will ensure that minor gaps in the presence of the logo and the programme would not amount</p>

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/state-union-2017_en

² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AL%3A2018%3A114I%3ATOC>

<p>Committee questions in particular how the former requirement will be policed, how it can apply to new parties emerging in the Member States, and how it can apply if European political parties are tardy in adopting their political programmes; why the latter requirement focusses only on gender and not, for example, on racial or ethnic or linguistic criteria.</p> <p>7. The European Economic and Social Committee therefore recommends to the European Commission that the length of time during which the programme must be available on party websites be reduced from 12 months to three and that information about diversity of candidates on electoral lists be required not only to demonstrate relative numbers of women and men but also for ethnic origin and linguistic diversity.</p>	<p>to a breach in the requirement, as long as it is, as a rule, complied with.</p> <p>While the Commission’s proposal made gender information a condition for European political parties to apply for funding, during the discussions with the European Parliament and Council, a compromise was found to instead simply encourage publishing this information.</p>
<p>8. Moreover, the European Economic and Social Committee once again draws attention to the worsening inequality of treatment between European political parties and foundations, on the one hand, and European associations and foundations with more general objectives (e.g. economic, social, humanitarian, cultural, environmental or sporting associations, etc.) on the other.</p> <p>9. The European Economic and Social Committee once again laments the European Commission’s decision, several years ago, to withdraw the draft statute for a European association: the barriers to the registration of companies with European statutes and once again urges the European Commission to present, in the near future, an equivalent European Regulation on the statute and funding of European non-party-political associations.</p>	<p>The aim of this target revision, and so limited in scope, was to close the identified loopholes while at the same time increase transparency even further still before the 2019 elections of the European Parliament.</p> <p>The Commission will continue to reflect on the development of different kinds of associations in the Internal Market, especially in the frame of the Expert Group on Social Economy and Social Enterprises (GECES). For the moment, it does not intend to present a European regulation on a statute for associations due to the lack of unanimity in the Council.</p>

<p>N°2 Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on rail transport statistics (recast) COM(2017) 353 final EESC 2017/4449 – TEN/644 530th Plenary Session - December 2017 Rapporteur: Mr Raymond HENCKS (GR11-LU) SJ – President JUNCKER</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.4. The Commission has sought merely to effect a "codification", merging the substance of the various earlier regulations unchanged into a harmonious and coherent whole. The only exception is the deletion of paragraph 5 of Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 91/2003³, which gave the Commission the right to adapt non-essential elements of the Regulation's annexes at its discretion.</p>	<p>This recast proposal of Regulation (EC) No 91/2003 on rail transport statistics is not a real recast, but a codification transformed into a recast because of an amendment the Commission had to introduce in Article 4, as mentioned in the explanatory memorandum.</p> <p>The deletion of paragraph 5 of Article 4 was agreed during negotiations for the adoption of the last amending act, Regulation 2016/2032⁴, but was overlooked in the final version. This "technical" deletion is necessary and in agreement with the Legislator's intention when the alignment of that Regulation was discussed.</p> <p>Therefore, the proposal is being presented in the form of a technical recast.</p>
<p>1.5. In keeping with the goal of regulatory fitness (REFIT), the European Economic and Social Committee supports the Commission's initiative. It wonders, however, whether the data in question</p>	<p>The Regulation (EC) No 91/2003 covers all railways in the European Union. Each Member State shall report to Eurostat statistics which relate to rail</p>

³ OJ L 14, 21.1.2003.

⁴ Regulation (EU) 2016/2032 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 October 2016 amending Regulation (EC) No 91/2003 on rail transport statistics, as regards the collection of data on goods, passengers and accidents, OJ L 317, 23.11.2016.

<p>could not be better handled and incorporated into other data on this matter collected by Eurostat.</p>	<p>transport on its national territory.</p> <p>Data to be collected cover annual and quarterly statistics on goods and passengers and regional data every five years.</p> <p>In addition, the European Union Agency for Railways and Eurostat have concluded an Administrative Arrangement that includes inter alia the regular transmission and dissemination by Eurostat of information available to the European Union Agency for Railways related to rail transport safety and interoperability of the rail system.</p>
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<p>N°3 Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the western Mediterranean COM(2017) 183 final EESC 2017/3128 - REX/493 530th Plenary Session - December 2017 Rapporteur: Mr Dimitris DIMITRIADIS (GRI-EL) DG MARE – Commissioner VELLA</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.1. The European Economic and Social Committee fully supports the specific initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the Western Mediterranean and calls on the European Institutions to conclude the consultation cycle and to set up the relevant Task Force.</p> <p>1.2. The European Economic and Social Committee considers that the success of this initiative requires good communication and an appropriate climate of cooperation between the states involved in it and, secondly, the European Institutions.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the positive Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee and agrees on the importance of good communication and an appropriate climate of cooperation between the participating countries. The attention paid to the Initiative and the comments raised by its Members during the preparatory phase show the relevance of the addressed topics for the development of the Blue Economy in the Mediterranean Sea basin as a whole.</p> <p>To this end, the Commission welcomes the appointment of a European Economic and Social Committee representative as Observer in the Steering Committee (former Task Force).</p>
<p>1.3.1. Besides the chosen areas of action in the specific initiative – (1) a safer and more secure maritime space, (2) a smart and resilient Blue Economy and the focus on skills development, research and innovation, (3) better governance of the sea – the European Economic and Social Committee suggests a further thematic</p>	<p>Priority 3.3I, "Biodiversity and Marine Habitat Conservation", of the Initiative focuses inter alia on actions related to biodiversity, invasive alien species, marine pollution and marine protected areas.</p> <p>Several actions across the goals of the</p>

<p>broadening of the initiative in biodiversity and conservation and intercultural communication, as well as a more concrete strategy for supporting small and very small (-scale) productive activities.</p>	<p>Initiative target or are relevant to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. At this stage it is considered more appropriate to quickly start-up the Initiative through concrete projects rather than focusing on a new strategy specific to small and very small (-scale) productive activities.</p> <p>The Initiative aims also to promote the networking and exchange of practices amongst stakeholders. The Initiative does not target specifically the Intercultural communication; however, it is expected to have a positive effect on it.</p>
<p>1.3.3. Maritime (transport) safety, security issues, sustainable economic growth and cultural and environmental conservation will not be handled efficiently in the long run, if we overlook the fact that the Mediterranean is a historical, economic and environmental unity. Therefore, even though the heightened geopolitical tensions and exacerbation of conflicts in the eastern part of the sea basin explain why the Initiative is starting in the western Mediterranean, this should be understood as a pilot application that can provide useful experiences and best practices, to be extended into a holistic Mediterranean approach.</p>	<p>The Western Mediterranean Communication⁵ recalls that the Initiative is based on the Commission's experience with sea basin and macro-regional strategies (such as the Atlantic Strategy, the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region). It also builds on other European Union policies linked to the region, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy Review priorities and the recent Communication on International Ocean Governance.</p> <p>In the Declaration adopted by the ten participating countries on 30 November 2017⁶, Ministers reaffirmed that although the Initiative focuses on the western Mediterranean region, its scope of action — and potential benefits — could easily extend beyond this sub-basin. Therefore, depending on</p>

⁵ COM(2017) 183 final.

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/2017-11-30-west-med-declaration_en.pdf

	<p>the needs to be addressed, actions will remain open to other partners belonging to other countries in the broader region.</p>
<p>1.4. The European Economic and Social Committee anticipates that the success of the Initiative will require a high degree of trans-national and cross-sectional coordination. The policies and programmes for the Mediterranean implemented over the last twenty years have had poor results and have left enormous amounts of funds unused, due to the different attitudes and lack of effective coordination between the European Institutions and the public administrations in non-European Union Mediterranean countries, and because in some cases bureaucracy, hidden behind the pretext of transparency, has created excessive barriers to the use of existing funds. This implies the need for technical assistance.</p>	<p>The Initiative is funded by channelling and coordinating existing international, European Union, national and regional funds that are relevant to the three goals. The fund alignment should be promoted by all interested parties and remains subject and without prejudice to the assessment of the evaluation procedures and criteria for the concerned funds, programmes and projects. In this way, it will contribute to generating pipelines of projects and underpin the implementation of existing instruments/tools, without any impact on already committed funds. The decision on possible re-allocation of funds will remain a prerogative of the responsible national authorities.</p> <p>The Commission welcomes European Economic and Social Committee's support to provide technical assistance, which is of utmost importance for an effective and efficient implementation of the Initiative. To this end, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund will finance a Western Mediterranean Assistance Mechanism, which shall support governance and implementation of the Initiative and its Framework for Action, including the stakeholder involvement and assistance in project preparation.</p>
<p>1.5.3. In order for spatial planning and coastal management to be efficient, the quadruple helix approach should be adopted, at trans-national and especially</p>	<p>The Commission fully agrees on the key role of the stakeholders and recalls that the involvement of all relevant actors started since the beginning of the</p>

<p>regional/ local level. Strengthened involvement of local authorities (municipalities and regions), as well as social partners and civil society organisations, within their respective areas of activity, is required. To that end, the Commission should invite local public and private-sector stakeholders to the consultation on the Communication and on the specific areas of action – transport safety and security, fisheries, tourism and energy, social cohesion and environmental sustainability.</p>	<p>preparatory phase in 2016. The Communication on this Initiative and its Framework for Action have drawn on the outcomes of the stakeholder consultations carried out from February 2016 to February 2017. The Framework for Action describes this process, and the relevant documents can be downloaded at http://www.westmed-initiative.eu/downloads/.</p> <p>The Western Mediterranean Assistance Mechanism will provide the necessary support to ensure the involvement of public and private sector stakeholders promoting the Initiative at local level.</p>
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<p>N°4 An Action Plan for nature, people and the economy COM(2017) 198 final EESC 2017/3013 - NAT/717 530th Plenary Session - December 2017 Rapporteur: Mr Lutz RIBBE (GR11-DE) DG ENV – Commissioner VELLA</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>3.4. The Action Plan has a short time frame: the Commission plans to report on the "delivery" of measures before the end of its current term of office in 2019. The European Economic and Social Committee thinks this is very ambitious, if only because the Commission does not provide for any extra human resources to implement the Action Plan.</p>	<p>The Action Plan directly responds to the findings of the Nature Directives⁷ Fitness Check and aims to rapidly improve practical implementation of the Nature Directives. It deliberately covers a short time period so that the Commission can report on its delivery before the end of its current mandate in 2019. Most actions have been launched in 2017 and will continue during 2018 and 2019.</p>
<p>4.2. [...] In European Economic and Social Committee's view it would have made more sense to evaluate the existing biodiversity strategy with its six targets and 20 specific measures, carry out and publish a detailed analysis of its weak points and on that basis possibly incorporate additional measures into it. Producing a new Action Plan like this will create confusion because it is still completely unclear how it relates to the existing biodiversity strategy, especially since</p>	<p>The Action Plan is the Commission's response to the Fitness Check⁸ of the Birds and Habitats Directives. It aims to rapidly improve practical implementation of the Nature Directives and accelerate progress towards the European Union 2020 goal of halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. It contributes to several targets of the</p>

⁷ Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds, OJ L 20, 26.1.2010 ("Birds Directive").
Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, OJ L 206, 22.7.1992 ("Habitats Directive").

⁸ SWD(2016) 472 final - http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness_check/index_en.htm

<p>some measures of the Action Plan (e.g. under Priorities B and C) have been in the European Union's biodiversity programmes and on the political agenda for years and remain unimplemented.</p>	<p>Biodiversity Strategy.</p> <p>The Commission plans to evaluate the European Union Biodiversity Strategy⁹ and to report on its findings by 2020. The outcomes of this evaluation will feed into the reflections on the follow-up to the current European Union Biodiversity Strategy, along with a global biodiversity framework for post-2020.</p>
<p>4.6. The critical problem, however, is that measures to promote or maintain biodiversity today largely represent a cost factor rather than a source of revenue for land owners and users. Whereas "natural diversity" used to be a virtual by-product of extensive agriculture, a classic land-use conflict has now arisen, triggered among other things by the difficult economic environment facing farmers and foresters.</p> <p>4.7. Whether they are implemented in or outside Natura 2000 sites, biodiversity measures must make economic sense for those who are to put them into effect. They must not and cannot be carried out on the backs of those people. The programmes introduced by the European Union and the Member States to date have not been able to resolve this fundamental dilemma; nor unfortunately does the Action Plan, where "win-win" positions are often invoked, really offer any useful approaches.</p>	<p>There is a legal obligation for European Union co-financing of management and restoration of the Natura 2000 network set out in Article 8 of the Habitats Directive. However, this does not mean that the total cost of the measures should be financed through European Union funds.</p> <p>The multiple benefits of the Directives, estimated at EUR 200-300 billion per year, significantly exceed identified costs. Their implementation contributes to local economies through job creation and tourism, especially in rural areas. The socio-economic benefits of the many ecosystem services provided by Natura 2000 should gain widespread recognition, acknowledgement and acceptance in public policy, so that internalization of costs is achieved.</p>
<p>4.8. [...] The European Economic and Social Committee believes that further improvement is very necessary in this area: adequate funding must be earmarked for the Natura 2000 network under the new medium-term financial plan from 2021 and</p>	<p>The Commission has put forward its proposals for the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework. Opportunities for funding Natura 2000 exist in all relevant European Union funds. It is for the Member State</p>

⁹ Communication from the Commission: Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 (COM(2011) 244 final).

<p>sufficient staff must be provided for the authorities that administer it, at both European Union and Member State level.</p> <p>5.3. Lack of financing for managing the Natura 2000 network is not just a major obstacle to achieving the agreed biodiversity targets, but is symptomatic of the failures of European Union policy. Laws are adopted that entail costs, but no agreement is reached on who must pay or how these costs are to be covered. The lack of alignment between European Union laws and the European Union budget is the main reason for the problems with biodiversity protection in Europe.</p>	<p>authorities to ensure sufficient resources are allocated to Natura 2000.</p>
<p>5.2. [...] The European Economic and Social Committee urges the Commission to produce an up-to-date and sound estimate of costs for the whole Natura 2000 network.</p>	<p>Article 8 of the Habitats Directive provides a legal basis for European Union co-financing of conservation measures for Natura 2000 sites and foresees the establishment of a mechanism for strategic planning of Natura 2000 funding through the establishment of Prioritised Action Frameworks. Under Action 8 of the Action Plan, the Commission together with Member States and stakeholders is currently finalising the update of the Prioritised Action Frameworks format to ensure a more harmonised approach to calculation of costs and identification of conservation objectives and measures including clear priorities. Member States will update their Prioritised Action Frameworks by the end of 2018. This work is expected to provide an up-to-date estimate of costs for the whole Natura 2000 network.</p>
<p>5.8. The European Economic and Social Committee emphatically welcomes the</p>	<p>Under Action 12, the Commission will develop guidance providing a strategic</p>

<p>Commission's intention to further expand the strategy on green infrastructure in the framework of the Action Plan. It points out, though, that no blueprint – including this one – will bring about any changes unless backed up by financial resources. The European Economic and Social Committee would also point here to the conclusions of the Environment Council of 19 June 2017, where the Commission was urged to move ahead with a proposal for a Trans-European Network for Green Infrastructure (TEN-G).</p>	<p>framework for further supporting the deployment of European Union-level Green Infrastructure, containing a series of guidelines on objectives, priorities and selection criteria for Green Infrastructure projects of European interest that contribute to the goals of the Nature Directives, including through improving connectivity of Natura 2000 sites in a cross-border context, with a view to identify projects to be prioritised with appropriate funding, so as to enhance the delivery of essential ecosystem services throughout the European Union territory (by mid-2018).</p>
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<p>N°5 Commission Notice on Access to Justice in Environmental Matters C(2017) 2616 final EESC 2017/2828 - NAT/716 530th Plenary Session - December 2017 Rapporteur: Mr Cillian LOHAN (GR11-IE) Corapporteur: Mr Brian CURTIS (GR11-UK) DG ENV – Commissioner VELLA</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.1.-1.3., 2.5. The European Economic and Social Committee welcomes the Interpretative Communication as a step towards providing for increased certainty and clarity to decision makers and relevant stakeholders. However, it calls for overarching and binding European Union legislation on Access to Justice.</p>	<p>As the Commission has pointed out in the Notice itself (notably at points 9 and 10), for the time being it does not intend to present a proposal for overarching binding legislation on Access to Justice.</p>
<p>1.1.-1.4. The Notice needs to be effectively rolled out and be complemented by education and training at Member State level across the intended audiences</p>	<p>The Notice was published in the Official Journal, but will also be published as a stand-alone product to be disseminated directly at relevant conferences/events or via Commission Representations and other partners. In addition, the Commission organised a meeting with experts from Member States in October 2017 and another one with academics and judges in November 2017. Their further involvement in the new developments is being considered. Moreover, Commission officials have made presentations of the Notice in some Member States, at the request of national authorities. The Commission is ready to ensure that its officials participate at other seminars/events, in particular in those Member States</p>

	<p>where presentations have not been made yet.</p> <p>In order to further spread knowledge of the Notice, consideration will be given to developing an improved specific training module on access to justice in environmental matters under the auspices of a training programme for judges on environmental law, which has been led by the Commission's Directorate-General for Environment since 2008.</p> <p>In addition, funding for national activities under the LIFE+ instrument (the European Union's funding instrument for the environment and climate action) could contribute towards the dissemination of the Notice. A number of environmental associations have successfully applied for a three-year long project between 2017 and 2020 to raise awareness of key stakeholders on access to environmental matters.</p>
<p>1.7.-4.8. The Notice needs to be kept up to date to ensure accuracy and currency.</p>	<p>The Commission will continue to follow relevant cases closely and, as is indicated in point 212 of the Notice, the Commission will consider updating the text in the future if that becomes necessary.</p>

<p>2.11.-2.12. The European Economic and Social Committee recognises the sensitivity associated with the recent findings of the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee (ACCC – Case C/2008/32) on the non-compliance of the European Union. It presses for timely and constructive engagement by the European Union before the next Meeting of Parties in 2021.</p>	<p>Work will continue on the Aarhus Convention, in particular on the compliance cases concerning the European Union. This will include exploring options to improve the Convention’s implementation within the European Union. The experience accrued in 2017 from the European Union’s interinstitutional debates will contribute to this work.</p>
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<p>N°6 Advantages of the Community-led Local Development approach (exploratory opinion) EESC 2017/4384 - NAT/724 530th Plenary Session - December 2017 Rapporteur: Mr Roman HAKEN (GRIII-CZ) DG REGIO – Commissioner CREȚU</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.2. How can the European Union strengthen its ties with the Member States and regain the trust of its citizens?</p> <p>1.3. The answer could be a well implemented Community-Led Local Development approach that enables integrated local development and the involvement of citizens and their organisations at grassroots level. The European Economic and Social Committee is convinced that Community-Led Local Development could have many advantages as a successful European local development tool.</p>	<p>Community-Led Local Development is indeed a European Union policy tool reaching out to local level and directly involving citizens in the development of their area.</p>
<p>1.4. The European Economic and Social Committee recommends establishing a clear vision for an obligatory Community-Led Local Development multi-funds implementation in the European Union, assuring a Community-Led Local Development approach is used for all types of territories: rural (including remote, mountain and island areas), urban and coastal.</p>	<p>The Commission proposal adopted on 29 May 2018¹⁰ enables a wide use of the Community-Led Local Development instrument for various territories. It is one of the territorial tools proposed to implement integrated, multi-sectoral territorial strategies. The Commission proposal builds on the positive experience with Community-Led Local Development and ensures continuity for existing structures. The lead-fund approach is a strong step in the direction of simplification where</p>

¹⁰ COM(2018) 375 final.

	<p>Community-Led Local Developments are supported from multiple funding sources.</p> <p>The 2014-2020 multi-fund support has enabled the extension of Community-Led Local Development beyond the LEADER ('Links between actions for the development of the rural economy') Programme areas and the fisheries communities as the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund can be used in all types of territories. (Member States may decide to make several European Structural and Investment Funds available to Community-Led Local Development in their country either through one Fund per strategy and area, or through support by several Funds to one strategy.)</p>
<p>1.5. The European Economic and Social Committee urges the Commission to explore and analyse in depth opportunities to create a reserve fund for Community-Led Local Development at European Union level. Irrespective of this, the Commission will have to ensure that all Member States have a national Community-Led Local Development Fund with contributions from all four European Structural and Investment Funds (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund).</p>	<p>The Commission is aware of some complexities of the current Community-Led Local Development framework and proposed a simpler framework for 2021-2027. All mentioned funds can contribute to supporting Community-Led Local Development.</p>
<p>1.6. The European Economic and Social Committee recommends defining a harmonised framework of all four European Structural and Investment Funds and setting up simple rules for Community-Led Local Development Fund implementation at</p>	<p>The European Structural and Investment Funds have common provisions setting out the Community-Led Local Development approach in 2014-2020. This continues to be the case for 2021-2027 through the</p>

European Union level.	Common Provisions Regulation ¹¹ and the fund-specific Regulation of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development ¹² which cross-refers to the Common Provisions Regulation.
1.7. In order to achieve greater impact, enough financial means have to be provided for the implementation of Community-Led Local Development in the programming period 2021-2027. To do this, the European Economic and Social Committee urged the Commission to establish a mandatory requirement for Member States to allocate at least 15% from each European Structural and Investment Funds budget to the Community-Led Local Development Fund, which must also be supported with sufficient national resources.	The Commission's proposal on common provisions does not establish mandatory earmarking for Community-Led Local Development in the Common Provisions Regulation for 2021-2027. However, the fund-specific rules for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development forming part of the proposed Common Agricultural Policy Plan Regulation ¹³ foresee that at least 5% of the total European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development contribution to the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan shall be reserved for the LEADER ('Links between actions for the development' of the rural economy") Programme.
1.8. The European Economic and Social Committee recommends avoiding any gap between programming periods and guaranteeing a better start to the 2021-2027 period.	The Commission is aware of the importance of providing continuity in the development work of the Local Action Groups. Forward planning by Member States is crucial to avoid funding gaps. The Commission's proposal establishes a framework which supports this goal.
1.9. A complicated legal framework and	The Commission took note of the call

¹¹ Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, OJ L 347, 20.12.2013.

¹² Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005, OJ L 347, 20.12.2013.

¹³ COM(2018) 393 final.

<p>time-consuming procedures have caused a significant growth in the bureaucratic burden for all Community-Led Local Development actors. To achieve efficiency in the future implementation of multi-funded Community-Led Local Development, the European Economic and Social Committee calls for a significant simplification of the Community-Led Local Development legal framework, implementation procedures and model for the 2021-2027 programming period.</p> <p>The new political and economic context should be used to reduce bureaucratic burdens and launch a simple framework which is focused on opportunities and trust. A simple system has been created, for instance, in the evolution of global grants.</p>	<p>for less bureaucratic burden and introduced a simplified framework overall for 2021-2027. Among others, programming, implementation, control, reporting and evaluation have been simplified considerably. Specifically for Community-Led Local Development, the applicable provisions have been streamlined, and the "Lead-fund" approach introduced. The Commission proposal builds on the changes already introduced by the Omnibus proposal¹⁴.</p>
<p>1.10. The European Economic and Social Committee recommends enabling a close dialogue between all Community-Led Local Development actors at European, national, regional and local level in preparation for the next programming period for building trust and for implementing a Community-Led Local Development multi-fund integrated approach. Links between the European Union, citizens and communities have to be strengthened.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees that dialogue between Community-Led Local Development actors from the local, regional/national and European level is important. European Union rural development and fisheries networks are facilitating those exchanges.</p> <p>The Commission is looking into the practical arrangements on how to further develop these arrangements for all Community-Led Local Development actors.</p>
<p>1.11. The European Economic and Social Committee recommends enabling a continuous capacity building of all Community-Led Local Development actors (authorities, Local Action Groups, LEADER ("Links between actions for the development of the rural economy") and rural networks, paying agencies, etc.) in relation to</p>	<p>The Commission considers capacity building as one of the most critical elements in Community-Led Local Development. Corresponding support is enabled in the legal framework.</p>

¹⁴ COM(2016) 605 final.

<p>Community-Led Local Development multi-funds.</p>	
<p>1.16. Community-Led Local Development in peri-urban and urban areas are the challenges for future European Union local development. The European Economic and Social Committee recommends that data on successful pilots be collected and information and motivation campaigns organised for wider use. Training will be needed for local urban actors and public administration.</p> <p>Community-Led Local Development in urban areas can be used as a tool for implementing the European Union Urban Agenda and combined with the Urbact Programme (the European Territorial Cooperation Programme aiming to foster sustainable integrated urban development in cities across Europe).</p>	<p>The Commission agrees that successful pilots and information need to be disseminated. For the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund, the Commission collected the first data on the implementation of Community-Led Local Development in 2017, including examples of urban strategies. The work is continuing during 2018 to complement the data and examples for learning and dissemination purposes, eventually also for a visual tool.</p> <p>In its proposal laying down common provisions, the Commission further developed the territorial tools and potential for synergies between them.</p>
<p>4.8. The direct dialogue between the Commission and Local Action Groups also needs strengthening – the European Economic and Social Committee could provide help on this.</p>	<p>The Commission acknowledges the importance of networking between the different levels involved in Community-Led Local Development implementation as supported by European Union level networks.</p> <p>The Commission welcomes the support and cooperation of the European Economic and Social Committee.</p>
<p>5. European Economic and Social Committee proposals for the 2021-2027 programming period at European Union, national, regional and local level</p> <p>At European level:</p> <p>5.1. To establish a clear vision at European Union level of obligatory Community-Led Local Development multi-funds implementation to provide simple</p>	<p>The Commission takes note of the proposal.</p> <p>The Commission with the help of its European Union networks and separate studies has been collecting examples of multi-funded Community-Led Local Development delivery models and facilitating exchange of experience in this field. This work will be continued.</p>

<p>models and guidelines as soon as possible and to introduce best practice on how to implement Community-Led Local Development multi-funds in Member States as soon as possible (2018).</p>	
<p>The European Economic and Social Committee recommends:</p> <p>5.2. thinking outside of the box by exploring and analysing in depth opportunities to create a reserve fund for Community-Led Local Development at European Union level. Irrespective of this, the Commission will have to ensure that all Member States have a national Community-Led Local Development Fund;</p> <p>5.3. setting out a harmonised framework for all European Structural and Investment Funds and establish simple rules for Community-Led Local Development Fund implementation at European Union level;</p> <p>5.4. requiring the design of a special Community-Led Local Development source of funding (Community-Led Local Development Fund) with contributions from all four European Structural and Investment Funds corresponding to all the focus areas of the different funds for rural, urban and coastal territories at national level (please see the proposed model below);</p> <p>5.5. requiring Member States to allocate at least 15% from each European Structural and Investment Funds budget for the Community-Led Local Development Fund and sufficient national resources;</p> <p>5.6. strengthening the dialogue between all Community-Led Local Development actors at each level (European, national, regional and local).</p>	<p>Please see the Commission's position under points 1.5. to 1.7., 4.8.</p>
<p>5.7. The European Economic and Social</p>	<p>The Commission takes note of the</p>

<p>Committee recommends finding a more memorable and acceptable name – LEADER ("Links between actions for the development of the rural economy") due to its successful history would be a good name for this tool, for example.</p>	<p>proposal. The Commission agrees that LEADER ("Links between actions for the development of the rural economy") has been a successful brand, however historically it has referred to actions in rural areas. Therefore, the Commission maintained the term "Community-led Local Development" in the proposal.</p>
<p>5.8. The European Economic and Social Committee recommends sharing best practice in the use of the new Community-Led Local Development in urban areas by keeping it in one location.</p>	<p>The Commission aims to make information on Community-Led Local Development in urban areas available in a user-friendly way online.</p>

<p>N°7 Wealth inequality in Europe (own-initiative opinion) EESC 2017/4384 – ECO/410 530th Plenary Session – December 2017 Rapporteur: Mr Plamen DIMITROV (GRII-BG) DG EMPL - Commissioner THYSSEN</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.6. The European Pillar of Social Rights should be tied much more closely in with the European Semester and policies, for their part, should be in line with the Europe 2020 strategy, with a view to effectively achieving the Europe-wide and national objectives enshrined therein.</p>	<p>The European Semester is the main tool to monitor the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.</p> <p>The 2018 Annual Growth Survey already makes clear that the Semester will be key to delivering the Pillar, which is a joint endeavour of European Union Institutions, Member States and social partners.</p> <p>The Joint Employment Report includes the new Social Scoreboard to monitor areas covered by the Pillar, such as the share of early school leavers, the youth unemployment rate or the impact of social transfers on poverty reduction.</p> <p>Also, the Employment Guidelines, the basis for the Country Specific Recommendations, have been aligned with the principles of the Pillar. They contain different elements to ensure that the Pillar dimensions are well reflected.</p> <p>The Country Reports gave further analysis on Member States' performance and will focus on reforms that help increase the resilience of labour markets, the effectiveness of national welfare systems and the capacity to deal with longer-term structural drivers of change (new forms of work, demographic</p>

	ageing, etc.).
<p>3.1. Inequalities in wealth tend to be far greater than those in income. The European Economic and Social Committee stresses the fact that it is first and foremost the Member States who have the appropriate instruments at their disposal – such as programmes for investment, economic growth and new jobs, taxation and social transfers – to tackle economic and social inequalities. However, there is scope for European level action as well, and the matter should be treated more seriously by the European Institutions, because its effects on the real business cycle would be complex and much more long-term. Existing policies continue to target income more than wealth.</p>	<p>The 2018 Annual Growth Survey sets out that the European Union priorities are centred along the virtuous triangle of investment, structural reforms and responsible fiscal policies, with a focus on delivering more inclusive growth.</p> <p>Numerous principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights place an important emphasis on income and wealth inequality through the promotion of equality of opportunity and enabling social services, education and training, as well as principles on the right to minimum income, adequate social protection, and fair wages.</p> <p>Inequality issues featured systematically and prominently in the 2017 European Semester Country Reports. Wealth inequality was addressed for all countries for which data was available¹⁵. In the forthcoming semester round, wealth inequalities will be covered where appropriate.</p>
<p>4.6. Accelerated globalisation over the last three decades has increased the tax burden on labour and reversed the share of wages and capital in gross domestic product. As a result, wages declined as a share of Gross Domestic Product by an annual average of 0.3% between 1980 and 2006 in most OECD ("Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development") Member States. Over the same period, the share of profit in Gross Domestic Product increased from around 31% to 47% in the EU15. The European Economic and Social Committee</p>	<p>Lowering the tax wedge and reducing tax disincentives to take up paid work would contribute to achieving several of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Shifting the tax burden away from labour towards other tax bases (less detrimental to growth) is recommended in various Commission policy documents, including the Europe 2020 Employment Guidelines, the 2017 Annual Growth Survey and the Euro Area Recommendations.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Pillar sets forward</p>

¹⁵ Data was available for 20 Member States based on the 2016 publication of European Central Bank: The Household Finance and Consumption Survey: results from the second wave, Household Finance and Consumption Network, Statistics Paper Series, No. 18, European Central Bank, Frankfurt am Main.

believes that Member States and the European Union should urgently implement policies to reverse this trend.

priorities, with a focus on inequalities and on the need to ensure that the benefits of globalisation and of technological and demographic change are distributed fairly across society. The structural reform measures in this direction include human capital investment, measures that increase productivity and allow for higher wage developments, and investment in social infrastructure.

<p>N°8 Work-life balance of working parents and caregivers COM(2017) 252 final, COM(2017) 253 final EESC 2017/2275 - SOC/529 530th Plenary Session - December 2017 Rapporteur: Ms Erika KOLLER (GRII-HU) Corapporteur: Ms Vladimíra DRBALOVÁ (GRI-CZ) DG EMPL/ DG JUST – Commissioner THYSSEN</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.2. The European Economic and Social Committee considers that the package’s proposals should be further analysed, taking into account the actual situation in each Member State as well as the costs and organisational efforts for enterprises and, in particular, small and medium-sized enterprises.</p>	<p>The Impact Assessment accompanying the Commission proposal is based on a thorough legal analysis per Member State and assesses in particular the costs of the proposed measures for companies and micro-businesses¹⁶.</p>
<p>1.2. The following measures should also be taken: tackle stereotypes, disseminate good practices and create national action plans on work-life balance.</p> <p>4.5.1.5. The European Economic and Social Committee believes that capacity building/information seminars, with the full participation of all stakeholders, are very important as accompanying measures but notes that they are required on a much larger scale than currently proposed. There is a particular need for information seminars on dismissal protection after returning from maternity leave.</p>	<p>In its 2017 Communication on An Initiative to support work-life balance for Working Parents and Carers¹⁷, the Commission states that it will take action to ensure better implementation of legislation and promote compliance, in particular through financial support (including information campaigns, for instance on stereotypes with regard to gender roles in care at home), through launching a study on the enforcement of dismissal protection by the European Network of Legal Experts in Gender Equality and through a seminar to be organised in cooperation with the European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet) on capacity-building activities with a focus on dismissal</p>

¹⁶ See Commission (2017) *Impact Assessment accompanying the work-life balance proposal*.

¹⁷ COM(2017) 252 final.

	protection.
<p>1.7. The European Economic and Social Committee stresses the need for more investment in high-quality, affordable and available care services and facilities for every family, and calls on the Commission to use the Country Specific Recommendations in the framework of the European Semester, as well as the regional development funds, to encourage the Member States to increase their efforts.</p> <p>4.5.1.4. In this context, the European Economic and Social Committee has on several occasions called for far more ambitious promotion of social investment, considering in particular the "multiple dividends" of investing in childcare facilities¹⁸.</p>	<p>In its 2017 Communication on An Initiative to support work-life balance for Working Parents and Carers, the Commission states that it will continue to provide guidance to Member States on employment-friendly and accessible care services, and provide funding to support the continued development of accessible, affordable and quality childcare provision, as well as out-of-school and long-term care services, including through the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund investments and by encouraging stakeholders to use the financial support provided by the European Funds for Strategic Investments. It states that it may request Member States to review the programming of European Structural and Investment Funds in light of country-specific recommendations and in case of insufficient funding earmarked to address the relevant challenges identified in the European Semester. The Commission will also explore how to address these concerns in the preparation of post-2020 European Union funding programmes.</p>
<p>1.8., 4.5.2.1. Although the proposal for a directive deals with tax systems to some extent, the European Economic and Social Committee regrets that it does not go far enough.</p>	<p>In its 2017 Communication on An Initiative to support work-life balance for Working Parents and Carers, the Commission states it will take action to support Member States in removing economic disincentives that hinder women's participation and outcomes in the labour market, through increased monitoring in the European Semester</p>

¹⁸ See, inter alia, the EESC opinions SOC/481, SOC/496, SOC/542.

	<p>and under the Mutual Learning Programme - as well as to improve data collection in this area.</p> <p>The Economic Policy Committee held a discussion focusing on the "Labour tax burden on secondary earners" in October 2017. The Commission's Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on the Economic Policy of the Euro Area¹⁹, published in November 2017, includes a specific reference to the taxation of second earners.</p>
<p>4.1.3. The European Economic and Social Committee stresses that it considers the right to a period of leave of 10 days for this purpose, as provided for in the proposal for a directive, to be a first step in the right direction in order to achieve the proposal's goal of substantially increasing fathers' participation. In the European Economic and Social Committee's view, however, a longer period – e.g. up to one month – to be agreed between employer and employee would be more appropriate to achieve the proposal's goal.</p>	<p>The Commission proposal sets minimum standards at European Union level and does not preclude the adoption of higher requirements by Member States.</p>
<p>4.3.2. The European Economic and Social Committee therefore welcomes the proposal to establish a minimum European playing-field by introducing an individual entitlement to carers' leave of at least five days per year, paid at the level of sick pay. However, this is only a first step and more will need to be done by the Commission to support and complement the Member States' efforts to help families cope better with growing care responsibilities. The introduction of this individual entitlement should be linked to the development of</p>	<p>In its 2017 Communication on An Initiative to support work-life balance for Working Parents and Carers, the Commission states that it will support Member States in increasing the provision of long-term care services. In addition to the funding measures mentioned above, the Commission committed to continuing its provision of guidance and improving European Union-level data collection in this area. The Commission is currently working with the Social Protection Committee's</p>

¹⁹ COM(2017) 770 final.

<p>support mechanisms for carers.</p>	<p>Indicators' Group on developing European Union-level indicators in the area of long-term care.</p>
<p>4.5.1.3. The European Economic and Social Committee notes that the Commission proposes to revise the Education and Training targets but does not mention the achievements of the Barcelona targets. However, the Education and Training target for early childhood education and care has a smaller scope as it only focuses on children from four years of age to school age. The European Economic and Social Committee therefore calls for urgent action to revise the Education and Training target for early childhood education and care to align it with the Barcelona targets by enlarging its scope (i.e. including targets for children below four years of age). The new targets resulting from this revision should be more ambitious than the current Barcelona targets.</p>	<p>In May 2018, the Commission proposed a Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems²⁰. It foresees for the Commission to propose updated European benchmarks or targets on early childhood education and care aiming at the provision of services, in line with possible revised Education and Training 2020 (ET2020) benchmark and Barcelona targets, following consultation with Member States.</p>
<p>4.5.1.3. Moreover, the European Economic and Social Committee calls for the development of European Union-level benchmarks for out-of-school care and long-term care services.</p>	<p>In its 2017 Communication on An Initiative to support work-life balance for Working Parents and Carers, the Commission states that it will explore the possibilities of developing benchmarks at European Union level in the areas of out-of-school care and long-term care services.</p>

²⁰ COM(2018) 271 final.

<p>N°9 Sustainable social security and social protection systems in the digital era (own-initiative opinion) EESC 2017/1220 – SOC/560 530th Plenary Session – December 2017 Rapporteur: Mr Petru Sorin DANDEA (GR11-RO) DG EMPL - Commissioner THYSSEN</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.7. The European Economic and Social Committee considers it imperative that the debate launched by the Commission on developing a European Pillar of Social Rights also encompasses the situation of workers engaged in the new forms of employment and, above all, look at how to recognise their status and ensure they have adequate access to social security and social protection systems.</p> <p>3.10. The European Economic and Social Committee has welcomed the debate launched by the Commission on developing a European Pillar of Social Rights. It is imperative that this debate also encompass the situation of workers engaged in the new forms of employment, and, above all, look at how to recognise their status and ensure that they can access adequate benefits provided by social security and social protection systems.</p>	<p>This Commission is committed to reinforce Europe’s social dimension, in particular to ensure that social considerations are duly and consistently taken into account across policy areas at European Union and national levels, respecting the different competences and the subsidiarity principle. The European Pillar of Social Rights has been proclaimed by the European Union Institutions and Member States. The Pillar is a shared political commitment to renewed upwards social convergence, in a period of rapid change.</p> <p>During the public consultation on the European Pillar of Social Rights, many stakeholders expressed concerns regarding the obstacles faced by workers in non-standard forms of employment and by the self-employed in accessing social protection.</p> <p>On 13 March 2018, the Commission adopted the Social Fairness Package, which includes a proposal for a European Labour Authority and a proposal for a Council Recommendation</p>

	<p>on Access to Social Protection for Workers and the Self-employed²¹.</p> <p>The initiative aims to implement Principle 12 of the European Pillar of Social Rights which states that:</p> <p><i>'regardless of the type and duration of their employment relationship, workers, and, under comparable conditions, the self-employed have the right to adequate social protection'</i>.</p> <p>For matters related to non-standard workers, the Commission has followed a two-stage consultation of the social partners, in line with the provisions of Article 154(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). The conclusion was that there was no agreement between social partners to negotiate. On matters related to the self-employed, the Commission also consulted the social partners on a voluntary basis.</p> <p>The Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs conducted a broad public consultation from 20 November until 15 January 2018.</p> <p>Targeted hearings were held in December 2017 with representatives of the self-employed, social insurance organisations and civil society, as well as relevant policy committees (Social Protection Committee) composed of representatives of Member States.</p> <p>The Commission has adopted a proposal in March 2018 for a Council Recommendation on Access to Social Protection for Workers and the Self-</p>
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²¹ COM(2018) 132 final.

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<p>N°10 Cooperation with civil society to prevent the radicalisation of young people (own-initiative opinion) EESC 2017/2234 - SOC/565 530th Plenary Session - December 2017 Rapporteur: Mr Christian MOOS (GR11-DE) DG HOME - Commissioner AVRAMOPOULOS/Commissioner KING</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.2. Member States and European Union Institutions need to be more aware of civil society players as partners instead of using them as tools in combating violent extremism. Best practice, programmes and other prevention initiatives already exist in all fields of radicalisation prevention, but they do not get enough sustainable, long-term support and are vulnerable to budget cuts.</p>	<p>The Commission considers civil society organisations as its core partners in tackling radicalisation and supports them through training and grants²².</p> <p>As highlighted also in its policy framework²³, the Commission has been adopting a bottom-up approach and considers the empowerment of civil society organisations as an utmost priority.</p> <p>The Commission furthermore advocates for a sustainable framework and financial conditions for civil society organisations with Member States as part of the work of the High Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R)²⁴. The Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence is a fully-fledged member of the Group.</p> <p>Under the Internal Security Fund Police (ISF-P), the civil society players are seen as partners to be supported as</p>

²² The Civil Society Empowerment Programme.

²³ Especially in the Communications on Radicalisation of 2014 (COM(2013) 941 final and 2106 (COM(2016) 379 final).

²⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=3552&NewSearch=1&NewSearch=1>.

	clearly stated in the call text ISFP-2017-CSEP ²⁵ .
<p>1.4. There is a need for more national and European support for civil society organisations, for more sustainable, long-term budgetary resources, and for European Union-wide coordination, networking and policy implementation. Therefore, the "European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism" needs to give even more consideration to involving and supporting civil society stakeholders, as politics and society do indeed share responsibility for combating radicalisation. The Civil Society Empowerment programme, launched under the European Union Internet Forum, could be an encouraging initiative in this context.</p>	<p>The Commission shares these objectives and intends to further support the civil society organisations.</p> <p>In line with the recommendations of the interim report²⁶ of the High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R), the Commission is also looking into ways to strengthen existing initiatives and their coordination (including the Radicalisation Awareness Network, the European Union Internet Forum with its Civil Society Empowerment Programme and the European Strategic Communications Network), and how to develop more structured cooperation mechanisms at European Union level.</p> <p>Various European funds including the European Social Fund may be used to implement anti-radicalisation projects from various perspectives – ensuring social cohesion, developing education systems, ensuring security and prevention of crime and terrorist threats.</p> <p>European Union funds should be considered as leverage means to the local, regional or national funding, where relevant.</p> <p>The added value of European Union funding could for instance lie in the launching of innovative projects, networking and dissemination of best practices.</p> <p>Facilitating access to the funding for</p>

²⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/other_eu_prog/other/home/call-fiche/isfp-2017-ag-csep_en.pdf

²⁶ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=36235&no=1>

	<p>civil society and developing long-term strategies of spending European Union resources is among the Commission objectives as regards the implementation of the Funds.</p>
<p>1.6. The European Union Radicalisation Awareness Network and the tools made available by the Commission are a step in the right direction but need to be geared more to local civil society structures and be better staffed and resourced in order to effectively bring together experts from the public sector and organised civil society.</p>	<p>The Commission shares the view on the crucial aspect of the local dimension. The High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R) Report has dedicated a specific chapter to this challenge. The Commission will assess the recommendations drafted by the Group and take up follow-up action as necessary.</p> <p>In this context, the Radicalisation Awareness Network stands ready to, inter alia, offer targeted counselling services to facilitate the implementation of multi-agency cooperation models at the local level. To effectively perform such services the Radicalisation Awareness Network reaches out to suitable experts in European Union Member States from the public and civil society organisation sector.</p>
<p>1.11. The European Economic and Social Committee highlights the importance of inclusive formal and non-formal education, which is absolutely essential for active participation in a diverse society, teaching critical thinking and media literacy as well as contributing to society's resilience against anti-democratic, xenophobic and populist tendencies that in some cases are gaining more and more influence on mainstream political discourse as it adapts to xenophobic sentiments and views.</p>	<p>The Commission has been very active in implementing the Paris Declaration of 2015 on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through a comprehensive policy agenda on education to promote social inclusion, and spread knowledge and understanding of shared values through formal and non-formal learning.</p> <p>About 20 concrete measures have been launched in the field of education, youth and sport. Among others, social</p>

inclusion has been made a priority for the Erasmus+ Programme, which mobilised more than EUR 215 million in 2017 to support inclusion and fundamental values.

The Commission is also working towards the establishment of a network of positive role models to operate in schools, youth, sports clubs and prisons to promote social inclusion, prevent exclusion and radicalisation as well as encourage active citizenship and commitment to shared values. This initiative is being rolled out gradually by Erasmus+ National Agencies.

A specific toolkit for youth workers on how to deal with young people at risk of radicalisation has also been developed.

The Working Group on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, set up under the Framework for European cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020) has held several successful peer learning seminars involving Member State experts, non-governmental organisations and international organisations. The Group has produced an online compendium of good practices to share the examples with a broader public, which has now been published.

In relation to the funding made available under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme for projects aimed at preventing and countering hate speech online, the Commission has included a priority for projects on the development of critical

	<p>thinking by Internet users and for tackling online hate speech and abuse against journalists and media actors and analysing their effects on the democratic debate.</p> <p>Furthermore, the importance of education has been clearly highlighted also in the High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R) Interim Report, with recommendations on formal and informal education and on resilience building.</p> <p>In 2018, the Radicalisation Awareness Network Working Group, building on the insights on critical thinking and media literacy gained in 2017, will further explore the issue of right-wing extremism in schools and the related challenges like anti-Islam groups and other nationalist and xenophobic groups.</p>
<p>1.12. In efforts to prevent the radicalisation of young people, there is a need for particular attention to, and investment in, civil society's youth work and youth organisations providing alternative identification structures and opportunities, as well as a safe space for dialogue including active listening and personal expression.</p> <p>4.8 More particularly, there should be more investment in civil society's youth work and youth organisations that provide cultural, sporting, and other leisure time activities, with a view to providing alternative identification structures and opportunities, as well as safe spaces for dialogue and personal expression.</p>	<p>Following the work of an Expert Group on "the specific contribution of youth work as well as non-formal and informal learning to fostering active citizenship and preventing marginalisation" in 2016, a Report was issued, comprising a practical toolbox for youth workers and youth organisations when working with young people at risk of violent radicalisation, and recommendations to public authorities from the local to the European level. Both the practical toolbox and the policy recommendations are inspired by successful good practice projects and policy approaches across Europe.</p> <p>In 2017, within the Working Group on</p>

	<p>Youth, Families and Communities, the Radicalisation Awareness Network has gathered youth workers from across Europe to discuss the role of youth work in prevention of radicalisation. Building on the learnings of the above-mentioned toolbox and other insights, they have provided valuable inputs for a practical tool to support youth workers in discussing controversial topics and taboos to be issued by the Radicalisation Awareness Network.</p>
<p>1.13. Investment in tackling the very high rates of youth unemployment and very widespread job instability in many European Union countries must also be viewed as a way of preventing radicalisation. In addition, the European Economic and Social Committee calls for a higher priority to be given to greater investment in combating poverty and to the integration of young people into society, the education system and the labour market.</p> <p>5.9. It is not only young people affected by poverty or unemployment who are vulnerable to radicalisation, but material deprivation and lack of opportunities and active participation may lead to social exclusion, which can in turn become a gateway for radical recruiters. In addition to greater investment to tackle poverty, the European Economic and Social Committee calls for higher priority to be given to the integration of young people into society, education systems and the labour market. The European Economic and Social Committee reiterates its call for robust integration systems in Member States, which facilitate access to the labour market,</p>	<p>Encouraging young people to actively participate in society is one of the two main priorities of the framework for European cooperation in the field of Youth²⁷.</p> <p>Integration of young people in the education system has long been a key objective of European Union policy in the field of Education (for instance, reducing school drop-outs). Inclusiveness has been a key area of focus in recent years, and it is stressed again in the Communication "Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture"²⁸, where the Commission suggests that the European agenda on education should give priority to offering everybody access to high-quality and inclusive education.</p> <p>Regarding the integration of young people into the labour market, the Youth Guarantee, supported by the Youth Employment Initiative and the European Social Fund, has sought to ensure a swift activation of young</p>

²⁷ 2009/C 311/01.

²⁸ COM(2017) 673 final.

<p>recognition of qualifications and the provision of vocational and language training as integration tools and rejects any kind of ethnic and religious discrimination.</p>	<p>people currently not in education, employment or training into employment, education, apprenticeships or traineeships.</p> <p>Around 18 million young people have registered with the scheme and 11 million have received a Youth Guarantee offer. 1.6 million young people have already benefitted from direct support by the Youth Employment Initiative.</p>
<p>1.14. The European Economic and Social Committee underlines the vital role played by, and the social responsibility of, religious communities in the prevention of radicalism, and calls for more strategic engagement in defending the rules and values of liberal democracy and in promoting values-based intercultural dialogue, peace and non-violence.</p>	<p>As also reaffirmed in its Communication on "Supporting the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism"²⁹, the Commission agrees that religion can play a vital role in preventing or countering radicalisation: it binds communities, strengthens the sense of belonging and guides people in a positive direction. Religious leaders and communities are also well-placed in providing alternative and counter messages. In this respect, countering discrimination and hatred, including on the grounds of religion or belief, as well as intercultural and interfaith dialogue between communities is of particular importance. Regular high-level meetings with religious communities and non-confessional organisations chaired by First Vice-President Timmermans allow for dialogue and exchanges on Commission policies addressing issues such as European Union values, integration and education. In addition, two Commission Coordinators have been appointed and tasked, since 2015, to liaise respectively with the Muslim</p>

²⁹ COM(2016) 379 final.

	<p>and the Jewish communities to prevent and counter discrimination and intolerance.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Commission has since 2015 allocated funding under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme precisely to support community leaders and civil society to prevent and combat hatred and intolerance by fostering exchanges and joint projects between communities, including religious communities, including through interreligious and intercultural activities. Under the same Programme, the Commission also awarded in 2017 an operating grant to a network of organisations led by the World Conference for Religions for Peace-Europe, whose objective is fostering tolerance through interreligious dialogue.</p>
<p>1.16. The European Union should demonstrate its strong interest in preventing radicalisation and cooperate more closely with civil society organisations in third countries.</p> <p>5.20. The European Union should demonstrate its strong interest in preventing radicalisation and cooperate more closely with civil society organisations in third countries that pose a high risk of radicalisation and that may be or will become hot spots for radicalisation too.</p> <p>5.21. More specifically, the European Union's external action on counter-terrorism and state and societal resilience, as outlined in the European Union Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy, stresses the need to foster inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue by broadening</p>	<p>On radicalisation, the European Union external engagement is growing in political importance, geographic scope and financial terms. The fundamental purpose of the European Union's efforts in preventing and countering violent extremism is for individuals and communities to become resilient towards radicalisation and violent extremism.</p> <p>The European Union fully recognizes the important role that civil society and local communities play in preventing and countering violent extremism, and supports several initiatives aimed at promoting the meaningful participation of civil society organisations at all levels in this area.</p> <p>With a view to ensuring a more</p>

partnerships with civil society, social organisations, religious communities and the private sector in those countries. There is a high risk that civil society efforts could miss the mark, as external actors in third countries exert considerable influence, for instance by financing violent extremist movements in European Union Member States and in its neighbourhood. Such financial flows must be shut down.

strategic engagement of civil society organisations and allowing the support of grassroots initiatives around the world, the Commission supports the Global Solution Exchange as well as organisations like Hedayah and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund.

Moreover, the European Union attaches particular importance to the crucial role that youth can play as powerful agents of change in combatting and preventing radicalisation. Youth inclusion, youth empowerment, and the youth diaspora should be components of the initiatives; as well as women, prison and probation officers, law enforcement agencies, and religious and community leaders.

The 5th African Union – European Union Summit, which took place on 29-30 November 2017, had an important focus on youth. Ahead of this event, a Youth Plug-In initiative was created in the 4th Africa-Europe Youth Summit, in order to strengthen the direct participation of young people on both continents in the political process. It focuses on six themes; education, peace and security, climate and environment, business and job creation, political inclusion, and culture.

In addition, the Commission would like to stress that one of the initiatives under the Thematic Programme "Civil Society and Local Authorities" for 2018-2020 is focused on Youth and Radicalisation. Results to be achieved include: a) enhancing the capacity of

civil society organisation networks, b) contributing to youth empowerment and inclusion in Africa; c) contributing to the prevention and countering of violent extremism worldwide through a more structured engagement with civil society.

In response to the growing challenges of violent extremism affecting our neighbourhood, the Commission has in recent years diversified and increased the number of projects that are either specific to preventing violent extremism, or closely related.

The Commission's programmes related to preventing violent extremism associate closely the civil society and mainly target youth (especially those that are disenfranchised and marginalised).

In addition, the Commission has a variety of projects that contribute to preventing or addressing the "root causes" of violent extremism through traditional cooperation programmes engaging with civil society in socio-economic development, inter-cultural dialogue, political/economic empowerment, education without however having been developed with an explicit Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) objective.

All programmes are being designed and implemented in accordance with the European Union policy framework of the 19 June 2017 Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on counter-terrorism and the Commission Communication on Supporting the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism delivered in June

	<p>2016³⁰.</p> <p>The Commission's commitment in preventing violent extremism is reflected in its technical assistance implemented in priority regions and partner countries identified in the 19 June 2017 Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions.</p> <p>The Commission's Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)-related programmes in priority countries are context-specific and implemented at grassroots level jointly with civil society organisations.</p> <p>The Commission has adopted a comprehensive anti-money laundering and terrorist financing package in 2016 and is currently launching a (EUR 16 million) project to assist countries in the Middle East and North Africa to better tackle money-laundering and countering terrorist financing.</p> <p>The Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace, and in particular the crisis response component (Article 3) and the conflict-prevention, crisis preparedness and peacebuilding component (Article 4) increasingly finances actions related to countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism (list of actions in the annex)³¹.</p> <p>Since 2015, approximately EUR 130 million has been committed in the Middle East and North Africa region, Africa, and Asia.</p> <p>The approach of the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace to</p>
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³⁰ COM(2016) 379 final.

³¹ Regulation (EU) No 230/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing an instrument contributing to stability and peace, OJ L 77, 15.3.2014.

	<p>countering terrorism/preventing violent extremism is guided by the European Union policy framework: the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, the June 2017 Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on European Union External Action on Counter Terrorism. This framework places an emphasis on the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism. These actions focus mostly on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - analysing radicalisation and violent extremism trends and dynamics; - supporting initiatives aiming to address the dynamics underpinning radicalisation and violent extremism; - strengthening capacities of state authorities to better engage and respond; - community engagement with vulnerable groups as well as strengthening resilience (e.g. preventing violent extremism and promoting peaceful resolution).
<p>1.17. It is important to shut down financial flows supporting extremist structures within the European Union as well as from third countries which counteract efforts by public authorities and civil society to prevent radicalisation.</p>	<p>Taking into account the recommendations of the High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R), the Commission stands ready to facilitate an exchange of experiences with European Union Member States on the measures taken at national level to address the foreign funding of Islamist extremism and work towards an overview and possible analysis of the</p>

	matter.
<p>3.4. In its Communication on the Supporting the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism³², the Commission announced that it would put forward a proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting social inclusion. The European Economic and Social Committee supports these plans and encourages the Commission to draft and present such a proposal in the near future.</p>	<p>On 17 January 2018³³, the Commission put forward a proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching. It aims to promote common values, citizenship, mutual understanding and a shared sense of European identity among young people. On 22 May 2018, Council adopted this Recommendation³⁴.</p>
<p>3.6. Nonetheless, the European Economic and Social Committee views European Union and Member State initiatives to prevent radicalisation, as well as the steps taken to implement them, as still being insufficient. Many of the current European Union policies put too much focus on civil society organisations as tools (rather than partners) in combating violent extremism (e.g. as tools for developing counter-narratives online). It also sees them as being driven mainly by "crisis" events such as the terrorist attacks over recent years, with the result that they appear to have focussed predominantly on Islamist terrorism and a short-term, punitive security policy when in reality there are more extremist threats that abuse religions as justification and from extremist political groups. Instead we must invest in sustainable and long-term prevention efforts. In its opinions on "The European Union Counter-Terrorism Policy" (2011) and on the European Union Agenda 2030, the European Economic and Social</p>	<p>On the role of civil society organisations in European Union prevent policies, it is important to highlight that the Commission values civil society organisations as full partners and not as tools.</p> <p>In line with the recommendations of the High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation Interim Report³⁵, the Commission is looking into ways how to strengthen existing initiatives and their coordination, and how to develop more structured cooperation mechanisms at European Union level with the aim to allow exchanges for all partners involved in tackling radicalisation (practitioners, civil society organisations, researchers and policy makers) in a sustainable and long-term manner.</p> <p>European Union policy documents have set out the general framework for discussion in stressing that radicalisation leading to violent</p>

³² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0379>

³³ COM(2018) 23 final.

³⁴ 2018/C 195/01.

³⁵ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=36235&no=1>

<p>Committee had already called for civil society and local stakeholders to be more involved and for them to be given further institutional support, as they play a major role in developing trust, social engagement and democratic inclusion locally, regionally and nationally.</p>	<p>extremism and terrorism is not limited to one ideology or belief. Consequently, efforts to prevent and counter radicalisation should focus on the entire gamut of existing extremist ideologies.</p>
<p>5.2. In this connection, the European Economic and Social Committee welcomes the idea of putting together overviews in each Member State of existing prevention and exit programmes. Such overviews could also be made available at European level for example through the Radicalisation Awareness Network, with a view to improving dialogue between government bodies and civil society stakeholders, creating synergies and avoiding duplication among programmes. Information about these initiatives needs to be significantly improved across the European Union.</p>	<p>The Commission has already compiled information about Member States' strategies to prevent and counter radicalisation leading to violent extremism or terrorism (Prevent Strategies)³⁶.</p> <p>As to exit programmes, the High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation Interim Report recommends mapping existing practices to prevent and counter radicalisation in the prison and probation context, including exit programmes. The Commission will ensure a proper follow-up to this recommendation.</p> <p>In 2018, the Commission will further strengthen the exchange of good practices and targeted research, and explore with Member States the organisation of peer reviews of de-radicalisation programmes with support from the Radicalisation Awareness Network.</p>
<p>5.5. Local authorities and their administrations have a particularly important role to play in prevention, since they are able to bring together all stakeholders locally. Existing funding mechanisms at European Union and national level must be strengthened and be</p>	<p>The Commission considers multi-agency collaboration as essential in tackling radicalisation and violent extremism cases effectively.</p> <p>As a follow-up to the High-Level Commission Expert Group on</p>

³⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-and-member-states/repository_en

made more accessible through lower bureaucratic barriers, and extensive sustainable fundings must be added.

Radicalisation recommendations on the local level, the Commission will analyse and foster exchanges on existing support structures and multi-agency approaches, with a view to identifying good practices for local cooperation in areas such as information sharing protocols or vetting of civil society partners.

The Radicalisation Awareness Network stands ready to assist Member States in the development of the necessary framework and components of local prevention action plans.

In 2017 a call for proposals to support civil society partners to provide effective alternative and counter narratives to terrorist and extremist content online amounting to EUR 6 million under the Internal Security Fund Police (ISF-P) was published. For the first time a call was dedicated to civil society organisations under ISF-P. It has been launched in the context of the Civil Society Empowering Programme and would be reiterated if the results are positive. Member States should foresee a more important civil society dimension in their national programmes implemented under the Internal Security Fund Police (ISF-P).

The Commission is also undertaking the Mid-Term Review of the implementation of national programmes under the existing Internal Security Fund Police (2014-2020). Member States have been invited to consider radicalisation (including counter narratives) among major funding priorities for the remaining period of implementation.

	<p>In terms of future funding, the Commission is currently working on the preparation of the architecture of the future funding instruments to address security and migration challenges. Modalities of management of the funds, their accessibility to relevant actors at the local level and implementation of the partnership approach are among the main issues under consideration.</p>
<p>5.6. The European Economic and Social Committee calls for more investment in education, training systems, youth work and leisure time facilities that promote integration and the democratic values shared throughout the European Union.</p>	<p>The Communication "Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture" underlines the need for improved investments in education.</p> <p>The proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching aims to promote common values, citizenship, mutual understanding and a shared sense of European identity among young people.</p>
<p>5.12. Active partnerships with business can contribute to prevention. This is especially true for the Information and Communications Technology sector. Innovative tools, such as those offered by social media and internet, can help disseminate counter-narratives through low-cost or ideally cost-free options. Businesses can help civil society organisations and practitioners avail of their professional communication and media skills and support development of targeted advertising and campaigns.</p>	<p>The Commission shares this opinion.</p> <p>Internet companies like Facebook, Twitter, Google and Microsoft have been active in the provision of training and advice to the Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence and partnered up with the European Union, in providing support to the Civil Society Empowerment Programme's first phase. They have supported the development of training curricula for civil society actors, hosting workshops at the Civil Society Empowerment Programme's kick-off event as well as hosting training in their offices in Europe.</p>

They have also been active in the counter/alternative narrative space. For example, Facebook's Civil Courage Initiative launched in January 2016 is a European-wide initiative to tackle extremism and hate speech. The campaign brings together different non-governmental organisations, including Amadeu and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue.

The Commission has been funding projects on social media research and innovation, specifically on social media content veracity and analytics since 2011. The outcomes of these projects have contributed to the development of the state of the art in several fields such as user generated content verification, image and video analytics, sentiment analysis and detection of trending topics.

Some of the achievements of these projects are in fact tools and applications which are already available and used in media and even non-media companies' newsrooms and for example at Amnesty International for debunking fake information.

The Commission is planning to continue its support for such research and innovation, and currently there is an open call for proposals in Horizon 2020 topic ICT-32-2018 Future Hyper-connected Sociality on "Content Verification" with a total budget of EUR 10 million.

The objective of this call is the development of innovative solutions and innovative approaches for information veracity on Social Media. The solutions to be developed shall

	<p>contribute to the understanding of information cascades, openness of algorithms and users' access to and control of their personal data (such as profiles, images, videos, biometrical and local data).</p>
<p>5.13. At the same time, online providers need to be involved in countering hate speech, alternative facts and extremist narratives in their media outlets and should be obliged to remove illegal extremist content from their sites. However, the monitoring of communications should not be developed into an instrument that can impinge on the privacy of the general public.</p>	<p>The Commission addresses the challenge posed by illegal content online in a wide array of policy areas, highlighting that a collective response – from all actors, including the internet industry is needed.</p> <p>Tackling terrorists' use of the internet remains a key priority for the Commission, and much progress has been made under the European Union Internet Forum (established in 2015), in reducing accessibility to terrorist content online and in empowering civil society to increase the volume of effective, alternative narratives online. Progress has been achieved in a number of priority areas covering the company-led creation of a database of hashes which will help prevent terrorist material removed from one site, simply being re-uploaded elsewhere; clear commitments have been made from companies on automated detection of terrorist propaganda, as well as continued engagement between companies and the European Union Internet Referral Unit at Europol. Please also refer to the answer to point 5.5. for further details on the supporting alternative narratives. In May 2016, the Commission and Information Technology Companies agreed on a Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online, aiming at countering the spread of</p>

	<p>illegal hate speech on social platforms, as well as support the developments of counter-narratives and improve the cooperation of national authorities and Information Technology platforms. The evaluation of the implementation of the Code during 2017 evidences remarkable progress by Information Technology platforms in tackling hate speech online.</p> <p>The Commission is also monitoring whether additional measures (including possible recommendations or even legislation) will be required to step up action in reducing the amount of illegal content online.</p> <p>The e-commerce Directive³⁷ provides for a limited exemption of liability of online providers in relation to content uploaded by third parties. The Commission Communication on "Tackling Illegal Content Online"³⁸ adopted on 28 September 2017 gives guidelines to online platforms with a view to a more efficient removal of illegal content.</p> <p>The Commission proposal for the revision of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive³⁹, adopted on 25 May 2016 aims to intensify efforts to fight hate speech. The proposal seeks to align the Audiovisual Media Services Directive with the Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. In addition, the proposal requires</p>
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³⁷ Directive 2000/31/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2000 on certain legal aspects of information society services, in particular electronic commerce, in the Internal Market ('Directive on electronic commerce'), OJ L 178, 17.7.2000.

³⁸ COM(2017) 555 final.

³⁹ COM(2016) 287 final.

	<p>European Union Member States to ensure that video-sharing platforms - currently not covered by the Audiovisual Media Services Directive⁴⁰ - take appropriate measures (such as flagging, reporting and parental control systems) to protect people from incitement to hatred (Article 28a).</p> <p>The Commission has earmarked since 2016 targeted funding under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme for projects aimed at preventing and countering hate speech online, including by countering illegal hate speech online on social platforms and enhancing transparency, promoting online alternative and counter-narratives and the development of critical thinking by internet users and fostering research and analysis of the sociological landscape relating to hate speech online, including extremist ideas leading to violence or hatred against minorities.</p>
<p>5.15. The European Economic and Social Committee calls for more research funding, which the European Union already makes available through its research programmes for preventing radicalisation - in connection with the Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence for example - and for more networking between academia and civil society experts in the field.</p>	<p>Within the security strand of the previous Framework Programme (Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7), 2007-2013) as well as of the current one (Horizon 2020, 2014-2020), the Commission has been funding several research projects that help in preventing violent radicalisation and terrorism (both offline and online). Regarding ongoing research projects, three of them (EUR 15 million in total) are related mainly to technology (such as detection and</p>

⁴⁰ Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) (Text with EEA relevance), OJ L 95, 15.4.2010.

	<p>analysis of the terrorist content online), while five of them (EUR 17 million in total) are focused on human, social and societal aspects (such as understanding and tackling terrorist ideas and beliefs). In December 2017, a workshop was organized where all eight projects were presented to the Radicalisation Awareness Network and possibilities of a closer cooperation were analyzed. In addition, the consortia of all these projects involve not only academia, but also various practitioners in the field.</p> <p>Under Horizon 2020, the Work Programme 2018-2020 of Societal Challenge 6 (Europe in a changing world - inclusive, innovative and reflective societies) has included the following topics on radicalisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extreme ideologies and polarisation (EUR 1.5 million); - drivers and contexts of violent extremism in the broader MENA ("Middle East and North Africa") region and the Balkans (EUR 9 million); - addressing radicalisation through social inclusion (EUR 10 million). <p>Moreover, the Horizon 2020 project DARE ("Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality") on how and why young people become radicalised started in 2017 and will end in 2021 with a budget of EUR 5 million.</p>
<p>5.17. Public officials from the security authorities, prisons, social work and schools and other relevant state institutions which have many links with organised civil society, must adopt a multi-agency approach, moving beyond punitive</p>	<p>The Commission considers multi-agency collaboration as essential in tackling radicalisation and violent extremism cases effectively. To this end, the Radicalisation Awareness Network offers dedicated support,</p>

measures with more training on prevention and awareness-raising on the subject. To this end, expertise and resources can be made available at European level and targeted cooperation with civil society promoted.

through training or consultancy, on how to build effective multi-agency approaches that also include civil society organisations. Practitioners in various Radicalisation Awareness Network working groups also exchange their experiences on effective multi-agency work in their respective fields.

As regards child protection, as a follow-up to the interim report of the High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation, the Commission will, in close cooperation with Member States, establish an overview and comparative analysis of relevant existing child-rights based good practices/toolkits for school teachers, social workers, child protection actors, judicial actors, practitioners working with migrants, etc., as well as support training for practitioners dealing with children at risk of radicalisation. The Commission will also continue to assist Member States to facilitate effective coordination among existing actors, structures and processes in key areas such as child protection, justice, social and youth care, health, and education systems, to enable appropriate integrated interventions.

In line with the strategic focus on preventing radicalisation in prisons and integrating rehabilitation into the criminal justice response, the Commission launched two calls for proposals in 2015 and 2016 under the Justice Programme to support judicial cooperation in criminal matters relating to the criminal justice response to terrorism and violent radicalisation,

	<p>including judicial training.</p> <p>The Commission is currently funding 19 projects in this area for a total amount of EUR 6.5 million.</p> <p>Organisations which receive operating grants from the Commission, such as the European Confederation for Probation and EuroPris are also closely involved in the issue of radicalisation in prisons. EuroPris works together with the Radicalisation Awareness Network and the European Penitentiary Training Academies to set up an online collection of good prison training practices.</p>
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<p>N°11 Civil society’s contribution to the development of a comprehensive food policy in the European Union (own-initiative opinion) EESC 2017/2234 - NAT/711 530th Plenary Session - December 2017 Rapporteur: Mr Peter SCHMIDT (GR11-DE) DG SANTE – Commissioner ANDRIUKAITIS</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.1. The European Economic and Social Committee reiterates its call for the development of a comprehensive food policy in the European Union, with the aim of providing healthy diets from sustainable food systems, linking agriculture to nutrition and ecosystem services, and ensuring supply chains which safeguard public health for all sections of European society. A comprehensive European Union food policy should improve coherence across food-related policy areas, restore the value of food and promote a long-term shift from food productivism and consumerism to food citizenship.</p>	<p>Food-related goals run across the targets set out in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and are often inter-related. As outlined in the Commission’s Communication on "Next steps for a sustainable European future", adopted on 22 November 2016⁴¹, the Commission is fully committed to integrating Sustainable Development Goals in the European policy framework and current Commission priorities, assessing where the European Union stands and identifying the most relevant sustainability concerns. The first monitoring report of the European Union’s progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals was published by Eurostat in November 2017⁴². Following the mainstreaming of Sustainable Development Goals in European Union policies, the Commission will prepare a Reflection Paper on 'Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030' for adoption in the second half of 2018.</p> <p>This Paper on the follow-up to the</p>

⁴¹ COM(2016) 739 final.

⁴² <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/8461633/KS-04-17-780-EN-N.pdf/f7694981-6190-46fb-99d6-d092ce04083f>

	<p>United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including on the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, will include a 'distance to Sustainable Development Goals' analysis, assessing progress on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and identifying areas where more work needs to be done.</p> <p>The new Multiannual Financial Framework beyond 2020 will also reorient the European Union budget's contributions towards the achievement of the European Union's long-term objectives.</p>
<p>1.2. The current European Union policy framework is not suited to making the transition to more sustainable food systems, in order to ensure the effective implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as well as of the right to food and the other human rights. While the current policy frameworks may have been successful in addressing individual problems, they do not provide the collective coherence needed to address the range of challenges that global and European Union food systems are expected to face in the future. The European Economic and Social Committee highlights that existing European Union policy tools need to be realigned and harmonised in order to deliver environmentally, economically and socio-culturally sustainable food systems. The European Economic and Social Committee also reiterates that a comprehensive food policy should be complementary to – not</p>	<p>European citizens should continue to have access to safe, high quality, affordable, nutritious and diverse food. The way this food is produced and marketed should adapt to citizens' expectations, in particular concerning the impact on their health, the environment and the climate. To ensure this in a context of growing world population, increased environmental pressure and climate change, the Common Agricultural Policy has to continue evolving, maintaining its market orientation and its support to the European Union family farm model across all the regions of the Union. The Commission acknowledges that the challenges, priorities and concerns of European Union citizens in relation to food have evolved. Pertinent in that respect is the recently published Fitness Check of the General Food Law</p>

replace – a reshaped Common Agricultural Policy⁴³.

Regulation⁴⁴, carried out by the Commission, which, amongst others, assesses the relevance of the General Food Law Regulation in light of emerging trends and current needs.

The Commission's Communication on the Future of Food and Farming, adopted on 29 November 2017⁴⁵ paves the way for a modernised Common Agricultural Policy reflecting a higher level of environmental and climate ambition and addressing citizens' concerns regarding sustainable agricultural production including health, nutrition, food waste prevention and animal welfare.

The Circular Economy Action Plan⁴⁶ and the FOOD 2030 approach on Research and Innovation for Food and Nutrition Security⁴⁷ as well as the ongoing review of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy provide further opportunities to coordinate efforts of and mobilise funding for research and innovation and investment needed to scale-up and roll-out new products, technologies and processes, in support of more sustainable food systems.

In preparing the Reflection Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030', the Commission will reflect on Europe's priorities after 2020 including possible synergies between the different policy portfolios relevant to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable

⁴³ EESC opinion on A possible re-shaping of the CAP, O.J C 288, 31.08.2017, p. 10.

⁴⁴ Commission Staff Working Document – the REFIT evaluation of the General Food Law (Regulation (EC) No 178/2002), SWD(2018)37 final, to be found at: https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/general_food_law/fitness_check_en

⁴⁵ COM(2017) 713 final.

⁴⁶ COM(2015) 614 final.

⁴⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/research/bioeconomy/index.cfm?pg=policy&lib=food2030>

	Development Agenda.
<p>1.3. The European Economic and Social Committee stresses the need to maintain a culture that values the nutritional and cultural importance of food, as well as its social and environmental impact. In this respect, the rich array of food and regional/local specialities available in the European Union is a real asset and, as such, should be further valorised. A comprehensive food policy should foster an increased appreciation of food by consumers, promote food waste prevention and reduction, and help reintegrate and realign the price of food with other values. In particular, it should ensure fair prices for producers so that farming remains viable.</p>	<p>As part of the Circular Economy Action Plan, the Commission is currently implementing a dedicated action plan to prevent food loss and waste in line with the Sustainable Development Goal targets (Sustainable Development Goal 12.3.).</p> <p>The ongoing initiative to improve the food supply chain is considering several options to strengthen food supply chains by addressing unfair trading practices (see point 3.4.).</p>
<p>1.4. The European Economic and Social Committee emphasises that all stakeholders across the food supply chain have a role to play in the development of a comprehensive framework, so as to achieve a fair distribution along the chain. No individual sector can do this alone. A comprehensive food policy should harness industry and retail power to accelerate the consumer shift towards sustainability. The transition to sustainable food systems also requires engaged consumers to become active food citizens. This also means that a comprehensive food policy must ensure that the European agri-food sector is able to sell at quality levels that maintain its position as the preferred choice for the vast majority of consumers.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees that all actors have a role to play in order to address challenges in the food supply chain. Cooperation and joined-up efforts are needed all along the food value chain in order to strengthen food sustainability.</p> <p>As part of the Circular Economy Action Plan, the Commission established in 2016 the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste⁴⁸, bringing together all key actors representing both public and private interests – from farm to fork – in order to help accelerate the European Union’s progress towards the United Nations target of halving per capita food waste at the retail and consumer level by 2030, and reducing food losses along the food production and supply chains (Sustainable Development Goal</p>

⁴⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/food_waste/eu_actions/eu-platform_en

	<p>12.3.).</p> <p>Sustainable food systems should support informed consumer choice. Such choices are however influenced by multiple contextual and environmental factors ranging from production systems to marketing strategies and education.</p>
<p>1.5. The European Economic and Social Committee acknowledges the increasing number of initiatives being implemented at regional and local level to support alternative food systems. These initiatives establish closer links between producers and consumers, create opportunities for local businesses and new jobs, and reconnect communities with their food. The European Economic and Social Committee also highlights the role of cities in developing more integrated food policies. A comprehensive food policy should build upon, stimulate and develop common governance at all levels – local, regional, national and European. This would create an enabling framework for these initiatives to flourish, whatever their scale.</p>	<p>With regard to food waste prevention, for instance, the Commission recognises the need to act across sectors and at all levels. This is reflected in the membership of the European Union Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste, which includes players from all relevant governance levels, i.e. international organisations, Member States, European Union bodies (the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee) as well as private sector organisations including those operating at the level of municipalities (e.g. the City of Milan). In doing so, the Platform aims to foster inter-sectoral cooperation and the sharing of best practice and promote coherence and synergies in action plans developed by its members.</p>
<p>1.6. The European Economic and Social Committee calls for a new smart system on sustainable food labelling. Policies have focused on nutrition and other health claims, but the European Economic and Social</p>	<p>Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers⁴⁹ provides the possibility to food business operators to provide, in addition to the mandatory information,</p>

⁴⁹ Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2011 on the provision of food information to consumers, amending Regulations (EC) No 1924/2006 and (EC) No 1925/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Commission Directive 87/250/EEC, Council Directive 90/496/EEC, Commission Directive 1999/10/EC, Directive 2000/13/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, Commission Directives 2002/67/EC and 2008/5/EC and Commission Regulation (EC) No 608/2004 Text with EEA relevance, OJ L 304, 22.11.2011.

Committee notes rising concerns about the lack of consumer information on the environmental and social impact of food. The food industry is aware that it can tackle environmental impacts up to a point, but ultimately consumers need to be engaged and information must be provided.

1.8. In particular, the European Economic and Social Committee recommends developing a European Union sustainable food scoreboard, which would allow food systems challenges to be addressed through a multi-year approach, thereby promoting policy alignment at different levels of governance. The scoreboard would provide indicators and would thus encourage and monitor progress towards meeting targets set.

voluntary information such as on the environmental and social impact of the food. In accordance with the relevant provisions of this Regulation, voluntary information shall not mislead, be ambiguous or confusing for the consumer and shall, where appropriate, be based on the relevant scientific data.

The Commission is aware and agrees that consumers are more interested in environmental information and more willing to follow their environmental values when choosing products. Consumer interest in the relation between diet and health is also increasing as evidenced, amongst others, by the Fitness Check of the General Food Law Regulation⁵⁰.

The Commission is also aware, in relation to environmental impacts, that in some cases there is a proliferation of initiatives and labels, of various levels of reliability, coverage and accuracy.

To address these issues, the Commission established in 2013 two methods for measuring and communicating the life cycle environmental performance of products and organisations (Commission Recommendation 2013/179/EU⁵¹). These are the Product Environmental Footprint and the Organisation Environmental Footprint methods. They are designed for assessing the overall environmental performance of products/organisations and the impacts throughout the supply chain.

⁵⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/general_food_law/fitness_check_en

⁵¹ 2013/179/EU: Commission Recommendation of 9 April 2013 on the use of common methods to measure and communicate the life cycle environmental performance of products and organisations Text with EEA relevance, OJ L 124, 4.5.2013.

	<p>Between 2013 and 2016, a pilot phase was carried out with voluntary participation of companies and organisations to test the process for developing product and sector specific rules, to test different approaches to verification and to test communication vehicles⁵².</p> <p>The Commission is now looking at the outcomes of the Environmental Footprint pilot phase and will start a reflection on whether and how the methods could be useful for policies related to environmental information and to the circular economy.</p>
<p>1.7. In order to support the establishment of a comprehensive framework bringing together European Union food-related policies, the European Economic and Social Committee proposes in the short/medium-term to create a cross-sectorial and interinstitutional task force, involving different Commission Directorates-General and other European Union Institutions. This task force would be responsible for developing an Action Plan on Food Sustainability, with the aim of helping the European Union implement food-related Sustainable Development Goals. The Action Plan should be developed through a participatory process involving stakeholders across the food supply chain, civil society and researchers. The European Economic and Social Committee would suggest organising and developing a space for civil society to get involved and actively participate in this process.</p>	<p>Cross-sectorial aspects on food sustainability are covered by the Commission Communication on “Future of Food and Farming”⁵³ which touches upon production as well as consumer and societal aspects, clearly stresses the need to enhance ambitions in terms of environmental and climate delivery and underlines the commitment to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. As far as the agricultural sector is concerned, with an impact assessment and Common Agricultural Policy legislative proposals under preparation, the Commission considers that engaging in a specific parallel process at this stage would not lead to the expected value-added.</p> <p>The Commission would in addition underline that the multi-stakeholder platforms established by the</p>

⁵² http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/smgp/ef_pilots.htm

⁵³ COM(2017) 713 final.

	<p>Commission to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals at European Union level as well as those dedicated to food waste prevention, animal welfare⁵⁴ and the FOOD 2030 policy framework may contribute to further discussions on the sustainability of our food systems.</p> <p>To support the Commission in the development and implementation of the FOOD 2030 policy framework and its Action Plan, the Horizon 2020 Coordination and Support Action 'FIT4FOOD2030'⁵⁵ aims to establish a sustainable multi-stakeholder, multi-level platform, mobilising a wide variety of stakeholders at the level of cities, regions, countries, and Europe.</p> <p>It should be noted that the first deliverable of the Sustainable Development Goals multi-stakeholder platform, established by the Commission in 2017, will be to contribute to the Reflection Paper 'Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030'.</p>
<p>1.9. In the longer term, and depending on the task force's conclusions, the European Economic and Social Committee encourages the Commission to explore the feasibility of creating a dedicated Directorate-General for Food, which would provide a clear centre for European Union responsibilities on all food-related policies and be the source of regulation, legislation and enforcement as appropriate. Such a structure could be mirrored in all European Union Member States, with dedicated ministries on food.</p>	<p>The Commission would like to underline the need for institutional frameworks which continue to allow open and transparent consideration of the different interests of key actors. Indeed, currently, within the Commission there are specific and well-established procedures which guarantee constructive and results-orientated work among the different Commission services on all European Union policies, taking into account all different</p>

⁵⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/welfare/eu-platform-animal-welfare_en

⁵⁵ https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/212409_en.html

	<p>interests involved, even if competences are shared between different Directorates-General, under the political steer of the President of the Commission, the Vice-Presidents and the Commissioners.</p> <p>As outlined in the Commission’s reply to point 1.1., coordinated and coherent policy action is required to strengthen the sustainability of the European Union’s food systems. The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda provides an appropriate framework for mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals into relevant European Union policy areas and identifying potential gaps to be addressed at European Union level.</p>
<p>2.3. The European Economic and Social Committee believes that the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Europe is key in the drive towards a comprehensive approach that encompasses different policy areas (agriculture, health, environment, trade, development, innovation, etc.) and governance levels (European Union, national, local) and to achieving more sustainable food production and consumption patterns. The ongoing debate on the post-2020 Common Agricultural Policy is also a key opportunity to ensure coherence between a re-shaped agricultural policy and other food-related policy objectives.</p>	<p>The Commission has started the process of modernisation and simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy. The Communication "Future of Food and Farming" clearly indicates policy coherence as an important aspect for the future Common Agricultural Policy both to deliver on the Commission priorities and on international commitments.</p> <p>The Communication emphasises that the Common Agricultural Policy has a role to play in promoting healthier nutrition, helping to reduce the problem of obesity and malnutrition, and making nutritiously valuable products, such as fruits and vegetables, easily available to European Union citizens.</p>
<p>3.1. Growing scientific evidence has emerged regarding food’s impact on health,</p>	<p>The Commission is committed to supporting Member States in reaching</p>

<p>the environment and on society as a whole. The "food world" which the Common Agricultural Policy was created to address has become more complex. Europe has no shortages, a success that is due to the Common Agricultural Policy and rising incomes as well as improved production methods in the agricultural sector. Food employment and value-adding has shifted from the land and sea to factories, the retail sector and food services. The health agenda has broadened from under-consumption; today, inappropriate diets due to social inequalities and "new" food poverty still exist but are outweighed by mass-scale non-communicable disease. These include heart disease, strokes, diabetes and obesity. Cardiovascular disease causes 1.8 million deaths in the European Union each year, 37% of all European Union deaths⁵⁶. In 2015, nearly 49 million people were living with cardiovascular disease in the European Union.</p>	<p>the United Nations/World Health Organisation's nine voluntary targets on non-communicable diseases and the Sustainable Development Goals. A Steering Group on Promotion and Prevention has been established in order to coordinate the implementation of validated best practice interventions in Member States with support from European Union financial instruments.</p>
<p>3.2. European social trends have also brought great change to foods, tastes and cuisines. Consumption patterns and lifestyles have changed since the Common Agricultural Policy was created. A culinary transition has affected women in particular, since historically they took and often still take much responsibility for food in the home. Changes in food technology have had both positive and negative social effects. Choices may have improved but Europe's diverse and rich cultural heritage is sometimes weakened. Food companies' large marketing budgets have generally encouraged consumers to eat "ultra-processed" foods. Industry figures show that Belgians, for example, consume two thirds</p>	<p>The Commission is launching in the course of 2018 a project to produce a snapshot of the nutritional quality of the food products sold to adults and children in supermarkets in Member States (based on food label information). Findings from this study can then be utilised as a consistent and fair baseline for national initiatives to reformulate foods in accordance with national dietary guidelines (e.g. reduction of levels of saturated fat, added sugars and salt).</p> <p>The Commission is also working towards reduction of trans-fat intakes. An impact assessment considering the different options for European Union</p>

⁵⁶ <http://www.ehnheart.org/cvd-statistics.html>

<p>of their calories from pre-processed, packaged foods – even more than the British. Public health agencies are concerned about the excess consumption of processed foods high in salt, sugar and fats. These can be cheap, which acts as an incentive to people on low incomes, who already have worse than average health. Diet thus contributes to European social inequalities. During and since the Great Recession, Europe has witnessed a growth of charitable food donations. The provision of such emergency food aid must not replace Europe tackling social inequalities which create diet-related ill health.</p>	<p>level action, including the possibility of setting legal limits for industrially produced trans-fats, has been completed.</p> <p>The Commission will continue to work with Member States to better monitor health inequalities, improve the health of migrants and identify best practices for supporting vulnerable populations.</p>
<p>3.3. Food’s impact on the environment has been documented and acknowledged. Climate change is a recognised threat, and the European Union strongly backed the 2015 Framework Convention on Climate Change agreed in Paris. The European Union has also ensured better environmental regulation and damage prevention, for instance through the Water Framework Directive⁵⁷. Nevertheless, European food tastes are driving consumption patterns which involve high levels of hidden or "embedded" water usage, posing threats to Member States⁵⁸, and requiring a more integrated approach to land, farming and water⁵⁹. It is of concern, too, that Europe’s soils are fragile. The European Union Joint Research Centre’s modelling suggests that soil erosion by water has affected 130 million hectares of the surface area of the EU 27; nearly 20% of the surface area</p>	<p>In the Communication on "Future of Food and Farming", the Commission states that "European farming needs to step up its contribution towards the European Union environmental objectives. Modernised Common Agricultural Policy should enhance its European Union added value by reflecting a higher level of environmental and climate ambition, and address citizens’ concerns regarding sustainable agricultural production.</p> <p>Healthy sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in a balanced marine ecosystem are fundamental for global food security and for biodiversity protection. The Common Fisheries Policy aims at the sustainable exploitation of fisheries and other marine resources while protecting the marine environment and biodiversity:</p>

⁵⁷ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, OJ L 327, 22.12.2000.

⁵⁸ e.g. Hoekstra & Mekonnen (2016).

⁵⁹ OECD (2014).

<p>has soil loss in excess of 10 tonnes per hectare per year⁶⁰. Biodiversity loss is marked on both land and sea, where stock diversity is reported to be under pressure⁶¹. Despite this, Member States continue to advise consumers to eat fish for nutritional reasons without being aware of the environmental consequences.</p>	<p>healthy and productive seas are key to long term sustainable development.</p>
<p>3.4. Economically, the last 60 years have been judged a success. Food is ubiquitous. The average proportion of household expenditure that goes on food has dropped from 30% to 15%. Consumer prices have decreased by the emergence of giant food retail chains. But now economists are asking whether food prices reflect the true cost of production, or whether they fail to reflect certain costs fully. The European Economic and Social Committee notes with interest the Food and Agriculture Organization's ongoing work on full cost accounting of agricultural costs⁶². Power imbalances in the food supply chain have also increased, leading to unfair trading practices and related consequences⁶³ and the share of consumer price to farmers has decreased.</p>	<p>Under the initiative to improve the food supply chain and following the work of the Agricultural Markets Taskforce, several issues are being reviewed. In this context, measures reinforcing the capacity of agricultural producers to organise themselves in producer organisations have been adopted in the framework of the 2017 Omnibus package; the Commission has proposed a Directive on business-to-business unfair trading practices in the food supply chain; and is exploring the possibility for improvements relating to market transparency in the food supply chain (results are expected by the end of 2018).</p>
<p>3.5. The tendency to overproduce has brought prices down but has also institutionalised food waste. Whereas consumers in low-income countries of the world waste an estimated 8% of food, consumers in the European Union waste around a third of what they buy. The European Union-funded Fusions project estimates that 88 million tonnes of food are</p>	<p>The Commission has taken specific action to address food waste - the specific activities are outlined in the Circular Economy Package and in the revised Waste Framework Directive⁶⁵ adopted by co-legislators on 30 May 2018 which includes new measures on food waste prevention. The revised European Union waste legislation</p>

⁶⁰ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/indicators/soil-erosion-by-water-1/assessment>

⁶¹ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/fish-to-fork-a-need>

⁶² www.fao.org/nr/sustainability

⁶³ EESC opinion on *"Unfair business-to-business trading practices in the food supply chain"*, O.J. C 34, 2.2.2017, p. 130.

<p>wasted annually in the European Union, costing EUR 143 billion⁶⁴. This cultural dimension to food waste is not fully addressed by the circular economy approach, or the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe, which are valuable for seeing food as a material entity, but fail to take account of its consumer or cultural value. A challenge for Europe is how to build a new concept of food citizenship around eating for sustainability.</p>	<p>introduces new obligations for European Union Member States to reduce food waste generation across the whole food supply chain in line with Sustainable Development Goals and identify these measures in their national Waste Prevention Programmes, monitor and measure food waste and food waste prevention measures and report back on progress made. The Commission fully supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals target to halve consumer food waste by 2030 and is pursuing efforts to reduce food losses and waste throughout the food supply chain in cooperation with Member States and stakeholders. Notwithstanding, the statement made in the European Economic and Social Committee's opinion that consumers waste around a third of food purchased, based on European Union research, is probably an overestimation and may not be representative of the EU-28.</p>
<p>3.6. Data and studies by both academics and the food industry have improved our understanding of how European food systems impact on society, the environment and health outcomes. Taken together, these suggest the need for a more integrated approach. While the current policy frameworks may have been successful in addressing individual problems, they do not provide the collective coherence needed to address the range of challenges that global and European Union food systems are expected to face in the future. Food-related</p>	<p>In the Commission, sustainable development is mainstreamed in key cross-cutting projects as well as in sectoral policies and initiatives.</p> <p>For instance, the recently adopted "One Health European Action Plan against Antimicrobial Resistance"⁶⁶ not only addresses Antimicrobial Resistance in both humans and animals but also extends the "One Health" approach to include the environment. This new Action Plan is based on three pillars</p>

⁶⁵ Directive (EU) 2018/851 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 amending Directive 2008/98/EC on waste

⁶⁴http://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/food_waste_en

⁶⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/health/amr/sites/amr/files/amr_action_plan_2017_en.pdf

policies are largely developed in isolation from each other and often lack consistency. Policies at various governance levels are also disconnected from each other. One example which illustrates the need for a more integrated approach is antimicrobial resistance, which has spread through the use of antibiotics in animal husbandry and now threatens human health. The importance of an integrated food policy in relation to this issue was also highlighted by the Commissioner for Health and Food Safety in a recent speech. Another example is the conflict between land use for food and land use for energy generation, housing and other pressures. Food waste, too, is partly an outcome of production efficiency gains; there is a constant and massive flow of food through the system. Appealing to rational consumer behaviour to resolve this does not work.

aiming at: (i) making the European Union a best practice region in tackling Antimicrobial Resistance; (ii) boosting Antimicrobial Resistance research and development; and (iii) pursuing the European Union's participation in global efforts to fight against Antimicrobial Resistance.

With regard to the use of antibiotics in animal husbandry, the use of antibiotics as feed additives for growth promotion in livestock farming is forbidden in the European Union since 1 January 2006. Consequently, the only legal administration of antibiotics is their use to treat or prevent an animal disease. This requires that the antibiotic is an authorised veterinary medicine for oral use and that a veterinary prescription is issued for their use in animals.

The Commission proposals for new Regulations on veterinary medicines⁶⁷ and on medicated feed⁶⁸ are undergoing the ordinary legislative procedure in the European Parliament and the Council. The draft Regulations envisage a comprehensive set of provisions addressing the public health risk of Antimicrobial Resistance including significant restrictions on the preventive use of antimicrobials, possibility to reserve certain antimicrobials for humans only, compulsory collection of data on sales and use of antimicrobials and other provisions aiming at responsible use of veterinary antimicrobials.

As regards food waste prevention, the Circular Economy Action Plan and the

⁶⁷ COM(2014) 558 final.

⁶⁸ COM(2014) 556 final.

	<p>related legislative proposal to revise the Waste Framework Directive⁶⁹ call for measures to reduce food waste at each stage of the food supply chain, in line with European Union Sustainable Development Goals.</p> <p>Members of the European Union Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste will also review and share learning from intervention strategies put in place to prevent food waste at each stage of the food value chain. Best practices will be exchanged in particular concerning food waste prevention at consumption level (i.e. initiatives and campaigns to raise awareness and influence consumer behaviour in relation to food waste).</p>
<p>4.2. Recently, various kinds of re-organisation of the food supply chain have occurred, with the aim of re-connecting producers and consumers and re-localising agricultural and food production. These include community-supported agriculture, short supply chains, alternative food networks, local farming systems and direct sales. Consumer cooperatives can also play a key role by ensuring a strong connection with the community as well as a social, educational and environmental focus. Public institutions have schemes which are also part of this process, e.g. through public procurement programmes for schools and hospitals encouraging the provision of local, organic food, as in Denmark and Malmö, Sweden. This fits the European Union circular economy approach.</p>	<p>The Commission recognises the key role of green public procurement in the transition toward a more circular and sustainable economy. In order to support the inclusion of environmental aspects into public procurement, the Commission provides several tools. One of the main tools offered are common European Union green public procurement criteria for different product groups. European Union green public procurement criteria for food and catering services are available since 2008 and are currently under revision. The revised document is foreseen to be published by the end of 2018. The criteria will take into account the main environmental impacts, from a life-cycle perspective, related to food, catering services and vending machines.</p> <p>Under the Maltese Council Presidency</p>

⁶⁹ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=consil:PE_11_2018_REV_2

	<p>in 2017, the Commission prepared a Report on public procurement of food for health in the school setting⁷⁰, a tool which offers operational guidance to schools for translating existing healthy school standards into procurement specifications. This offers an opportunity to steer procurement of EUR 80 billion per year towards healthier food options in schools.</p> <p>The Union-wide School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme aims to encourage good eating habits in young people. Besides providing fruit and vegetables, the scheme requires participating Member States to set up strategies including educational and awareness-raising initiatives⁷¹.</p>
<p>4.6. A particular concern for parents and health agencies is the unequal financial investment in messages about food targeting children. The World Health Organization sees this as a priority issue because such a high proportion of these messages concern foods that are high in salt, sugar and fat⁷². With the shift from traditional to digital media forms, the case for a comprehensive approach grows. An estimated USD 37 billion was spent on digital food advertising alone in Western Europe in 2016⁷³. The European Economic and Social Committee notes the recent call by consumers to food and retail companies, asking them to stop using their brand</p>	<p>The Audiovisual Media Services Directive⁷⁴ is under revision. The Commission proposal provides that the Commission and Member States continue encouraging stakeholders to develop self- and co-regulatory codes of conduct to reduce the exposure of children to inappropriate audiovisual commercial communications of foods high in fat, sugar or salt. This is under discussion with the co-legislators. The Commission is also launching a study to measure children's exposure to marketing of foods that are high in salt, sugar and fat including food marketing in the digital sphere.</p>

⁷⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/sites/jrcsh/files/public-procurement-food-health-technical-report.pdf>

⁷¹ https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sfs_en

⁷² WHO European Region (2013) http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/191125/e96859.pdf

⁷³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/237928/online-advertising-spending-in-western-europe/>

⁷⁴ Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) (Text with EEA relevance), OJ L 95, 15.4.2010.

<p> mascots in advertising and marketing campaigns for foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar. In the absence of adequate action from industry, governments should consider introducing regulatory measures. </p>	
<p> 5.5. A comprehensive food policy should bring existing and new policies together, with the ultimate objective of delivering sustainable food systems and healthy diets. This should not mean reinventing the wheel, by creating a completely new policy or appropriating new powers to the European Union, as the aim is not to impose a single standard. Rather, it means adopting reforms at European Union level to encourage new and more sustainable courses of action at all levels (local/municipal, regional, national and companies), as well as scaling up initiatives that are already taking place, thus providing more coherence. It means integrating measures at European Union level with what can best be undertaken at other levels of governance. The case could be made for fiscal regimes that improve access to healthy diets through city planning and public procurement, thereby supporting local markets and employment. </p>	<p> While in principle fiscal incentives can support food sustainability initiatives (for instance to support food waste prevention and food donation), the Commission would like to stress that fiscal regimes are first and foremost for Member States to decide at national level. </p>
<p> 5.6. A comprehensive food policy should also become a basis to end the unfair commercial practices in terms of dual and lower quality of products – namely the production and sales of foods of lower quality in different Member States despite the packaging being identical⁷⁵. </p>	<p> Following President Juncker’s statement in his 2017 State of the Union speech⁷⁶ that the Commission could not accept that there would be second-class consumers in the European Union, the Commission has taken decisive action to tackle the serious issue of Dual Quality products. </p> <p> As a first strand of action, the Commission has entered into a </p>

⁷⁵ Results of the study by the University of Chemistry and Technology of Prague, 2015 <http://www.sehnalova.cz/soubory/rozdily-potravin/Prezentace.pdf>

⁷⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/state-union-2017_en

constructive dialogue with the industry concerned and has repeatedly asked them to revisit their differentiation policies. As a result, several influential producers have already publicly announced to align their recipes across the European Union and to offer the same high-quality products across the Single Market.

As a second strand of action, the Commission has taken decisive steps to empower national enforcement authorities:

On 26 September 2017, the Commission issued an interpretative notice clarifying the interplay of the relevant European Union food and consumer protection legislation, providing concrete guidance for national enforcement authorities on how to apply the existing legislation to tackle the issue of dual quality. Furthermore, and to better understand the scope and dimension of the problem and in order to collect authoritative and comparable data to form the basis for law enforcement by national authorities, the Commission's Joint Research Centre has, in close collaboration with the industry concerned, developed a common testing approach. It functions as a blueprint and as such sets out certain agreed key principles, such as transparency and fairness, as well as agreed and concrete recommendations regarding product selection, sampling, testing and data interpretation, which national entities should take into account when designing their comparative tests at national level. This methodology was presented in April 2018 and will now be implemented and further refined in a Union-wide testing campaign under the

	<p>coordination and logistics of the Joint Research Centre. First results of this exercise are expected to be available already by the end of 2018.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Commission has offered specific funding of EUR 1 million to Member States under the Consumer Programme for developing enforcement capacities and carrying out further tests. The evaluation of the resulting grant proposals has been finalised, the award letters have been sent to the successful candidates and the grant agreements will soon be signed.</p> <p>On 11 April 2018, in order to further clarify the relevant legislation and to enhance legal clarity for all actors, the Commission proposed to amend the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive⁷⁷ in the context of its New Deal for Consumers initiative⁷⁸. This proposal clarifies that making consumers believe that a product which is marketed under the same brand and with the same or very similar packaging is the same across several Member States, when this is not the case, may be considered as a misleading action.</p> <p>The action undertaken by the Commission fully acknowledges the food business operators' right to legally differentiate their products due to legitimate factors, such as for example defined consumer preferences or availability or seasonality of raw materials, as long as they comply with</p>
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⁷⁷ Directive 2005/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2005 concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market and amending Council Directive 84/450/EEC, Directives 97/7/EC, 98/27/EC and 2002/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council ('Unfair Commercial Practices Directive') (Text with EEA relevance), OJ L 149, 11.6.2005.

⁷⁸ COM(2018) 185 final.

	<p>the existing legislation – including the obligation to provide consumers with all the information they need to make informed choices.</p>
<p>5.7. To meet these goals, policy measures on both the supply and the demand side have to be coordinated. This means that the availability and affordability of food through sustainable food production must also be coordinated with increased access and empowerment of consumers to choose healthy and tasty diets. A combination of legislative changes to remove regulatory obstacles and provide fiscal incentives and behavioural changes driven by better information, education and awareness-raising of consumers and processors has to be developed. The main aim is to raise awareness of and support for the value of food at all levels and to support gradual but significant change. For example, salt reduction works best if it is done slowly but systematically, but there are no incentives for companies to reformulate their products.</p>	<p>The Commission considers that whilst incentives to reformulate foods exist, there is ample space for improvement. The Commission is launching a project in the course of 2018 which will produce a snapshot of the nutritional quality of food products sold in our supermarkets to support national initiatives to reformulate foods and remove excess sugars, salt and fat.</p>
<p>5.9. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals provides a crucial framework for joint action, with the aim of feeding the world sustainably by 2030. Issues related to food and agriculture cut across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, the World Health Organization states that 12 of the Sustainable Development Goals require action in the area of nutrition. By its very nature, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals requires collaborative, holistic solutions involving different departments, ministries, sectors and the whole food supply chain. This offers great opportunities for European Union leadership</p>	<p>The Commission has appointed 30 members to a new high-level multi-stakeholder Platform to support and advise the Commission on implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals at European Union level. Platform members are either individuals appointed in a personal capacity or to represent a common interest or organisations representing stakeholders from civil society, non-governmental organisations, the private and the corporate sector.</p> <p>The Platform should give their views on possible direction and action to best implement the 2030 Agenda. Some of</p>

<p>at continental level.</p>	<p>the principal roles of the Platform are to contribute to the Reflection Paper "Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030" as announced in the 2018 Commission Work Programme, support Commission-related sustainable development events, help prepare an annual sustainability prize, and exchange best practices on Sustainable Development Goals implementation.</p>
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<p>N°12 Vehicles hired without drivers for the carriage of goods by road COM(2017) 282 final EESC 2017/2882 – TEN/638 530th Plenary Session - December 2017 Rapporteur: Mr Brian CURTIS (GR11-UK) DG MOVE –Commissioner BULC</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.1. and 4.1. The European Economic and Social Committee welcomes this further step in removing some of the remaining obstacles to an effective and equitable single market in the European road haulage sector. In this instance, the amending Directive is concerned with facilitating the best use of vehicle fleets across Europe, particularly during seasonal peaks, and achieves a minimum level of liberalisation. Eliminating restrictions on the use of goods vehicles for own account use is a positive step.</p>	<p>The Commission appreciates the overall positive opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee.</p>
<p>1.3., 5.1., 5.2., 5.3. To prevent the growth of letterbox companies, the European Economic and Social Committee urges that the measures proposed⁷⁹ to strengthen Regulation (EC) No 1071/2009⁸⁰ and Regulation (EC) No 1072/2009⁸¹ to eliminate rogue letterbox companies be agreed and effectively implemented by all Member States. Outcomes should be carefully monitored and form part of the report on the effectiveness of this amending</p>	<p>The Commission agrees that the creation of letterbox companies has to be avoided. There should be no ‘regime shopping’ for lower taxes etc. The concern that this amending Directive facilitates the creation and operation of letterbox companies has been taken into account: to make it less attractive to set up letterbox companies in low-tax Member States, register one’s fleet there and hire it back from there, the Commission proposal allows Member</p>

⁷⁹ COM(2017) 281 final.

⁸⁰ Regulation (EC) No 1071/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 establishing common rules concerning the conditions to be complied with to pursue the occupation of road transport operator and repealing Council Directive 96/26/EC (Text with EEA relevance), OJ L 300, 14.11.2009.

⁸¹ Regulation (EC) No 1072/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 on common rules for access to the international road haulage market (Text with EEA relevance), OJ L 300, 14.11.2009.

<p>Directive.</p>	<p>States to limit the use of vehicles which their undertakings hire (and which are registered) in another Member State to a period that can be as short as four months per calendar year. The Commission appreciates the Committee's support for the measures it has proposed in its Communication COM(2017) 281 final to exclude rogue operators who use letterbox companies from the market. It is appropriate for the Report on the effectiveness of the amending Directive to address issues relating to letterbox companies insofar as linked to the use of hired vehicles.</p>
<p>1.4., 5.4., 5.5. To discourage operators from taking advantage of lower vehicle registration taxation between Member States, further measures should be applied should analysis in the review period show them to be necessary, for example a cap on the proportion of the fleet owned by an operator that can be temporarily transferred to an affiliate operator in another Member State.</p>	<p>One of the main purposes of the review Report is precisely to understand the impact which the possibility to use vehicles hired in another Member State will have on the market, on tax revenues etc. On the basis of this Report, the Commission will consider additional measures should it find that it is necessary to do so.</p>
<p>1.5., 5.6., 5.7. The European Economic and Social Committee notes that, even though increasingly effective tracing methods are being applied, illegal cabotage remains a significant problem in the haulage sector. There is some risk that detection may be made more difficult with the implementation of measures in this Directive. Therefore, further requirements to safeguard a traceable link between company and vehicle could be put in place. [...] These should comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mandatory declaration of the vehicle number plate of all vehicles in use by a haulier in the national electronic registers 	<p>One of the overarching objectives of the Mobility Package which the Commission adopted on 31 May 2017 was to improve the enforcement of the applicable rules, including the rules on cabotage. The Commission acknowledges that targeting foreign-registered vehicles during roadside checks will not work when foreign operators use vehicles for cabotage operations which they have hired (and which are registered) in the cabotage host country. However, the Commission believes that closer administrative cooperation can help enforce the cabotage rules also in such</p>

<p>(NERs);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- real time access of road inspectorates, during road side and company checks, to the national electronic registers (NERs);- introduction of infringements relating to the Hired Vehicles Directive⁸² in the so-called "list on categorisation of infringements leading to the loss of good repute".	<p>cases. The Commission thanks the Committee for its suggestions, which the Council and the European Parliament will have the opportunity to consider.</p>
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⁸² Directive 2006/1/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 January 2006 on the use of vehicles hired without drivers for the carriage of goods by road (codified version) (Text with EEA relevance), OJ L 33, 4.2.2006.

<p>N°13 European Defence Industrial Development Programme COM(2017) 294 final EESC 2017/3593 – CCMI/154 530th Plenary Session - December 2017 Rapporteur: Mr Antonello PEZZINI (GRI-IT) Corapporteur: Eric BRUNE (GRII-FR) DG GROW – Commissioner BIENKOWSKA</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.1. The European Economic and Social Committee supports the launch of the European Defence Industrial Development Programme.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s support for the European Defence Industrial Development Programme.</p>
<p>1.1., 1.7. and 4.1. The European Economic and Social Committee considers that development of common defence capabilities depends on strengthening the European defence industrial and technological base including the retention of a highly skilled workforce. To that effect, a strong focus should be given to specialisation and job security.</p>	<p>The Commission fully shares this analysis. The aim of the Commission proposal for a European Defence Industrial Development Programme is to strengthen Europe’s defence industrial base so that the European Union retains the ability to develop defence products and technologies in priority areas. Retention of a highly skilled workforce and specialisation is necessary to this effect. This is in line with the more general policy context under which this proposal was developed and more particularly with the European Defence Action Plan which aims amongst others to tackle skill shortages and skill retention. However, the objective of the Programme is to support collaborative projects in the area of defence industrial development, but it cannot be used for funding training programmes which is the objective of other programmes co-financed by the</p>

	European Union.
<p>2.13., 3.2.and 4.3. The European Economic and Social Committee calls for significant progress in European defence cooperation including in terms of standards technical specifications and CE certification as the European Union’s defence market is overly fragmented and inefficient.</p>	<p>The Commission fully shares the European Economic and Social Committee’s call for greater European defence cooperation and its analysis of the challenges, reflected in the fragmented defence market, in achieving this. Reducing fragmentation and duplications and hence improving the competitiveness of the European Union defence industry is a core objective of the Commission proposal. The Commission proposal in particular foresees that in order to be eligible to receive support under the European Defence Industrial Development Programme, actions in principle need to be based on common technical specifications.</p>
<p>3.3. The European Economic and Social Committee considers that as concerns the eligibility criteria and in order to ensure that the projects’ technological and industrial base has an effectively European dimension: the requirement should be that at least three separate companies from at least three Member States are involved.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees with the Committee that increased cross-border cooperation is important for the efficiency and effectiveness of European defence. The European Defence Industrial Development Programme proposal refers to at least three undertakings which are established in at least two Member States in order to allow as many projects as possible to be considered for participation in the programme, given the very short timelines set for forming a consortium and preparing an application.</p>
<p>4.9.1. The European Economic and Social Committee strongly supports giving special attention to small and medium-sized enterprises and maintaining a good balance between European countries. Additionally, the European Economic and</p>	<p>The Commission fully shares the European Economic and Social Committee’s call for special attention to be given to small and medium-sized enterprises. For this specific reason the Commission proposal contains a</p>

<p>Social Committee asked for a quota (e.g. 10%) of calls to be dedicated to small projects and the possibility of adding key involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises to the project award criteria.</p>	<p>specific provision that foresees that the Work Programme shall ensure that a credible proportion of the budget will benefit actions enabling the cross-border participation of small and medium-sized enterprises.</p> <p>In this regard it should also be mentioned that small and medium-sized enterprises and cross-border market access of small and medium-sized enterprises is also a major theme of the European Defence Action Plan which makes a number of proposals of particular benefit to defence-related small and medium-sized enterprises in fields such as improving access to finance, strengthening the support of European Structural and Investment Funds to investments in the defence sector, supporting regional clusters of excellence and skills in defence.</p>
<p>4.4. The European Economic and Social Committee considers that the European Defence Industrial Development Programme's budgetary allocation is particularly limited and that it should also be able to draw on the European Fund for Strategic Investments in order to make the best possible impact on employment, including dual technologies related to the security and defence industries.</p>	<p>The proposal for the European Defence Industrial Development Programme foresees a budget of EUR 500 million for two years.</p> <p>The European Defence Industrial Development Programme will co-finance a part of the costs of development. An amount of EUR 500 million under the Programme could therefore lead to a significant total investment of at least EUR 2.5 billion over the two years in the development phase of collaborative defence products and technologies.</p> <p>A more ambitious European Defence Fund will be prepared in the next Multiannual Financial Framework.</p> <p>Involvement of the European Fund for Strategic Investments in the defence</p>

sector is for the moment limited to dual use activities. The European Investment Bank has announced that it will further step up its contribution to the European Union security and defence agenda through, as a first step, increased support for dual-use technologies.

In the European Defence Action Plan, the Commission noted that within the limitations of the Treaties, and the decision making bodies of the European Investment Bank, the European Investment Bank group can provide loans, guarantees and equity products for the expansion of current dual-use activities, which would unlock new opportunities for certain parts of the defence supply chain, notably for small and medium-sized enterprises and mid-caps. As stressed by the Commission, adapting further the lending criteria within the European Investment Bank Group for the defence sector, within the limitations of the Treaties and subject to the necessary decisions by the relevant European Investment Bank bodies, would benefit Member States, whose defence industry is mainly made of small and medium-sized enterprises.

<p>N°14 Launching the European Defence Fund COM(2017) 295 final EESC 2017/3598 – CCMI/155 530th Plenary Session – December 2017 Rapporteur: Mr Mihai IVASCU (GRIII-RO) Corapporteur: Mr Fabien COUDERC (GRII-FR) DG GROW – Commissioner BIENKOWSKA</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>The European Economic and Social Committee supports the launch of the European Defence Fund.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s support for the European Defence Fund.</p>
<p>1.4. The European Economic and Social Committee strongly recommends that the Member States and the European Commission use the European Defence Fund to keep key industrial capabilities on European soil and to ensure that European money is spent on European Research and Development and on buying European weapons systems.</p>	<p>The Commission’s objective, by launching this fund, is to enhance the competitiveness of European Union industry and thus to allow it to deliver on the defence products and technologies that Europe needs for its security.</p> <p>Under the ‘research window’, beneficiaries must be established in the European Union and must use assets, resources and infrastructures located in the European Union. Under the ‘capability window’, and in particular under the European Defence Industrial Development Programme, the Commission has proposed, in addition to the establishment and location requirements, that the beneficiaries shall be undertakings in which Member States and/or nationals of Member States own more than 50% of the undertaking and effectively control it.</p>
<p>1.6. The European Economic and Social Committee considers that, besides providing</p>	<p>The Commission fully shares the European Economic and Social</p>

<p>financing for the industry, the Commission should build up the framework for stronger communication between industry players of all sizes across Member States. In this regard, the European Economic and Social Committee appreciates the special attention that the current proposal gives to small and medium-sized enterprises, no matter what country they come from.</p>	<p>Committee’s call for special attention to be given to small and medium-sized enterprises and their cross-border participation. For this specific reason, the Commission’s Communication on launching the European Defence Fund specifically points out that small and medium-sized enterprises, at the heart of innovation in Europe and critical for the supply chains, should benefit in particular both in the research and the capability window.</p>
<p>1.8. The European Economic and Social Committee firmly considers that it is necessary to build up strong key capabilities that support European interests. These must be defined by the Member States, in accordance with their national defence policies, European objectives and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) partnership obligations.</p>	<p>The Commission fully shares this analysis. To this effect, the Fund underlines that to be ready to face tomorrow’s threats and to protect its citizens, Europe needs to enhance its strategic autonomy. This requires the development of key products and technologies in critical areas so as to ensure technological leadership. Cooperation at all levels is the only way to deliver on the expectations of Union citizens. In the content of the European Defence Industrial Development Programme for example, the defence capability priorities will be identified by Member States notably on the basis of the Capability Development Plan, through processes such as the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence, the Permanent Structured Cooperation as well as through regional and international cooperation initiatives.</p>
<p>1.12. The European Economic and Social Committee considers that the governance of the European Defence Fund must be established as soon as possible and should include the European Union, the European Defence Agency and the Member States, as</p>	<p>The Communication makes specific references to the governance of both the research and capability windows. Both the Preparatory Action on defence research and the European Defence Industrial Development Programme are</p>

well as industry. The Commission should explore new options for limiting the level of bureaucracy involved in the implementation of the European Defence Fund. The European Economic and Social Committee also recommends that the European Parliament should have access to reporting on a regular basis so that it can evaluate how the fund is working.

European Union programmes, and the Commission will be responsible for their overall execution.

The Commission will be assisted in the establishment of the work programmes by a Committee of Member States. In order to benefit from its expertise in the defence sector, the Commission's proposals envisage for the European Defence Agency the status of observer in the Committee.

In the case of the Preparatory Action on Defence Research, the Commission has entrusted certain implementation tasks to the European Defence Agency. The European Defence Agency is currently managing the implementation of the Preparatory Action's annual work programmes on behalf of the Commission, in accordance with the Delegation Agreement signed on 31 May 2017.

As for the capability window and in particular the European Defence Industrial Development Programme, the exact implementation modalities will also depend on the final text that will be adopted when an agreement between the colegislators is reached.

More generally, as underlined in the Communication, the Commission will foster a continued dialogue with Member States, the European Parliament, the Council, the European Defence Agency, the industry, Research and Technology organisations and other interested parties in the preparation of the programmes developed under the fund.

The European Parliament will be regularly informed about the

	<p>implementation through the programme statements submitted within the framework of the annual budgetary procedure as well as through the information provided for the annual discharge procedure. In addition, the Commission proposal for a Regulation establishing the European Defence Industrial Development Programme⁸³ provides that the Commission will draw up a retrospective evaluation report that will be sent to the European Parliament and to the Council.</p>
<p>1.16. The European Economic and Social Committee recommends that it should be possible to make use of training programmes co-financed by the European Union in the early stages of the development of projects funded under the capability window. The European Economic and Social Committee stresses that a skilled workforce is key for the development of cutting-edge technologies in the field of defence.</p>	<p>The Commission fully shares the analysis that a skilled workforce is key for the development of cutting-edge technologies in the field of defence. The aim of the fund is to strengthen Europe's defence industrial base so that the European Union retains the ability to develop defence products and technologies in priority areas. Retention of a highly skilled workforce and specialisation is necessary to this effect. The Communication makes specific references to actions for smart specialisation and helping to develop technological skills. However, the objective of the Fund is to support collaborative projects in the area of defence research and industrial development but it cannot be used for funding training programmes, which is the objective of other programmes co-financed by the European Union.</p>
<p>1.15. The European Economic and Social Committee has doubts concerning the "reasonable expectation that the development will result in procurement",</p>	<p>The Commission understands the Committee's concerns and agrees that it is important that the final use of Union funds should be assigned to</p>

⁸³ COM(2017) 294 final.

<p>given that military research is full of examples of projects developed and later not procured by states. The European Economic and Social Committee calls for clear rules regarding the commitment to purchase the successfully developed capabilities.</p>	<p>actions that will have an actual added value. This is why the Commission proposal for the European Defence and Industrial Development Programme⁸⁴ includes, amongst the award criteria, a contribution to the competitiveness of the European Union defence industry, through the demonstration by the beneficiaries that the Member State commits to jointly produce and procure the final product or technology.</p>
<p>1.13. The European Economic and Social Committee recommends exploring the possibility of increasing the minimum number of countries participating in an eligible project to three, as the European Defence Fund programme evolves.</p> <p>1.14. The European Economic and Social Committee considers that maximising the number of Member States involved in the European Defence Fund will reduce redundancy and foster standardisation of logistics and sub-systems</p>	<p>The Commission agrees with the Committee that increased cross-border cooperation is important for the efficiency and effectiveness of European defence. The European Defence and Industrial Development Programme proposal refers to at least three undertakings which are established in at least two Member States in order to allow as many projects as possible to be considered for participation in the programme, given the very short timelines set for forming a consortium and preparing an application.</p>

⁸⁴ COM(2017) 294 final.

<p>N°15 A Renewed Partnership with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries JOIN(2016) 52 final EESC 2017/0788 – REX/485 530th Plenary Session - December 2017 Rapporteur: Ms Brenda KING (GRI/UK) DG DEVCO - Commissioner MIMICA</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.4. The European Economic and Social Committee welcomes the Joint Communication as well as the Commission’s preferred option of an umbrella agreement with specific regional priorities that should be legally binding. The European Economic and Social Committee believes that a new updated agreement is needed that takes account of the new realities such as the concern of European public opinion regarding the increased risk of terrorist attacks, perceived uncontrolled migratory flows, the risk of climate refugees due to the dramatic increase of the African population, the increasing influence of other regional powers, and the unpredictable actions of the current United States president.</p>	<p>The Commission appreciates the positive assessment by the European Economic and Social Committee of the preferred option described in the Joint Communication "A Renewed Partnership with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries". Marking an important milestone in the process towards a renewed agreement between the European Union and the countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, a Recommendation for a Council decision authorising the opening of negotiations on a Partnership Agreement between the European Union and African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States⁸⁵ was sent to the Council on 12 December 2017, with annexed negotiation directives ('the Recommendation'). The setup of the proposed partnership foresees a common European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States Foundation Agreement and three partnerships (European Union-Africa 'Compact', European Union-Caribbean 'Compact', European Union-Pacific</p>

⁸⁵ COM(2017) 763 final.

'Compact'), in the form of protocols. The common Foundation Agreement lists general objectives, principles and priorities, following an integrated approach, and allowing also for increased cooperation at international level. In the proposal, the centre of gravity in policy terms is on the Compacts, with tailored priorities for the regions.

In compliance with President Juncker's policy of increased transparency, the text was released into the public domain immediately after adoption by the College of Commissioners. The proposed directives are the result of a wide consultation process with key stakeholders, which has preceded and followed the publication of the Joint Communication.

The Commission agrees with the European Economic and Social Committee that Europe needs effective partners in addressing the challenges of a rapidly changing world and a global landscape of increasingly interconnected, and often unpredictable, relations. The Commission has proposed that the new agreement between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States shall fully align with the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy: not only should the partnership seek to promote universal and indivisible values, but also to pursue an integrated approach to conflicts and crises, to lead to specific measures aimed at combatting terrorism and countering radicalisation, and ultimately to contribute to the

	<p>construction of peaceful, stable, well-governed, and resilient states and societies. It will seek cooperation for well managed migration and mobility, as well as to address climate change. Moreover, the European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States partnership should translate into the construction of effective alliances in multilateral fora and international organisations on issues of mutual and global interest.</p>
<p>1.5. The European Economic and Social Committee also calls for civil society to be better integrated in the next framework and provided with a stronger role that goes beyond consultation. This is important to ensure the Policy Coherence for Development principle.</p>	<p>In line with the new European Consensus on Development, the Commission acknowledges and fully supports a strong, structured, responsible and effective involvement of civil society organisations, including the private sector, in the broad political dialogue process. The Commission confirms that multi-stakeholder dialogue should be a key principle for the strengthening of European Union–African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States relations. In this regard, the Commission would like civil society in the new European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States agreement to be well positioned to have an input role in the political decision making process. The draft negotiating directives for the European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States Foundation Agreement indicate that a principle of the partnership shall be the promotion of a multi-stakeholder approach, facilitating the active engagement of a wide variety of actors in dialogue and cooperation processes.</p>
<p>1.6. The European Economic and Social</p>	<p>The Commission confirms the</p>

<p>Committee welcomes the plan to build on the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [...] However, the European Economic and Social Committee is disappointed that the 2030 Agenda is not placed at the core of the future Agreement reinforcing key principles such as universality, governance, and the inter-linkages and indivisibility of the Sustainable Development Goals.</p>	<p>European Union’s engagement to be at the frontline in the implementation of the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A renewed European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States partnership should have the objective to accelerate progress towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Recommendation is firmly anchored on the sustainable development framework, including the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change.</p>
<p>1.7. The European Economic and Social Committee believes that any future Partnership should be based on a political dialogue, rather than on a donor-recipient relationship. The European Economic and Social Committee notes that the Communication is rightly aligned with the European Union Global Strategy however it recommends that any future European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States cooperation should also be aligned with any strategies and objectives of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States partners.</p>	<p>The Commission fully shares the Committee’s opinion that any future European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States partnership should be based on political dialogue, rather than a donor-recipient relationship. The Commission also agrees with the Committee that an effective partnership must align with the strategies and objectives of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States partners.</p> <p>In drafting the negotiation directives, the Commission has been receptive to the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States’ own agenda for the future relations. The Waigani Communiqué, released at the Summit of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States’ Heads of State and Government in 2016, indicated that the partners were in favour of a renewed legally-binding agreement with the European Union that builds on the basis laid down by the Cotonou Agreement, of deepening the dimension of political dialogue, and increasing the scope for international</p>

	<p>cooperation in multilateral fora. The policy framework document "Towards the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States we want", published in May 2017 by the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States Secretariat, has further confirmed such a vision.</p> <p>Furthermore, the draft negotiation directives build on existing joint strategies that have been guiding the relations between the European Union and the three African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States regions over the past decade – notably the 2007 Joint Africa-European Union Strategy, the 2012 Joint Caribbean-European Union Partnership Strategy, and the 2006 Strategy for a Strengthened Partnership with the Pacific Islands. The directives also consider regional strategic frameworks adopted by the partner countries, such as the Agenda 2063 of the African Union. Lastly, the Commission has reached out to individual governments of African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States countries in their capital cities and to regional organisations, with the objective of starting the negotiation process from a basis for discussion already largely agreed among the parties.</p>
<p>1.8. The European Economic and Social Committee also recommends that the political dimension be strengthened and there should be a strong monitoring mechanism, which includes civil society. The European Union acquires for civil society, including the private sector, (civil society organisations) involvement in all stages of the future partnership should be kept and</p>	<p>The Commission fully accepts that the political dimension of the new European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States agreement must be strengthened: a clear indication to that effect is expressed in the Recommendation. The Commission has proposed that, building on the acquis of the current Cotonou</p>

<p>strengthened, with civil society organisations included in an institutionalised framework within the political dialogue.</p>	<p>Agreement, the European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States partnership shall reaffirm the commitment of the parties to develop further and to strengthen political dialogue on all areas, aims and objectives covered by the agreement. The dialogue should be conducted regularly, in the format and at the level – national, regional, or African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States-wide – which is most appropriate. The role of civil society and the private sector should be strengthened within the broader process of political dialogue.</p>
<p>1.10. The European Economic and Social Committee is disappointed that the Joint Communication does not reflect the importance of civil society organisations at either the umbrella level or in the three regions. The European Economic and Social Committee recommends that the future Partnership should include a formal mechanism to include civil society organisations in the design, implementation, monitoring and review as well as during the upcoming negotiation stage. The European Economic and Social Committee stands ready to play a central role in this process.</p>	<p>The Commission notes the Committee’s remark on this specific aspect of the Joint Communication, but points out that the subsequent Recommendation proposes, under Title II of the draft Foundation Agreement, that a principle of the European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States partnership shall be the promotion by the parties of a multi-stakeholder approach, facilitating the active engagement of a wide variety of actors in dialogue and cooperation processes. The draft directives also contain a specific indication, under the draft Foundation Agreement’s strategic priorities (Title II on Inclusive and sustainable economic development), that the parties to the European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States agreement shall agree to promote the involvement of civil society and the private sector in dialogues on trade and trade-related matters, as well as in the implementation of the Economic</p>

	<p>Partnership Agreements. The parties shall also agree to engage in dialogue at the appropriate level and to carry out such dialogue through an appropriate institutional framework.</p> <p>The Commission welcomes the proactive role that the Committee is ready to play in support of the upcoming negotiation process.</p>
<p>1.14. The European Economic and Social Committee welcomes that trade and the Economic Partnership Agreements will be fully integrated into the new partnership. The European Economic and Social Committee believes that trade agreements, including the Economic Partnership Agreements, should use the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda and the Paris (Climate) Agreement as their framework.</p>	<p>The Commission appreciates the Committee’s positive evaluation on the aspect of integration of trade cooperation and Economic Partnership Agreements into the proposal for a new European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States partnership. The draft negotiation directives suggest that the parties to the agreement shall commit to take all the necessary measures to reap the benefits of the stable framework provided by the Economic Partnership Agreements, including the possibility of widening and deepening the scope of the agreements, in accordance with their respective <i>rendez-vous</i> clauses.</p> <p>All relevant European Union policies, including trade policy, promote sustainable development and the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals as well as other international agreements and conventions relating to sustainable development.</p> <p>The draft negotiation directives propose that the parties shall reaffirm their commitment to integrate sustainable development, including its social and environmental dimensions,</p>

	<p>into all mutual trade relations, and to enhance cooperation and dialogue in these areas.</p>
<p>1.12. The European Economic and Social Committee welcomes the focus on human development as a specific priority of the future partnership and believes it should be a priority for all three regions and linked to the Sustainable Development Goals.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees with the Committee that human development should be a priority for all three regions, Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. The Commission points out that human development and dignity, linked to the related goals of the 2030 Agenda of eradicating poverty, tackling inequalities, and promoting social cohesion, is a core strategic priority of the proposed negotiation directives, at Title IV of the Foundation Agreement.</p>
<p>1.13. The European Economic and Social Committee welcomes the Joint Communication's statement to fully protect, promote and realise gender equality and empowerment of women and girls as well as its recognition of the key contribution women and girls make towards peace and state-building, economic growth, technological development, poverty reduction, health and well-being, culture and human development. However, the European Economic and Social Committee is disappointed that the Joint Communication omits to detail how this will be facilitated.</p>	<p>The Commission notes the Committee's remark on this specific aspect of the Joint Communication, but points out that the subsequent Recommendation establishes in the draft Foundation Agreement, under Title VI on 'Human Development and Dignity', that equality between women and men, girls and boys is crucial for sustainable development and it acknowledges the multiplier effect of gender equality itself "in achieving poverty eradication, reaching sustainable population growth, enhancing prosperity and unlocking the development of democratic societies based on human rights, social justice and accountability". Moreover, the draft directives for each regional Compact of the future agreement, under the Title on Human Development, contain a specific section detailing those provisions that are seen as immediately relevant to bring about gender equality.</p>

1.16. The European Economic and Social Committee welcomes that climate is one of the main priorities but is concerned that the climate and environment priorities differ in the three regions. It is also concerned that the focus is on actions required by African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States countries with no reference to the European Union's responsibility with regard to its footprint or impact on natural resources and ecosystems in these developing countries.

The Commission believes that climate and environment priorities should be tailored to each of the three regions' needs and highlights that the draft negotiation directives currently under discussion by the Council take into account the regional specificities of Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, when listing areas and actions for cooperation.

The Commission also acknowledges the Committee's concern with respect to the European Union's own footprint and impact on natural resources and ecosystems of developing countries. The Commission points out that support to conservation and sustainable management and use of natural resources, including by promoting the circular economy and sustainable production and consumption practices, is a provision clearly spelled out in the draft Foundation Agreement, under Title III. This same priority is approached and detailed through a list of targeted areas and actions for cooperation for each regional Compact agreement, both under the titles on inclusive and sustainable economic development and on climate change and environment/ climate change and sustainable management of natural resources.

The Commission points out that policy coherence for development should be a core principle of the European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States partnership, and as such it can be found in the draft negotiation directives for the Foundation Agreement. The principle of policy

	<p>coherence would assume that each of the parties to the new European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States agreement shall have an individual and collective responsibility to maximise the benefits and to minimise the negative impacts that their policies may have on the other party.</p>
<p>3.6. The future agreement should prioritise human development, noting the twin impacts of exponential demographic growth and climate disruption that African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States countries face. This will present challenges for nutrition and food security, environmental protection, and achieving prosperity for all.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees with the Committee on the need for the future agreement to focus on human development as a priority. The Commission highlights that specific reference to the challenges presented by demographic growth and to climate change are made in the draft negotiation directives, under the Title III and Title VI of the Foundation Agreement, respectively.</p>
<p>4.1.4. The European Economic and Social Committee recommends that the new framework agreed should reinforce the legitimacy of civil society organisations in particular, and Non State Actors in general, as much-needed stakeholders in policy processes by including civil society organisations, from both the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States and European Union, in the legally binding principles of the agreement. This should include a structured framework between civil society organisations and all joint African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States-European Union Institutions. It therefore calls for stronger technical and financial commitments to encourage and bolster the active participation of civil society organisations.</p>	<p>The Commission acknowledges and welcomes the Committee’s feedback on the legitimate role of non-state actors as stakeholders to policy processes, and particularly the indication that the European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States agreement should be based on legally binding principles that allow such a role to be preserved and reinforced. As recalled in point 1.5., the Commission would like civil society to be well positioned to have an input role in the political decision-making process of the new European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States partnership.</p>
<p>4.2.7. The Future Partnership should place</p>	<p>The Commission reaffirms that</p>

<p>trade and the Economic Partnership Agreements within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement. The Economic Partnership Agreements should contain an enforceable sustainable development chapter with a formal and structured framework for civil society organisation inclusion. Future European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States negotiations should take place transparently, involving civil society organisations in the monitoring of the negotiations and the implementation and monitoring of the agreement.</p>	<p>Economic Partnership Agreements are firmly anchored in the objectives of sustainable development. They contain relevant provisions either in dedicated chapters, in <i>rendez-vous</i> clauses, or in references to the Cotonou Agreement, which contains the enforcement mechanisms for the implementation of the ‘essential elements’ clauses. According to the draft negotiation directives, the parties shall reaffirm their commitment to integrate sustainable development, including its social and environmental dimensions, into all mutual trade relations, and to enhance cooperation and dialogue in these areas. The Commission promotes the involvement of civil society organisations and the private sector in the monitoring activities, which is also explicitly recognised in the draft negotiating directives.</p>
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<p>N°16 The core role of trade and investment in meeting and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (own-initiative opinion) EESC 2017/1072 - REX/486 530th Plenary Session - December 2017 Rapporteur: Mr Jonathan PEEL (GRI-UK) Corapporteur: Mr Christophe QUAREZ (GRII-FR) DG TRADE – Commissioner MALMSTRÖM</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.1.1. The European Economic and Social Committee believes that the Sustainable Development Goals, together with the Paris Agreement (COP21), will fundamentally change the global trade agenda, especially for trade in industrial goods and agriculture. The need to implement these profound agreements must lie at the heart of all future European Union trade negotiations.</p>	<p>The Trade and Sustainable Development Chapters of European Union trade agreements concluded since the adoption of these two landmark international agreements contain commitments of the Parties to cooperate towards their implementation and this is reflected in the draft negotiating directives of new European Union trade agreements to be negotiated.</p>
<p>1.2. The European Union is uniquely placed to further the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals. It has the credibility to play an effective bridging role between developed and developing countries. Greater priority is needed for the development of the policies outlined in the Commission Communication "Next Steps towards a sustainable European Future"⁸⁶, and sharper focus given to integrating the Sustainable Development Goals fully "in the European policy framework and current Commission priorities", in conjunction with Member States where necessary.</p> <p>1.5.1. The European Economic and Social Committee welcomes the European Union's</p>	<p>The Commission's strategic approach towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, as presented in the Commission Communication "Next steps towards a sustainable European Future", consists of two work streams. The first work stream, which is already being implemented, is to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals into all European Union policies and strategies, <i>inter alia</i> through the use of the better regulation tools. A second track will launch reflection work on the long term implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, the</p>

⁸⁶ COM(2016) 739 final.

<p>intention to provide annual updates, but remains concerned that it often appears more interested in showing how existing policies coincide and overlap with Sustainable Development Goal targets, rather than in gaining maximum synergy through focussing and adapting such policies and activities. A more concentrated European Union focus on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals would gain better results.</p>	<p>President of the Commission announced in his 2017 State of the Union address⁸⁷ and accompanying Letter of Intent⁸⁸ on 13 September 2017 a sixth Reflection Paper in the framework of the Future of Europe discussion, entitled 'Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030'. This Paper will consider the follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals, including on the Paris Agreement on climate change. It is expected to be published in the second half of 2018.</p>
<p>1.3. Trade was only referred to once in the Millennium Development Goals, but there are nine specific mentions of trade in the Sustainable Development Goals. As well as direct action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we urge the European Union to include "Sustainable Development Goal-friendly" trade and investment.</p>	<p>The Commission is committed to use European Union policies, including European Union trade policy, to help implement the United Nations 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals, and the chapters on trade and sustainable development of European Union trade agreements contribute to this aim.</p>
<p>1.5. The European Economic and Social Committee notes that, as the Sustainable Development Goals are not legally binding, with no dispute mechanism, the European Union must work through its own policies and activities to further their realisation.</p>	<p>The European Union's position in the Agenda 2030 negotiations to agree the Sustainable Development Goals was an ambitious one. This is reflected in the wording of the Staff Working Document which accompanied the Commission Communication "Next steps towards a sustainable European future", going far beyond what was explicitly identified in the Sustainable Development Goals, so as to reflect the European Union's lead role in supporting the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals through European Union policies and initiatives.</p>
<p>1.5.2. There are a number of key policy areas where the European Economic and</p>	<p>The Commission's recommendation for draft negotiating directives for a</p>

<p>Social Committee believes the European Union must work to ensure full synergy with the Sustainable Development Goals. These include the renewal of the "Cotonou" African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States – European Union Partnership Agreement as well as the European Union’s wider interaction with those regions. That should specifically include both targeted capacity building to support and help implement the Trade Facilitation Agreement, as well as the wider joint European Union/Member State Aid for Trade strategy. This is a core contribution to, and an essential part of, the World Trade Organization Aid for Trade Initiative which is designed to enhance the capacity of developing countries to use the opportunities offered by trade agreements. Sustainable Development Goals-focused input into the World Trade Organization’s sixth Global Review will be important.</p>	<p>modernised partnership with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, issued on 12 December 2017⁸⁹, is fully in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and includes capacity building for trade facilitation and the Aid for Trade strategy.</p> <p>On 11 December 2017, the Council adopted conclusions on the updated strategy on Aid for Trade, as presented in the Commission Communication of 13 November 2017⁹⁰. The updated Strategy builds on 10 years of European Union Aid for Trade assistance and reflects significant changes in the political context both globally - in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including the Sustainable Development Goals - and at the European Union level - notably the new European Consensus on Development⁹¹ and the "Trade for All" Communication⁹². The Aid for Trade strategy makes reference to a number of pragmatic ways in which Aid for Trade can support European Union trade policy in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. This will also drive the European Union’s inputs to the broader World Trade Organization initiative on aid for trade.</p>
<p>1.5.3. More specific support should also be given to using trade as a means to boost both regional integration and the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in those regions where Economic Partnership Agreements have yet to be reached, despite</p>	<p>The Commission is working in close cooperation with partner countries and regions to prepare them for Economic Partnership Agreements, including support to regional integration and achieving the Sustainable Development</p>

⁸⁹ COM(2017) 763 final.

⁹⁰ COM(2017) 667 final.

⁹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/european-consensus-on-development-final-20170626_en.pdf

⁹² http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/october/tradoc_153846.pdf

<p>the Economic Partnership Agreements not yet fully realising their early promise.</p>	<p>Goals. This position is fully reflected in the new Aid for Trade strategy which the Commission will implement.</p>
<p>1.5.4. The European Union should also look to develop greater synergies between the 27 core Conventions relevant to its General System of Preferences (GSP+) Programme and the Sustainable Development Goals, as far as its competences will allow.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees that finding synergies between the Sustainable Development Goals and existing trade policy tools such as the special incentive arrangement under the General System of Preferences (GSP+) can be mutually supportive. At the same time, the voluntary nature of the Sustainable Development Goals differs from the binding nature of the 27 Conventions included in the GSP+ arrangement, which limits their potential for close alignment.</p>
<p>1.7. The European Economic and Social Committee underlines the key role of Responsible Business Conduct in helping realise the Sustainable Development Goals.</p>	<p>The Commission shares the Committee's assessment of the importance of Responsible Business Conduct as a contributing factor to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. The Commission will continue to emphasise the key role of Responsible Business Conduct as it develops its next steps to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals.</p>
<p>1.8. The European Economic and Social Committee urges that all future mandates for Trade and Sustainable Development Chapters in European Union trade and partnership negotiations must include a specific clause requiring both parties of each civil society monitoring mechanism to work together to promote the Sustainable Development Goals and monitor the effects of that.</p>	<p>The Commission shares the view that civil society engagement is one of the key factors that contributes to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Civil society organisations in the European Union and partner countries are independent groups that set their own working priorities, and should thus not be legally bound to any particular agenda in breach of their freedoms. The implementation and enforcement of European Union trade agreements and the monitoring thereof is a primary responsibility of the</p>

	contracting Parties. Civil society organisations can contribute to this objective.
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