

FOLLOW-UP PROVIDED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

TO THE OPINIONS OF THE

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

PLENARY SESSION OF MAY 2019

N°	Title	References
SG		
1.	<p><u>Single market communication</u></p> <p>Rapporteur: Gonçalo LOBO XAVIER (Gr. I-PT) Co-rapporteur: Juan MENDOZA CASTRO (Gr. II-ES)</p>	<p>COM(2018) 772 final</p> <p>EESC-2018-05252-00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>INT/876</p>
ENER (assoc. GROW)		
2.	<p><u>Working with asbestos in energy renovation (own-initiative opinion)</u></p> <p>Rapporteur: Aurel LAURENȚIU PLOSCEANU (Gr.I-RO) Co-rapporteur: Enrico GIBELLIERI (IT)</p>	<p>EESC-2018-04791-00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>CCMI/166</p>
EMPL		
3.	<p><u>Economic, technological and social changes in advanced health services for the elderly (own-initiative opinion)</u></p> <p>Rapporteur: Marian KRZAKLEWSKI (Gr. II-PL) Co-rapporteur: Jean-Pierre HABER (FR)</p>	<p>EESC-2018-04518-00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>CCMI/165</p>
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4.	<p><u>Strengthening administrative cooperation for combating VAT fraud (e-commerce)</u></p> <p>Rapporteur: Krister ANDERSSON (Gr. I-SE)</p>	<p>COM(2018) 813 final – 2018/0413 CNS</p> <p>EESC-2019-00105-00-00-AC-TRA</p> <p>ECO/487</p>

5.	<u>VAT – certain requirements for payment service providers</u> Rapporteur: Krister ANDERSSON (Gr. I-SE)	COM(2018) 812 final –2018/0412 CNS COM(2018) 819 final – 2018/0415 CNS EESC-2019-00106- 00-00-AC-TRA ECO/488
CNECT		
6.	<u>Coordinated Plan on Artificial Intelligence</u> Rapporteur: Tellervo KYLÄ-HARAKKA-RUONALA (Gr.I-FI)	COM(2018) 795 final EESC-2018-05386- 00-00-AC-TRA INT/877
ECFIN		
7.	<u>European philanthropy: an untapped potential (exploratory opinion requested by the Romanian Presidency)</u> Rapporteur: Petru SORIN DANDEA (Gr. II-RO)	EESC-2018-05416- 00-00-AC-TRA SOC/611
RTD		
8.	<u>Communication updating the 2012 Bio-economy Strategy</u> Rapporteur: Mindaugas MACIULEVIČIUS (Gr. III-LT) Co-rapporteur: Udo HEMMERLING (Gr. I-DE)	COM(2018) 673 final EESC-2018-06204- 00-00-AC-TRA NAT/758

CLIMA		
9.	<u>Global data collection system for ship fuel oil consumption data</u> Rapporteur: Constantine CATSAMBIS (Gr. I-EL)	COM(2019) 38 final – 2019/0017 COD EESC-2019-01686- 00-00-AC-TRA NAT/772
GROW (assoc. EMPL)		
10.	<u>Social economy enterprises' contribution to a more cohesive and democratic Europe (exploratory opinion requested by the Romanian presidency)</u> Rapporteur: Alain COHEUR (Gr. III-BE)	EESC-2018-05559- 00-00-AC-TRA INT/875
JUST		
11.	<u>Gender equality issues (own-initiative opinion)</u> Rapporteur: Indrė VAREIKYTĖ (Gr. III-LT)	EESC-2018-04753- 00-00-AC-TRA SOC/610

<p>N°1 Single Market communication COM(2018) 772 final EESC 2018/5252 – INT/876 543rd Plenary session – May 2019 Rapporteur: Gonçalo LOBO XAVIER (GR.I-PT) Co-rapporteur: Juan MENDOZA CASTRO (GR.II-ES) SG – Vice-President Katainen</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.1. The EESC welcomes the Commission’s strong message on reinforcing the Single Market and the need for commitment from all Member States and citizens. The Single Market requires a balance between peoples’ expectations and coordinated policies to adapt Europe to the different challenges imposed by globalisation, new trends and technological progress.</p> <p>1.2. The EESC calls for a Single Market that is the same for all EU countries, and which must be perceived as an opportunity to reassert European values, fundamental rights and duties in order to achieve progress and welfare for all Member States and citizens.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees with this position of the Committee. In its November 2018 Communication ‘The Single Market in a changing world’, the Commission has emphasised the important benefits and opportunities of the Single Market for citizens and businesses, presenting a fresh assessment of the situation in the Single Market and calls on Member States to renew their political commitment to the Single Market.</p>
<p>1.3. A smooth but concrete integration process is a huge reason to avoid and combat the menace of protectionism, individualism and extremist societies. The fundamental achievements of the Single Market must be better communicated among citizens and Member States.</p>	<p>The Commission’s Single Market Communication from last November indeed recalled to Member States that and why the Single Market is one of the greatest achievements of the European project. The Commission called on the European Council to renew their engagement with citizens and businesses to promote continued political and public support for the Single Market, notably in the context of the European Parliament elections.</p>
<p>1.4. There are good examples of how</p>	<p>The Communication emphasised that</p>

<p>European citizens benefit from the Single Market, based on the efforts and commitment of different actors. Values like liberty, economic growth, democracy, peace, science and innovation, political stability, consumers and social rights must be present in citizens' mindset as a result of a process that started 60 years ago. The difficulties in achieving these values cannot be forgotten but should become lessons learned for the future.</p>	<p>thanks to the Single Market, Europeans can study, travel, live and work where they wish. They benefit from greater choice and lower prices as well as high standards of environmental, social and consumer protection. The Commission will not hesitate to reiterate this message to citizens at any occasion.</p>
<p>1.5. The EESC reiterates its support for limiting state aid and fighting against abuse of dominant positions, emphasising the difficulties that European companies have competing on global markets with oligopolies or monopolies, which are state-owned in certain cases.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees that it is important at the same time to limit distortions of competition on the Single Market and to address distortions of competition through third country financing.</p>
<p>1.6. The EESC also highlights the crucial role of the Single Market as a tool to boost a more ambitious European industrial strategy with clear objectives for 2030. More inclusive and broad Single Market integration on the margins of a truly European industrial strategy should also be a top priority for the next European Commission with focus on more investment in innovation and technologies, a more flexible and user-friendly regulatory framework to compete on a global scale but without forgetting respect for the rules and sustainable procedures of healthy global competition.</p>	<p>In its Communication 'The Single Market in a changing world', the Commission has emphasised the important benefits and opportunities of the Single Market for citizens and businesses. As announced in its contribution to the informal EU-27 leaders' meeting in Sibiu on 9 May 2019, the Commission considers a modern and holistic industry strategy, building on the Single Market, as a key element of a competitive Europe. Building on this, the new Strategic Agenda 2019-2024 highlights the need for a more integrated approach connecting all relevant policies and dimensions. The Single Market and its four freedoms is a key asset in that regard. This is highlighted by the Commission's report from March 2019 on implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan, assessing to what extent EU policy tools addressing products are supporting circular,</p>

	sustainable products.
<p>1.7. The EESC reiterates its call to develop the social dimension of the European Union with the aim of fostering quality job creation, improving skills and competences, increasing social investments and developing the social economy, with the emphasis on socially responsible companies, as well as preventing poverty, inequalities, discrimination and social exclusion, with special emphasis on the inclusion of young people in society. The EESC considers it appropriate that social policies be implemented to deal with this situation, which causes disaffection towards the EU, increased populism and the proliferation of xenophobia in sectors of the population.</p>	<p>The Commission considers the social dimension of the Union an integral part of the Union policies. It has in the last years, in particular through the European Pillar of Social Rights and through legislative initiatives, made new and more effective rights for all citizens a top priority. The Commission considers that further development of the social dimension of the Union will continue to be a priority in the future.</p>
<p>1.8. The EESC notes that in spite of a huge effort regarding the implementation and the application of Single Market rules, facts show that national measures may lead to disproportionate burdens on citizens and businesses. For the EESC, it is a priority to call on the Member States to avoid these practices.</p>	<p>Proper implementation of all the legislation which has been adopted in the last few years to drive forward the Single Market will be a major shared challenge for the immediate future and will require the continued commitment of all Member States. The Commission agrees with this position of the Committee: In cases of minimum harmonisation of national rules at Union level, it is legitimate for Member States to go beyond what is required by Union rules if they wish so. However, this should not lead to "gold-plating", where national measures may lead to disproportionate burdens on citizens and businesses.</p>
<p>1.9. The EESC has supported the digital economy over years, aware that the future of the Single Market is linked to it. The EESC</p>	<p>The General Data Protection Regulation is essential to ensure trust in the protection of personal data and</p>

<p>agrees with the Commission that General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)¹ is essential to ensure trust in the Single Market for personal data but additional measures for a better, clear and user-friendly framework must be taken to avoid unnecessary burdens and misunderstandings. This is also critical to increasing mobility for a better services sector that is growing and with a major significance for economic growth and new jobs. A growing services sector and an increasing shortage of competence require a better functioning Single Market.</p>	<p>therefore indispensable for a data ecosystem for the Single Market. The Commission is working closely with stakeholders to facilitate its implementation.</p>
<p>1.10. The EESC endorses the objective of establishing an enabling framework for the transition towards a circular model and reiterates that a sound system for financing sustainable growth, with a long-term approach, is the key driver for restoring trust in the markets and connecting savings to sustainable investments.</p>	<p>On 4 March 2019 the Commission reported that relevant actions from the 2015 Circular Economy Action Plan have now been delivered or are being implemented. This will contribute to boost Europe's competitiveness, modernise its economy and industry to create jobs, protect the environment and generate sustainable growth.</p>
<p>1.11. The EESC welcomes the clear progress in transforming the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) into a European Monetary Fund, which could offer liquidity in a precautionary manner, thus reducing conditionality programmes. However, to tackle future dangers in the financial system the EESC supports the search for consensus among the Member States on the completion of the Banking Union. The delivery of fully integrated financial markets and the Capital Markets Union should also remain high on the agenda.</p>	<p>In its Communication 'Taking stock four years after the Five Presidents' Report' of 12 June 2019 on Deepening Europe's Economic Monetary Union, the Commission has invited the Member States to make a renewed effort to complete the Banking Union, starting with political negotiations on the European Deposit Insurance Scheme and to accelerate progress on the Capital Markets Union.</p>

¹ [OJL 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1.](#)

<p>N° 2 Working with asbestos in energy renovation EESC 2018/4791 - CCMI/166 543rd Plenary Session – May 2019 Rapporteur: Aurel Laurențiu PLOSCEANU (GR.I-RO) Co-rapporteur: Enrico GIBELLIERI (IT) DG ENER – Commissioner ARIAS CAÑETE</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.1. The EESC recognises the considerable danger posed by asbestos and deems it necessary to create the synergies for the removal of harmful substances during energy renovation.</p>	<p>The Commission acknowledges the danger associated with substances like asbestos and agrees that action is needed in order to remove it from buildings.</p> <p>The revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) emphasises health issues, and to raise awareness and increase synergies, indicates that energy performance upgrades of existing buildings should contribute to achieving a healthy indoor environment, including through the removal of asbestos and other harmful substances, preventing the illegal removal of harmful substances.</p>
<p>1.6. The EESC suggests that the European Commission and Member States shall review the transposition and practical implementation of the directive on exposure to asbestos at work (Directive 2009/148/EC), so as to improve the protection of all workers at risk of asbestos exposure.</p>	<p>According to the revised Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, compliance with existing legislative acts, such as Directives 2009/148/EC² and (EU) 2016/2284³ should be facilitated.</p> <p>The Commission agrees that training of workers is essential to improve their protection to asbestos exposure.</p>
<p>1.9. The EESC believes it crucial that Member States design their national</p>	<p>The revised Energy Performance of Buildings Directive provides that</p>

² Directive 2009/148/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos at work (Text with EEA relevance); OJ L 330, 16.12.2009, p. 28–36.

³ Directive (EU) 2016/2284 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2016 on the reduction of national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants, amending Directive 2003/35/EC and repealing Directive 2001/81/EC (Text with EEA relevance); OJ L 344, 17.12.2016, p. 1–31.

<p>long-term renovation strategies with a view to the inherent dangers of asbestos and other harmful substances.</p>	<p>Members States when developing their long-term renovation strategies must encompass ‘<i>an evidence-based estimate of expected energy savings and wider benefits, such as those related to health, safety and air quality</i>’, which should for instance include the prevention of the illegal removal of harmful substances, such as asbestos of buildings.</p>
<p>1.10. The EESC urges Member States to ensure that the criteria for financial support of energy renovation enable homeowners to completely remove harmful substances in the course of renovation.</p>	<p>Similarly to other safety issues, such as fire and risks related to seismic activities, where the revised Energy Performance of Buildings Directive encourages Member States to consider them when renovating and when designing financial support schemes, the removal of harmful substances could also be taken into account.</p> <p>However, it has to be noted that safety is an area of national competence, and a much broader area than renovation-related removal of harmful substances.</p>
<p>3.3. The EESC suggests Member States or regions to develop publicly available registers of harmful substances featuring all relevant information.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees that registries and databases could play a crucial role in raising awareness, gathering of data and compliance with regulations.</p>
<p>4.4. The EESC believes that consumers require additional support in the form of awareness-raising about the dangers of harmful substances in buildings that can have negative effects on health and indoor air quality.</p> <p>1.5. The EESC recommends that the European Commission make the removal of harmful substances a priority when developing complimentary tools such as a digital building logbook and building renovation passport.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees on the importance of awareness raising and encourages Member States to provide information to the owners or tenants of buildings on energy performance improvements. Information could be included and provided by accessible and transparent advisory tools, such as buildings renovation passports, one-stop-shops, buildings logbooks, etc.</p>

<p>N°3 Economic, technological and social changes in advanced health services for the elderly (own-initiative opinion) EESC 2018/4518 - CCMI/165 543rd Plenary Session – May 2019 Rapporteur: Marian KRZAKLEWSKI (GR.II-PL) Co-rapporteur: Jean-Pierre HABER (FR) DG EMPL – Commissioner THYSSEN</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.2. The Committee regrets that the growing needs of older people have not been anticipated in the EU’s economic, social and health policies. [...]</p> <p>1.5. The EESC recommends that the right to dignified ageing be recognised as a fundamental human right. It therefore believes that every effort should be made to promote equal access to high-quality care and services.</p>	<p>The European Pillar of Social Rights, jointly proclaimed by the Parliament, the Council and the Commission in 2017, recognises the needs of older people. In particular, principle 15 recognises that everyone in old age has the right to resources that ensure living in dignity. Principles 16 and 18 focus on access to affordable and quality health and long-term care respectively. The Pillar offers orientation for future policy-making in times of quick change, aiming at launching a process of upward convergence between Member States.</p> <p>The Pension Adequacy Report, jointly prepared by the Social Protection Committee and the Commission, provides a periodical assessment (every three years) of current and future adequacy issues, and includes, to a lesser extent, access to health and long-term care⁴; in 2021 a focussed report on long-term care will be prepared.</p> <p>Based also on the above, in 2019 the Commission has proposed, within the European Semester, recommendations to</p>

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8084&furtherPubs=yes>

	22 Member States on issues such as pensions, health and long-term care ⁵ .
1.3. [...] demographic ageing should be measured in a dynamic and fine-tuned way, in particular by including variables such as gender, healthy life expectancy, environmental epidemiology, etc. A panel of demographers, sociologists and doctors should therefore be asked to put together a set of dynamic indicators of demographic ageing.	The Commission monitors these aspects of ageing, and on the basis of Eurostat's population projections, provides current assessments and medium-term scenarios of pension adequacy, including access to health and long-term care. Healthy life years monitored ⁶ and computed by Eurostat ⁷ .
1.4. [...] Given the wide range of activities relating to personal services for the elderly, these services are not considered to be a coherent economic sector within the EU. An overall EU-wide legal definition of personal services for elderly people should therefore be considered.	Long-term care developments in the Member States are monitored regularly through the European Semester. In this framework long-term care is understood as a range of services and assistance for people who, as a result of mental and/or physical frailty and/or disability over an extended period of time, depend on help with daily living activities and/or are in need of some permanent nursing care. The Commission is working with Member States via the Indicators Sub-Group of the Social Protection Committee ⁸ to develop a portfolio of indicators on long-term care, which should further improve the monitoring of national policy developments.
1.6. The EESC would like the EU digital strategy to take account of the continued use of paper, to make it easier for older people to understand the care they are receiving.	The Commission supports the development of digital accessibility, skills and literacy of older people to bridge the digital divide in this population group. The Commission has proposed to support digital literacy under the Digital Europe Programme ⁹ . This will build on existing actions such as the European Innovation

⁵https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2019-european-semester-country-specific-recommendations-council-recommendations_en

⁶https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Healthy_life_years_statistics

⁷<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

⁸<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=758>

⁹http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-4043_en.htm

	Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing ¹⁰ , through which the Commission supports projects that seek to train older adults in the use of digital tools ¹¹ .
1.7. The EESC recommends that housing and ageing policies focus on innovative housing schemes (such as modular flats, group housing, intergenerational and supportive housing, etc.), which should be the subject of sustained attention and benefit from a specific funding programme from the European Structural Funds.	The European Structural and Investment Funds support housing within their respective scope of action. Some examples include support for 'housing first' projects by the European Social Fund and for energy efficiency in housing by the European Regional Development Fund.
<p>1.9. The EU should consider establishing a coordinating platform for the activities of ageing observatories with responsibility for, inter alia, offering continuous training and disseminating good practices by developing a public database of the best products, devices, equipment and architecture aimed at making the daily lives of elderly people safer.</p> <p>The EESC would like the EU to provide more active support for R&D programmes on epigenetics and the human and social factors that characterise elderly people, by identifying the main molecular and biological mechanisms of ageing. It recommends setting up an EU technology platform that would help focus R&D on innovations that protect the health of older people and prevent poor health.</p>	<p>The European Innovation Partnership for Active and Healthy Ageing provides a communication and information hub for all actors involved in active and healthy ageing through Europe.¹² The Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe¹³ is a space for disseminating good practices and information on training and tools for practitioners. Although it covers adult learning in all its facets, it has a substantial number of items on themes such as older persons, health literacy, carers/caring staff, etc.</p> <p>The Commission is committed to further supporting research and innovation benefitting older adults, with a view to developing adapted care and treatments of the highest standards. This includes the investigation of mechanisms of healthy and diseased ageing as well as of the impact of socio-economic position of older adults and the quest for solutions enabling older adults living autonomous lives for the longest time possible.</p>

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/eip/ageing/home_en

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/eip/ageing/actiongroup/index/a3/achievements/training-older-adults_en

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/eip/ageing/home_en

¹³ <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en>

<p>1.12.1. Given the different approaches in the EU, the EESC recommends defining a common framework that includes the best of existing training programmes, using a similar approach to the one taken when establishing Directives 2005/36/EC of 7 September 2005 and 2013/55/EU on the recognition of professional qualifications.</p>	<p>In the face of heterogeneity of training courses and requirements in health services for the elderly in the EU work can be done to ensure recognition of qualifications in the sector across the Union. This could be facilitated by more referencing of the qualifications in the elderly care services to national qualifications frameworks and to the European Qualifications Framework. This would facilitate a common understanding of the skills required, including those involving the use of digital and other new technologies and help prepare common curricula for the sector. Work on the recognition of skills and qualifications of the many informal long-term care workers following the 2012 Council Recommendation on non-formal and informal learning would help to formalise the role of the many informal workers in the sector and lead to proper career prospects and structures.</p>
<p>1.13. In order to prepare and strengthen the mobility of workers and services for the elderly, a European foundation for the training of gerontological nurses, carers and care assistants should be established, not only on a technical level but also on a social and human level.</p>	<p>Some Member States have chosen to use the European Social Fund to invest in the training of carers and family members looking after the elderly, as well as ensuring their work-life balance. Furthermore, Spain ran a successful European Social Fund project to train immigrants to care for the elderly in their own homes¹⁴.</p> <p>The European Union has just established a European Labour Authority, a new agency aiming at providing adequate information and services to mobile workers and strengthening administrative cooperation between the Member States to enforce EU rules on labour mobility. Among other things, the European Labour Authority</p>

¹⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=67&langId=en&newsId=8123>

	will integrate the EURES job mobility portal ¹⁵ – a placement service and network geared to matching labour demand and supply across the EU.
1.15. The EESC recommends setting up a European communication policy aimed at developing greater intergenerational solidarity for the elderly, both economically and socially.	The 2012 European Year was devoted to active ageing and solidarity between generations. One of the objectives was to raise awareness of the importance of older persons' participation in society and the economy ¹⁶ . In this context, the Active Ageing Index ¹⁷ is still produced as a policy advocacy and monitoring tool. In 2014, the Social Protection Committee and the European Commission jointly prepared a report on the adequate social protection for long-term care needs in an ageing society. A new joint report is expected to be published in 2021.
2.6. Digital medical cards and medical records should be introduced in all Member States. They would lead to a better understanding of health levels and would facilitate the introduction of a specific care pathway for elderly people.	In its Recommendation on Electronic Health Records ¹⁸ , the Commission encourages Member States to introduce electronic health records and provide patients with access to their own health data. Moreover, the Commission supports, with funds from the Connecting Europe Facility ¹⁹ , the exchange of patient summaries and e-prescriptions between Member States. The first exchanges have started in 2019. Different EU funds – such as the European Regional Development Fund, Invest EU or Digital Europe Programme – can/will be able to support the digitalisation of healthcare systems.
2.8.1. The EU could be at the forefront of	The Commission has funded projects in

¹⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/homepage>

¹⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2129>

¹⁷ E.g., <https://statswiki.unece.org/display/AAI/Active+Ageing+Index+Home>

¹⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/recommendation-european-electronic-health-record-exchange-format>

¹⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/inea/en/connecting-europe-facility>

<p>launching an intergenerational time bank pilot scheme in a dozen European cities and/or regions based on the Japanese FK scheme. It could then propose mainstreaming the scheme, should it prove to be effective, to those Member States that show an interest in taking part.</p>	<p>this sense via the Employment and Social Innovation –EaSI– programme²⁰. Currently, a ‘Call for proposals on social innovation and national reforms: Long-term care’ is financed under the EaSI programme. The call for proposals aims to support the relevant actors in addressing the common Long Term Care (LTC) challenges²¹.</p>
<p>3.4 The EU could take the initiative by setting up a programme aimed at creating pilot age-friendly cities targeting diverse urban populations, from neighbourhoods in (very) large cities to semi-rural areas.</p>	<p>URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund to promote sustainable urban development, including age-friendly urban areas²².</p>
<p>4.4. [...] The EU could also introduce a proactive policy of assisting caregivers by suggesting that Member States adapt their social legislation.</p>	<p>The responsibility for the design and organisation of long-term care services lies with the Member States. The Commission provides support and guidance to Member States, for example by organising peer reviews and exchanges of good practice. The role of informal carers has been taken into consideration as it is central to developing and maintaining an effective care system.</p> <p>The Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers²³ introduces the right for workers to take 5 working days of carers’ leave per year to take care of relatives or persons living in the same household, in need of care or support due to a serious medical reason.</p>
<p>4.7. The above points [elderly training] should be the focus of a specific Erasmus+ programme. In addition, the EU Budgetary Authority should initiate and support discussions through a budget</p>	<p>The Erasmus+ database of projects²⁴ includes many projects financed to support elderly people, including initiatives to help them live independently at home for longer.</p>

²⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1081>

²¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=629&langId=en&callId=570&furtherCalls=yes>

²² <https://urbact.eu/ageing>

²³ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1311&langId=en>

²⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/>

<p>line on "practical experience".</p>	<p>Some good examples include an online course on home-based care and home-based education; well-being and healthy choices for older adults and their carers; and a curriculum for course in 24-hour caring.</p>
<p>5.3. [...] The EESC would like to see the Commission recommend that Member States ensure market transparency and quality performance from activities in the area of care and personal services for the elderly.</p>	<p>The European Pillar of Social Rights has put an emphasis on the quality of long-term care (principle 18²⁵). The Commission is looking into ways to help Member States implement this commitment.</p> <p>The Social Protection Committee and the Commission have planned a joint report to assess the provision of long-term care and analyse the growing private market for care services. Quality of care provision will be a central aspect of the report. The report is expected to be published in 2021.</p>
<p>5.5. [...] It would also be beneficial at this time for the Commission to carry out a broad study on the socio-economic outlook, addressing the issue of the viability of jobs in the area of personal services for the elderly in the EU. This study should consider different forms of public and private funding, propose investment mechanisms based on public-private partnerships and put forward various recommendations at both supranational and Member-State level. The exact form that this study will take should be outlined as part of a financial round table bringing together the key players responsible for care of the elderly.</p>	<p>The Commission has launched an open call for tender for a study on exploring the incidence and costs of informal long-term care in the European Union, which will bring first results at the end of 2020. While formal care services become more widespread, informal care remains an important part of long-term care provision in Europe. At the same time, the available evidence about the incidence of informal long-term care and the socio-economic characteristics of carers is incomplete and scattered. In addition, as there is little information about the associated cost, informal long-term care is often seen as a no-cost or very low cost way of providing care from the public budget perspective. This vision, however, fails to acknowledge the indirect costs of informal care, both for the individual and at</p>

²⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

	<p>aggregate level. This study aims to narrow this research gap and to support evidence-based policy design.</p> <p>Also, the Commission is implementing a pilot project funded by the European Parliament on 'Promotion of domestic workers cooperatives and service voucher schemes²⁶'. The project, with the overall budget of €750.000, will run over 18 months until May 2020. It aims to create a platform of personal and household services stakeholders at EU level and a single point of contact to support, guide and provide advice to public authorities in the development of their personal and household services policies.</p>
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²⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=629&langId=en&callId=536&furtherCalls=yes>

<p>N°4 Strengthening administrative cooperation for combating VAT fraud (e-commerce) COM(2018) 813 final EESC 2019/105 - ECO/487 543rd Plenary Session – May 2019 Rapporteur: Krister ANDERSSON (Gr.I-SE) DG TAXUD – Commissioner MOSCOVICI</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.1. , 3.1. - 3.2.: Objective of the proposal</p> <p>The EESC supports the Commission’s objective of establishing advanced operational collaboration between tax authorities with regard to VAT fraud in the e-commerce sector based on clear legislative provisions.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s broad support for the objectives of the proposals.</p>
<p>1.1. The EESC recommends that the response of the public authorities to sophisticated forms of VAT fraud continuously improve as regards the effectiveness of enforcement – using appropriate technologies such as, for example, artificial intelligence – and in terms of cooperation between the national authorities involved. Such authorities should work in synergy to guarantee a comprehensive and effective European answer to VAT fraud.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s recommendation. The Commission is working in close relationship with the EU’s network of Member State VAT fraud experts ‘Eurofisc’ to ensure Member States collaborate effectively when using the data available through the Central Electronic System of Payment Information.</p> <p>The Commission will also ensure the system has all the functionalities necessary to perform risk analysis based on Eurofisc liaison officials’ needs.</p>
<p>1.3.-1.5., 3.3., 3.7.-3.12.: Data Protection</p> <p>1.5 All the above-mentioned aspects are formally taken into consideration by the Commission proposal and that is surely a positive feature of the proposal itself. Having said that, the EESC requires that the Commission guarantees, in the future</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s comment. The Commission has ensured a high degree of protection regarding the data subject rights in its proposal. In that regard, the Commission only introduced restrictions that were proportionate and</p>

<p>everyday-practice of the system, full and effective implementation of all the safeguards for fundamental freedoms embedded in the proposal, thus striking an appropriate balance between robust enforcement of VAT rules and the necessary protection of individual rights and fundamental freedoms.</p>	<p>strictly necessary for the objective of the proposal. The Commission will continue to strive for compliance of the proposal with data protection rules during the Council negotiations, and subsequent implementation phase and daily management of the system.</p> <p>The proposal will be subject to periodic reporting from the Commission, which will cover the various aspect of the proposal, including the respect of data protection rules.</p>
<p>3.4.-3.6. : International cooperation</p> <p>Given the cross-border nature of VAT fraud and the increasing ease (facilitated by technology) with which illegal practices can rapidly be developed – an example is the speed with which money gained from VAT fraud can be moved – closer cooperation needs to be developed not only within the EU, but between authorities worldwide. Measures to fight VAT fraud can only succeed if countries’ tax administrations cooperate more closely in a spirit of mutual trust, which will require the exchange of relevant information to be able to perform their tasks.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s comment and is conscious of the need to establish closer administrative cooperation with third countries or territories. The Commission has already started working on this aspect, as testified by the EU-Norway agreement on administrative cooperation, combating fraud and recovery of claims in the field of value added tax.</p> <p>The Commission is also actively participating in discussions within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and with individual third countries in order to develop effective administrative cooperation measures.</p>
<p>3.13. With regard to the protection of European businesses operating in the e-commerce field, the EESC recommends that the new system be able to effectively safeguard and guarantee trade secrets both in the preliminary monitoring stage of the data collection and analysis and especially in the subsequent (hypothetical) stage of law enforcement. In this respect, the experience accrued by the European Commission in protecting intellectual</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s comment. Under no circumstances trade secrets will be disclosed under the new system and the proposal will have no impact either on the protection of intellectual property.</p> <p>The Commission will value how the experience accumulated in other fields can serve this system.</p>

property and industrial secrets within competition law cases could be useful as a comparative standard.	
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<p>N°5 VAT – certain requirements for payment service providers COM(2018) 812 final COM(2018) 819 final EESC 2019/106 - ECO/488 543rd Plenary Session – May 2019 Rapporteur: Krister ANDERSSON (Gr.I-SE) DG TAXUD – Commissioner MOSCOVICI</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>3.4 ., 3.1: Objectives</p> <p>The EESC supports the Commission’s objective to introduce further rules ensuring proportionality and enhancing legal certainty for traders operating electronic interfaces, who facilitate the supply of goods to consumers in the EU, especially when they are treated as deemed suppliers.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s broad support for the objectives of the proposals.</p>
<p>3.5 ., 3.2.: Purpose</p> <p>The EESC further supports the Commission’s purpose of establishing regular cooperation with payment providers based on clear legislative provisions. The promising results expected after the implementation of the new measures will ensure more resources both for national and the EU budgets, as well as a simplified level playing field for tax-abiding businesses.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s broad support for the purposes of the proposals.</p>
<p>3.6 ., 3.4., 3.6.-3.7: Approach</p> <p>The EESC notes that the regulatory approach embraced by the Commission is consistent with the principle of subsidiarity, given that e-commerce VAT fraud is common to all Member States and that European legislation is the most efficient tool to effectively support Member States in obtaining the</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s support on the approach adopted by the Commission and agrees with its conclusion.</p>

<p>information necessary to control VAT cross-border supplies. By contrast, several legislative initiatives carried out at the national level would be unsuitable to effectively address the issues related to VAT fraud and would result in an overcomplicated regulatory scenario.</p>	
<p>3.7 . , 3.9.-3.11: Data Protection</p> <p>However, at the same time, the EESC underlines that – from the consumer side – the proposal will imply new exchanges and the processing of VAT-related personal information, now regulated by the General Data Protection Regulation (“GDPR”)²⁷. In this respect, the EESC strongly underlines the importance of fully respecting the provisions of the GDPR and the need to limit the use of data to the sole – and strictly limited – objective of fighting VAT fraud in a manner that is cost-efficient and acceptable to the public at large.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s comment.</p> <p>The Commission proposal foresees restrictions to data subject rights that are proportionate and strictly necessary to fulfil the objectives of the proposal.</p> <p>The Commission will strive to ensure compliance of the proposal with data protection rules during the Council negotiations, and for the subsequent implementation phase and daily management of the system.</p>
<p>3.8 . , 3.12: Investments</p> <p>Finally, the EESC recommends that the Commission carry out adequate investments in physical assets and IT to ensure a functional central repository system, noting that the estimated costs of the project could be easily and swiftly covered by the expected results in terms of reducing VAT fraud and the VAT Gap.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s comment. The Commission will ensure that the system has all the functionalities necessary to store the data and perform risk analysis based on the needs of the liaison officials of the network of Member State VAT fraud experts ‘Eurofisc’.</p> <p>The Commission will also make sure the system benefits from the highest degree of protection from cyber-attacks at all stages of the exchange of information.</p>
<p>3.3. The Commission proposal follows an extensive consultation with several stakeholders and in particular with</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s acknowledgement of the various consultations held during the</p>

²⁷ General Data Protection Regulation - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32016R0679>

<p>payment service providers, other businesses representatives, and tax authorities of the Member State. The EESC commends the Commission's wide gathering of feedback and contributions from public and private players, which were certainly helpful in devising a sound and proportionate legislative proposal.</p>	<p>preparation of the proposal.</p>
<p>3.7. The threshold of 25 payments per quarter, equal to around EUR 10 000 per year based on an average EU e-commerce transaction value of EUR 95, appears reasonable and proportionate, also considering that, usually, the amount of EUR 10 000 already gives rise to VAT obligations in the Member States. Moreover, such an amount matches the EUR 10 000 threshold for intra-EU supplies introduced by the VAT e-commerce directive. Therefore, the minimum amount of EUR 10 000 seems appropriate in order to strike a balance between the protection of purely private transactions – that have nothing to do with VAT fraud – and the objective of setting up a viable monitoring system to reduce fraud. The EU Commission should, however, monitor developments to ensure the thresholds are appropriate over time and initiate changes if required.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee's comment. The Commission will evaluate the effectiveness of the threshold during the periodic evaluation.</p>
<p>3.11. The EESC strongly underlines the importance of fully respecting the provisions of the GDPR and the need to limit the use of data to the sole – and strictly limited – objective of fighting VAT fraud in a manner that is cost-efficient and acceptable to the public at large. On this point, the EESC calls on the Commission – when collecting feedback from Member States which is due to be completed by the end of 2024 – to carefully check whether the provisions of the GDPR have been</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee's comment. National data protection authorities will have a crucial role in the control of the respect of data protection rules by national tax administrations. The Commission will take into account data protection issues in the periodical evaluation of the system.</p>

fully complied with and whether any cases of such provisions being infringed in Member States can be identified and corrected.	
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<p>N°6 Coordinated Plan on Artificial Intelligence COM(2018) 795 final EESC 2018/5386 – INT/877 543rd Plenary Session – May 2019 Rapporteur: Tellervo KYLÄ-HARAKKA-RUONALA (GR.I-FI) DG CNECT - Commissioner GABRIEL</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.2. The EESC stresses that the development and uptake of AI must be inclusive as regards civil society actors, including enterprises, workers and consumers. The implementation of the AI strategy should thus focus due attention on how to make maximum use of the opportunities provided by AI for the whole of society.</p>	<p>Spreading the benefits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across the European focus area of the Commission work. All the activities proposed in the European Union AI strategy, including the investments in AI-related research and the use of AI in public administrations, are expected to ultimately benefit all Europeans.</p> <p>One of the key tools in this respect is the roll-out of the Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs), which will make AI expertise available in every region of the EU. DIHs are proposed for funding under the Digital Europe Programme. Furthermore, addressing the socioeconomic impacts of AI, for example related to the necessary re-skilling and upskilling of the European workforce, is a substantial element of the EU AI strategy.</p>
<p>1.3. The EESC endorses the initiatives to allocate more funding to AI-related innovation, infrastructure, education and training via EU financing instruments. The Committee also urges the Member States to take the necessary steps towards the common objectives.</p>	<p>The total investment in AI in the EU, both public and private, was estimated between €4 and 5 billion for 2017. The AI Coordinated plan with Member States targets to increase this investment to €7 billion per year for the years 2018-2020.</p> <p>The Commission has already increased its funding allocated to AI-oriented activities in H2020 to €1.5 billion in</p>

	<p>the period 2018-2020 and Member States are also reorienting existing budgets to AI related innovation. For the following decade (2020-2030) the Commission has called for an average investment of €20 billion annually.</p> <p>To contribute to reaching these targets, the 'Digital, Space and Industry' cluster of Horizon Europe identifies AI as one of its key areas of intervention. The Commission proposes for an overall investment of €15 billion under this cluster. The Commission has also proposed to earmark €2.5 billion for AI under the new Digital Europe Programme. The Coordinated Plan has further identified joint actions in a number of key areas including increasing investment.</p>
<p>1.5. The EESC finds it crucial to ensure the quality, availability, accessibility, interoperability and smooth flow of data in the single market, while securing data protection and privacy. The Committee urges the facilitation of access to public data and calls for supportive conditions for the establishment of European digital platforms.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees that action is needed to facilitate sharing of data held by public and private sectors by creating common European Data Spaces. Hence, the Commission will launch this year a Support Centre for data sharing, funded under Connecting Europe Facility programme, to propose model contracts for the sharing of private sector data, provide practical advice, best practices and methodologies for data sharing and data analytics to all European actors in the data economy.</p> <p>The Commission is also promoting the development of the Open Data ecosystem, both through legislative measures and through targeted funding under Connecting Europe Facility, Horizon 2020 and the future Digital Europe programme. The availability of public sector data will be significantly increased with the implementation of</p>

	<p>the recently adopted Directive (EU) 2019/1024 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on open data and the re-use of public sector information²⁸ (Open Data Directive), which will be supplemented by implementing and delegated acts aiming to create a pool of high value datasets from the public sector, available for re-use for free and via application programming interfaces (APIs). The Commission is also funding the relevant infrastructure for easy access to open data from all Member States in one place – the European Open Data Portal.</p>
<p>1.9. The EESC stresses that the development and use of AI must take place in line with EU values and in compliance with consumer, labour and company related legislation. Civil society representatives and the social partners need to be involved in the preparation of AI-related policies and measures. Providing knowledge about AI is also necessary to enhance people’s trust.</p>	<p>Developing ethical guidelines for human-centric AI is a key policy for the Commission. It has tasked a high-level expert group on AI with representatives from, among others, civil society, trade unions and Non-governmental organizations with drafting such guidelines. The guidelines have identified seven key requirements and put forward an assessment list to help check whether these requirements are fulfilled. A pilot phase, from June to December 2019, will help stakeholders test the practical implementation of the guidelines in real-life so they can be further fine-tuned, if need be. In parallel, stakeholders have the opportunity to be involved in the preparation of AI-related policies and measures through the AI Alliance, which currently has more than 2700 members.</p>
<p>1.10. As AI must serve society at large and consider economic, social and</p>	<p>The Commission has welcomed the seven key requirements set out in the</p>

²⁸ OJ L 172, 26.6.2019, p. 56–83.

<p>environmental aspects simultaneously, the EESC suggests that the EU adopt the framework of sustainable development as a guiding approach for future AI developments. The EESC also calls for the sustainable implementation of AI by individual organisations, including proper information and consultation practices.</p>	<p>Ethics Guidelines published by the High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence on 8 April. Key requirement VI states that sustainability and ecological responsibility of AI systems should be encouraged. These guidelines are meant to apply to all organisations.</p>
<p>2.8. As AI must serve society at large, the EESC suggests that the EU take the framework of sustainable development as a guiding approach for future AI developments. Sustainable development with its three dimensions requires policies and measures that strengthen the economy and generate well-being for society, while also helping decrease climate and environmental impacts.</p>	<p>Sustainable development is a key point for future AI developments. As an example, the Commission, through the European Processor Initiative, is promoting European low-power technologies that have the potential to strengthen the economy through the development of state of the art European hardware while at the same time decrease the environmental impact of AI infrastructure.</p>
<p>2.11. Given the huge societal challenges and the extremely rapid development of technologies, the EU should make full use of AI in predictive analysis regarding sectors such as healthcare and transport, including the issue of labour. Moreover, the EU should anticipate the opportunities inherent in disruptive technologies such as quantum technology.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees that the EU should anticipate the opportunities given by quantum technologies. In October 2018, the Commission launched a Quantum Flagship with a €130 million budget under Horizon 2020. The Quantum Flagship project seeks to address classically hard optimization problems of relevance for AI in fields such as image recognition and deep learning, flight scheduling, drug discoveries for e.g. personalised medicine, and for the design of new materials. In order to achieve this, in accordance with the common understanding reached between the Council and the Parliament on 27 march 2019, the areas currently supported under H2020 in the framework of Future Emerging Technologies Flagships (FET Flagships), including the quantum Flagship project will continue to be</p>

	funded under Horizon Europe ²⁹ .
<p>3.7. Competencies and skills play a significant role as an enabler of innovation and AI-related business development. There is demand not only for specific "AI skills" but also for skills to apply AI in specific businesses, including entrepreneurial skills. As new talent for business and industry is best promoted through research projects, the EESC urges the EU and Member States to ensure adequate funding for this kind of research.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees that AI-related skills are a key enabler for innovation, not just in terms of supporting AI specialists but ensuring a deeper understanding across industry more broadly.</p> <p>In order to support the identification of these specific AI skills a dedicated action has been introduced within the Horizon 2020 call for a European Network of Artificial Intelligence Excellence Centres. One aim is to support academia, in cooperation with industry, via organisation of workshops, and other appropriate approaches, to identify AI courses and modules that could be integrated in non-ICT education programmes, and corresponding mechanisms to foster such integration.</p>
<p>3.9. The EESC calls for increased investment in the technology and infrastructure needed by AI and AI-based applications, including high-performance computers and 5G mobile networks, together with measures to improve cybersecurity. Moreover, the EU should be in the frontline in the development of quantum technology, especially quantum computing and quantum communications.</p>	<p>In addition, the EU is exploring the possibility of building a pan European quantum communication infrastructure (QCI). In this context, 8 Member States (BE, NL, LU, DE, ES, MT, IT and HU) have already signed a Declaration on a Cooperation Framework on Quantum Communication Infrastructure.</p>
<p>3.13. The EESC calls for an enabling framework that stimulates innovation and avoids hampering development with overly detailed rules and requirements, while ensuring the trustworthiness of AI. The EESC also invites the Commission to assess together with the industries and stakeholders</p>	<p>Stakeholders will have the opportunity to get involved in the piloting phase of the assessment list of the ethical guidelines and provide feedback, thus contributing to shaping the future policy approach.</p>

²⁹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/38902/st07942-en19.pdf> : see recital 17a)

<p>concerned whether there are pieces of regulation that might hinder the development or uptake of trustworthy AI, including the review of the fitness of competition law.</p>	
<p>4.2. Given that AI potentially has considerable implications for people’s everyday life as consumers, as well as for the development of jobs and the work of the future, it is vital to provide people with the necessary knowledge and skills to be prepared for the changes. The social partners have an essential role in anticipating the changes in work, supporting the development of digital skills and enhancing the employability of workers in the labour market.</p>	<p>The Digital Education Action Plan, adopted by the Commission in January 2018, includes an action on the use of Artificial Intelligence and analytics in predicting future skills. This is a two-fold action that includes a pilot on skills gap analysis for the energy storage industry conducted by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology’s Knowledge and Innovation Community InnoEnergy. The second part of the action, led by the Commission, includes a study on predicting future skills needs and skills shortages.</p>
<p>4.3. The deployment of AI implies considerable changes in the demand for skills. Due to the profound and rapid nature of AI’s development, both immediate and long-term needs for training and education must be identified. Education must respond to the needs of both basic and advanced digital skills. In addition to ensuring basic AI literacy, general skills should provide people with the ability to apply AI in creating and using innovative solutions in their everyday life and work, associated with for example human-robot cooperation systems.</p> <p>4.4. The EESC urges Member States to respond to the new skills demand by adapting their education systems. The EESC also stresses the importance of cooperation between governments, education institutions, the social partners, consumer</p>	<p>In the Artificial Intelligence coordinated Action Plan, Member States have agreed to include the skills dimension in the national AI strategies, stating that the ‘strategies should address the whole cycle of formal education, vocational training, higher education and post-docs. At the same time, more focus should be put on life-long learning, in order to allow also people already in employment to acquire and improve their skills related to AI’. The implementation of the coordinated action plan is ongoing, Member States representatives have already met on several occasions and they are reporting about ongoing national initiatives aimed at fostering AI skills. The Commission is supporting Member States in this exercise, by gathering inputs, analysing the initiatives, selecting and sharing best</p>

<p>organisations and other civil society organisations concerned in both designing and implementing new education and training programmes, to enhance skills relevant in the labour market and in society at large. AI should also be used in evaluating skills needs as well as in organising and providing content for education and training.</p> <p>4.5. Reforms are needed in curricula from primary schools to universities. A strong base in science, technology, engineering and mathematics is needed, while recognising that both the development and use of AI require wide competencies. This highlights the significance of education in social sciences and the arts, among others.</p> <p>4.6. In addition to the development of basic education, there is an evident need for the upskilling and reskilling of people, including teachers. Lifelong and ongoing learning is a necessity for everyone to cope with current and future developments. Learning will more and more take place in the context of work and be based on individual ambitions.</p> <p>4.7. The EESC believes that investment in education and training should be a central part of national AI strategies, and that good practices of national initiatives should be shared at the European level. The EESC calls for increased allocation of EU funds to support the necessary reforms and new initiatives in education and training.</p>	<p>practices and providing skills intelligence insights.</p> <p>The Joint Research Centre is carrying out an exercise aimed at evaluating national investment in AI through the AI Watch, this include as well investment to develop AI skills.</p> <p>The Commission encourages Member States to explore how AI could be incorporated into the curricula of programmes for secondary and tertiary education. The Commission will issue a report on this by early 2020.</p> <p>The Commission supports Member States in the development of digital skills through a variety of current and future funding mechanisms, for instance: Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, European Social Fund, Digital Europe programme, but also e.g. under the EAFRD and particularly the EIP-AGRI. In particular, the EU, the Commission has proposed a dedicated budget of €700 million within the Digital Europe programme. In this context, support will be provided for the development of new specialised education programmes and training courses in cutting-edge technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence. Training opportunities are proposed to be designed in cooperation with excellence and competence centres developing and deploying digital to ensure that the learning content is up to date with the latest technological developments. These specialised training opportunities will be opened to students, job-seekers as well as people already in employment, who are willing to become digital specialists.</p>
<p>5.4. If considered within the framework of</p>	<p>Environmental aspects will be a key</p>

sustainable development, the ethical aspects under discussion mainly include human-related aspects and thus fall within the social dimension of sustainability. In addition, AI should consider environmental aspects such as those related to climate change and natural resources, including the sustainable use of energy and raw materials and the avoidance of premature obsolescence of products, among others. Furthermore, economic sustainability requires that AI solutions are economically sound, i.e. productive, profitable and competitive.

application area of the European Open Science Cloud. The integration of AI in environmental studies is one of the priorities which Member states are encouraged to include in the skills dimensions of their national AI strategies. Similarly, the Commission intends to promote the use of geo-observation data such as Copernicus to foster services for the environment.

<p>N°7 European philanthropy: an untapped potential (exploratory opinion requested by the Romanian Presidency) EESC 2018/5416 – SOC/611 543rd Plenary session – May 2019 Rapporteur: Petru SORIN DANDEA (GR.II-RO) DG ECFIN – Commissioner MOSCOVICI</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.2. The EESC calls on the Member States to establish an enabling environment for philanthropy in line with EU freedoms and fundamental rights, which encourage philanthropic and citizen action, private giving to public benefit causes and the creation of philanthropic organisations, as well as ensuring that national and EU security measures are risk-based, proportionate and evidence-based but also promote transparency in philanthropic action.</p>	<p>The Commission attaches great importance to the existence of a vibrant civil society and will continue to provide and encourage concrete support including capacity building and funding. Moreover, in its role of guardian of the Treaties, the Commission has not shied away from taking action against measures adopted at national level in breach of European Union rules, including of Treaty provisions on the free movement of capital.</p>
<p>1.4. As the free flow of capital is at the core of the EU's single market, the EESC considers that ensuring the legal and practical application of this fundamental freedom coupled with the non-discrimination principle to facilitate cross-border philanthropic giving and investments should be a priority for the EU and the Member States. Supranational legal forms to facilitate philanthropic engagement should also be considered.</p>	<p>The opinion seems to refer mainly to donations in money and in kind to non-profit entities. Donations are a capital movement covered by the Treaty rules on free movement of capital, that give rise to rights both for the donor and the recipient of the donation. In its role of guardian of the Treaty, the Commission may take action to tackle national measures unduly restricting cross-border capital movements.</p> <p>The idea of 'supranational legal forms to facilitate philanthropic engagement' does</p>

<p>6.3. Facilitate cross-border philanthropy: the free flow of capital is at the core of the EU's single market. Ensure the legal and practical application of this fundamental freedom coupled with the non-discrimination principle to facilitate cross-border philanthropic activity. Cross-border investments by philanthropic organisations are key. Supranational legal forms to facilitate philanthropic engagement should also be considered.</p>	<p>not seem to relate to capital movements.</p>
<p>1.5. The EU could leverage the impact of private resources for the common good by introducing financial instruments, for example via the 2018 Invest EU programme, that act as a catalyst for co-granting with philanthropy, that stimulate co-investments and more social impact investments and that provide guarantee tools to reduce the financial risks of mission-related investments by philanthropic organisations. It should also facilitate engagement in social innovation.</p>	<p>Stimulating social investments are a key priority for the European Union in order to build a more inclusive and fairer Union. Financial instruments and budgetary guarantees are important tools for mobilising private capital and channelling support to strategic policy areas delivering on the European Common Good. The blending of resources to support the establishment of adapted tools for social entrepreneurship, social infrastructure and social impact finance are also important.</p> <p>The role of foundations and philanthropic organisations in stimulating social investment and developing Europe's social finance ecosystem is well recognised. Thus, philanthropic organisations have been highlighted as important stakeholders in the framework of the InvestEU programme, and specifically in the design and implementation of the Social Investments and Skills Window.</p> <p>The Commission is currently reviewing the possibility to develop several mechanisms to help capital flow where it is most needed, through collaboration within and across sectors, and the synergetic use of European Union and private resources. These include: guarantee mechanisms to</p>

	<p>de-risk the sustainable investments of foundations from their endowments, and blended solutions for co-investments with foundations. The latter aim at catalysing social innovation, venture philanthropy activity and patient capital provision to key social challenges. In addition, collaborative platform solutions to develop partnerships and capacity building, sector transparency and investment pipelines are being considered. These mechanisms would interact with and leverage the development of sustainable finance and investment taxonomies.</p>
<p>4.1. To unleash its full potential, philanthropy and its organised forms need an enabling environment at EU and Member State level. This includes a favourable social culture and legal environment stimulating philanthropic engagement. The 2018 study Enlarging the Space for European Philanthropy by Oonagh Breen revealed that while companies can, within the EU single market, move freely across borders for profit capital flows without undue restrictions, this is not yet the case for philanthropic organisations and philanthropic flows. In addition, worrying developments regarding the introduction of foreign funding restrictions in some EU countries and more demands from the security agenda are challenging the operating space.</p>	<p>Capital flows for philanthropic purposes are in principle free. Yet, restrictions on the free movement of capital can be justified if necessary and proportionate to the protection of legitimate public interests (e.g. on public security grounds).</p> <p>If the Commission identifies unjustified restrictions on the free flows of donations, it may take enforcement action, including launching infringement proceedings, to tackle them (see for instance the Court case introduced by the Commission against Hungary).</p> <p>Any restriction to capital movements both intra-EU and to/from third countries shall be justified and proportionate.</p>
<p>4.3. In addition we see restrictions on foreign funding, whereas philanthropic funding should flow freely according to the EU principle of free movement of capital and on occasion, security policies at national and EU level challenge the space. While the security agenda is of great importance and a</p>	<p>The Anti-Money Laundering Directive provides that transactions are subject to customer due diligence. This process does not act as an impediment to transactions being carried out, as long as certain basic information is established, for example the identity of the person, the source of funds</p>

<p>joint concern, caution is needed when it comes to potential unintended consequences for the sector. Policy measures must be risk-based and proportionate.</p>	<p>etc.</p>
<p>6.4. Co-grant and co-invest for the public good and for a stronger civil society: facilitate engagement in social innovation tools and the establishment of strategic partnerships with philanthropic actors. The EU could leverage the impact of private resources for the common good by introducing financial instruments that facilitate co-granting and stimulate co-investments by philanthropic organisations.</p>	<p>The Commission has reiterated at numerous occasions the importance of supporting the voluntary and philanthropic sector as a critical part of social economy, civil society and public life more broadly, thus vital for a vibrant European democracy³⁰.</p> <p>The Commission also recognises philanthropic actors have a potential in contributing innovative solutions given their activities and ethos of working for empowerment and active citizenship. This includes aspects such as quality media and journalism, responsible information consumption and public debate. Acknowledging their potential to bring innovation into public policy, service and common good delivery, the Commission is exploring different models of partnership as ways of scaling impact to address social, environmental and cultural challenges at European and global levels.</p> <p>A first focus is on engaging philanthropic capital and expertise under the InvestEU programme for supporting an integrated financial ecosystem for social impact to deliver on the common good. Supporting actions may be explored, such as a network of Social Impact challenge platforms across Europe to enable stakeholders from business, government and civil society to collectively respond to disruptive challenges of our time; and the establishment of Social Outcomes Fund(s)</p>

³⁰ Communication from the Commission on promoting the role of voluntary organisations and foundations in Europe, COM (1997) 241 final.

	<p>pooling philanthropic, public and commercial resources to support outcomes-based mechanisms, innovation, preventative approaches, experimenting and replicating/scaling solutions for better social outcomes across Europe, in key areas (e.g. youth employment, skills, social inclusion/ migration, homelessness, and empowerment of vulnerable groups).</p>
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<p>N° 8 Communication updating the 2012 Bio-economy Strategy COM (2018) 673 final EESC 2018/6204 – NAT/758 543rd Plenary session – May 2019 Rapporteur: Mindaugas MACIULEVIČIUS (Gr. III-LT) Co-rapporteur: Udo HEMMERLING (Gr. I-DE) DG RTD – Commissioner MOEDAS</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>1.3 The EESC welcomes the update of the 2012 Bioeconomy Strategy which is an important step in the right direction. There is a global demand for sustainable, resource-efficient bio-based products. However, in spite of the significant progress made in the new version, some of the measures included still need to be put into practice.</p> <p>The opinion provides conclusions and recommendations, highlighting the need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to tackle major challenges (climate change, population), to find substitutes to fossil fuels and better valorise the use of bio-resources; • for better awareness of our consumption of bio-resources and the need to engage consumers through regular advice and information and market creation measures (public procurement) for bio-based products; • to put into practice some of the measures included in the updated strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → to setup individual, flexible consulting or advisory services to help agri-food SMEs to launch long-term innovative projects, in addition to access to financial instruments. 	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee opinion on the updated Bioeconomy Strategy and Action Plan as adopted by the Commission on 11 October 2018. The Commission notes that the proposed recommendations are very much in line mainly with the updated Strategy's action line 1 and 2 respectively, but less so with action line 3 which deals with biodiversity and the ecological boundaries of the bioeconomy.</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ to support the model of public-private cooperation by a range of measures and instruments (CAP) and give attention to primary producers;→ to incorporate research, innovation and bioeconomy into a long-term strategy;→ to continue the education and training of workers and primary producers and facilitate knowledge exchange;→ to promote the circular economy and inter-sectorial, territorial linkages;→ all Member States to mainstream a bioeconomy strategy into their policies and programmes involving stakeholders;→ for a global pricing system for carbon emission and sustainability criteria in bioeconomy. | |
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<p>N°9 Global data collection system for ship fuel oil consumption data COM(2019) 38 final EESC 2019/1686 - NAT/772 543rd Plenary session – May 2019 Rapporteur: Constantine CATSAMBIS (GR.I-EL) DG CLIMA – Commissioner ARIAS CAÑETE</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>2.3. In its assessment for the proposed amendments, the Commission should take into consideration the fact that the global shipping industry is fully committed to reducing CO2 emissions [...].</p>	<p>The Commission agrees with the need to take into consideration the recent progress made at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in the area of greenhouse gas emissions, in particular the adoption of the initial IMO Strategy on greenhouse gases in 2018. However, the Commission also acknowledges the fact that this strategy is yet to be implemented. Despite the declared commitment by the International Maritime Organisation, its recent negotiations moved at slow pace. Once significant progress on the implementation of the Strategy has been achieved in the International Maritime Organisation, this will certainly be duly considered.</p>
<p>2.5. The EESC considers that the proposed partial alignment will lead to burdensome and ineffective double monitoring and reporting requirements, since reporting obligations remain under two different systems: a regional (European) and a global (UN IMO) one.</p>	<p>While it is important that rules applying to international shipping are global and uniformly applied, the Commission disagrees with this statement and recalls that the aim of the proposal is to facilitate the harmonious implementation of the two monitoring, reporting and verification systems, and therefore reduce administrative burden for companies. As explained in its impact assessment, while a further alignment of the two systems could lead to more reduction in administrative burden, it would also</p>

	<p>significantly undermine the expected environmental, social and economic benefits of the Regulation (EU) 2015/757³¹ and jeopardise its key objectives. The role of the European Union in moving forward environmental ambition should be duly recognised. In the case of the shipping monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) Regulation - as well as of sulphur regulation for example - the EU endeavours in striking the right balance between reducing the administrative burden, whilst achieving the policy objectives of the original EU Regulation on shipping monitoring, reporting and verification.</p>
<p>2.7. The Commission wishes to publish detailed (and commercially sensitive) data about individual ships visiting EU/EEA ports, which may be misused. This could result in the unfair penalisation of ships, and could also distort competition and bring major competitive disadvantages for EU shipowners in the global shipping market and for ships calling at EU ports.</p>	<p>The Commission disagrees and recalls that the publication of information is already a requirement under the current regulation (Article 21 of Regulation (EU) 2015/757). The collection of data on a per ship basis and their publication in a transparent form are key to contributing to the removal of market barriers, in particular those related to the lack of information about ship efficiency.</p>
<p>2.8. It would be desirable to use the existing UN IMO mechanisms of the Flag State Administrations for enforcement and implementation, under a single and functional global fuel consumption data collection system.</p>	<p>The Commission disagrees and recalls that relying on a single global fuel consumption data collection system in line with the current International Maritime Organisation system would put at risk the key objectives of the Regulation (EU) 2015/757. Also, previous experiences with IMO databases like Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS) for example indicate that they</p>

³¹ Regulation (EU) 2015/757 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 on the monitoring, reporting and verification of carbon dioxide emissions from maritime transport, and amending Directive 2009/16/EC (Text with EEA relevance); OJ L 123, 19.5.2015, p. 55–76.

	<p>seemingly have difficulties to become sufficiently populated by parties in an early stage. This causes delays which cannot be afforded due to the urgency of acting on climate change and on the basis of a robust set of data to allow for inter-comparison of efforts considering the ambition of the exercise.</p>
<p>3.1. Under Article 21(f), the annual average fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions per distance travelled and cargo carried on voyages still have to be made publicly available by the European Commission. This seems to be in conflict with the new amended provision of the proposal in Article 9(1)(f) (new) stating that any monitoring (on a per voyage basis) of cargo carried shall be voluntary...</p>	<p>The Commission would like to clarify that, from its point of view, the proposed voluntary monitoring of cargo carried would <i>de facto</i> impact the calculation of the annual average fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions per total transport work.</p>
<p>3.2. The newly introduced description seems not to be precise enough to regulate the relation between an "old" and "new" company. In order to have maximum legal clarity, the new owner could be legally liable from the day when the completion of the change takes effect.</p>	<p>The Commission would like to clarify that companies have to comply with the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2015/757 as soon as their ships fall into the scope of the Regulation, as defined in Article 2 of the same Regulation.</p>

N°10 Social economy enterprises' contribution to a more cohesive and democratic Europe (exploratory opinion requested by the Romanian presidency)
EESC 2018/5559 – INT/875
543rd Plenary Session – May 2019
Rapporteur: Alain COHEUR (Gr.III-BE)
DG GROW – Commissioner BIENKOWSKA

Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential

European Commission position

The follow-up given by the Commission to this opinion will be included in a subsequent report.

<p>N°11 Gender equality issues EESC 2018/4753 - SOC/610 543rd Plenary Session – May 2019 Rapporteur: Indrė VAREIKYTĖ (Gr.III-LT) DG JUST – Commissioner JOUROVÁ</p>	
<p>Points of the European Economic and Social Committee opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>2.3. Adopt an integrated and ambitious five-year EU gender equality strategy, spanning the term of the next Commission and EP and promote a strong commitment to gender equality by the EU institutions, governments, civil society and the private sector to holistically tackle all aspects of equality effectively at the same time and with measures of equal impact.</p>	<p>The Commission is currently taking stock of the progress under the Strategic engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019, and also identifying gaps and reflecting on the priorities for the next five years. The aim is to present the incoming Commission with a robust and ambitious policy framework for gender equality. Any decision in that respect will be taken by the next Commission.</p>
<p>Launch a package on care services to boost the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and revise the Barcelona targets on childcare.</p>	<p>Indeed, this fits into a more holistic and comprehensive life course approach, based on the Work-Life Balance Initiative from April 2017, including a focus on childcare and long term care, as an important tool to allow for women to participate in the labour market. The Commission adopted a report on the Barcelona objectives in May 2018. Childcare and long term care are also considered in the context of the European Semester, with recommendations to Member States with regard to availability and affordability of care services, as well as funding through European Structural Investment Funds, such as the European Social Fund Plus and the European Regional Development Fund. The Commission proposal for a Council recommendation on high quality early childhood education and care services was adopted by the Council in May 2019, including a quality framework. The Social Protection Committee is discussing the</p>

	<p>development of indicators on long-term care and on childcare, from a social inclusion angle. Eurofound prepared a mapping report on out-of-school care. Through the current Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme and the future Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme, projects could be funded on actions related to economic empowerment of women and work-life balance for parents and carers, for instance to tackle gender roles including with regard to care.</p>
<p>6.4. Add online harassment and mobbing of women to the definition of illegal hate speech. EU-wide indicators for comparable data collection on violence against women should be established, as this would assist with developing effective policy measures.</p>	<p>In response to calls for action from several stakeholders, the Commission is evaluating whether additional measures could be taken to step up efforts to tackle online violence and abuse against women, using the positive experiences from the ‘Code of Conduct on racist and xenophobic hate speech’, launched in 2016, as an inspiration. The Commission has initiated cooperation with IT platforms to combat online violence and harassment. The Commission plans to continue this work, as there is great potential and momentum to collaborate with the platforms and civil society organisations on tackling online violence.</p>