



European Economic  
and Social Committee

January 2020



# Diversity Europe Newsletter



**Diversity Europe  
Group's Conference**  
*on 6 December 2019*

**Agenda for Europe:  
towards 2025**

# Foreword

**Arno METZLER**

*President of the Diversity Europe Group*



## **Taking the EU into the new decade!**

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a stimulating and fruitful year and I hope that you will all find interest and reward in your respective activities.

In December of last year, the EC proposed a European Green Deal. The first discussion on the subject at the European Parliament earlier this month, clearly illustrated the extent of the challenge of effectively communicating the strategy.

This is where I see an obvious role for or-

ganised civil society and for the Diversity Europe Group of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), in particular. We have strong linkages to all those who will be affected: civil society, consumers, socio-professional and economic organisations. As the EC rightfully claims, every industry and country will be part of the transformation. We also feel that we have a responsibility to explain the context and the objectives of the European Green Deal to citizens and civil society, as well as communicating on the linkages between the policies and groups concerned.

The worst-case scenario for the new strategy, would be one where the EU is blamed for falsifying or misleading its citizens. The Diversity Europe Group will continue to remind the rest of the EU that the support of ordinary citizens is fundamental for the future of the EU and that this deserves a great deal more attention than it currently receives. But we at the EESC will continue to energetically fulfil our role as the intermediary between citizens and the European Institutions and we will extend our activities to help implement the European Green Deal.

2020 is also the year when our British colleagues will leave the EU and the EESC. We will say 'good bye' but not 'farewell' to you. Despite the political decisions which were made and irrespective of the motivations, the UK will remain a key European partner and a friend to all of us! I wish you well and your important contribution to the EU and the EESC will certainly not be forgotten!

**Arno METZLER**

President of the Diversity Europe Group

# This issue:

**Agenda for Europe: towards 2025** p. 3

**COP25 – civil society cannot and will not wait to start the fair transition** p. 4

**NGO transparency in the Netherlands** p. 5

**From development to partnership** p. 6

**2019 EESC civil society prize –empowerment of women and gender equality** p. 6

**MAJALAT Initiative – New Opportunities for Civil Society in the South of the Mediterranean** p. 7

**Civil Society for Rights and Equality - Towards a Democracy that Gives a Voice to All** p. 8

**The Western Balkans: a clear roadmap for the way forward** p. 8

**Supporting the institutionalisation of civil dialogue in Poland** p. 9

**Visit of the Korean Delegation to the EESC** p. 9

**Overview of our Members' work at the EESC** p. 10

**Group III members working on new opinions** p. 11

**Meeting with delegation group from the Malta Federation of Professional Associations** p. 12

# News from the Diversity Europe Group

## Agenda for Europe: towards 2025

On **6 December 2019** the **Diversity Europe Group** organised a **thematic debate** with high level speakers from the **European Commission**, on the topic **'Agenda for Europe: towards 2025'**. With the new EC taking up office on 1 December, the event provided the opportunity for a **timely insight into the Institution's five-year agenda**. The meeting also provided the occasion for the **EC representatives to comment on the EESC resolution on the 2020 work programme of the European Commission**, which was adopted by the Committee at its October plenary.

Following introductory remarks by **Mr Metzler, President of the Diversity Europe Group**, the floor was taken by **Mr Ribbe, rapporteur for the resolution on 'The EESC's contribution to the Commission's 2020 work programme and beyond'**. The rapporteur highlighted the key elements of the resolution, calling on the EC to focus on **climate change, digitalization, the rule of law and globalization, within a new system of EU governance, which strengthens participation by organised civil society**.

**Interventions** were made by **EC representatives** of the Secretariat General, DG Environment, DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship & SMEs, DG Trade, the European External Action Service, DG Justice & Consumers, as well as DG Agriculture & Rural Development.

Of particular interest was the reaction of the representative of the EC Secretariat General to the EESC resolution, who commented that the **Committee's**

**document largely matches forthcoming EC priorities**. He added that the **Diversity Europe Group is a powerful group, given its diversity and its key role in defending European values and in communicating Europe**.

The representative of the Secretariat General also noted that the **EC work programme for 2020 will focus on deliverables for the first 100 days**. Moreover, he noted that the **EC Vice-President Mr Šefčovič hopes to integrate parts of the resolutions of the EESC and of the Committee of the Regions, into the forthcoming State of the Union Speech** of the new EC President, Ms Ursula von der Leyen.

With regard to the **Conference on the Future of Europe**, that the EC President has pledged to establish, the EC representative explained that there are ongoing discussions with the European Parliament, the Council, the EESC and the Committee of the Regions, in order to **ascertain how to best consult citizens and give a new impulse to European construction**.

In response, **Mr Metzler stressed the key role of the Committee in galvanising participation in the elections**

**to the European Parliament**. The President added that the EESC has existed since 1958 and that there should **not be a replication of roles at the EU level**.

The discussions with the representatives of **individual EC Directorate Generals were very stimulating and enriching**. Overall, they demonstrated that the EESC has repeatedly been at the **forefront of EU policy**, through its **valuable contributions to fundamental and topical EU topics** such as the **circular economy, EU-Africa relations, consumer policy, trade relations, agriculture & rural development**, as well as **SMEs**.



# REFLEXION CORNER

## COP25 – civil society cannot and will not wait to start the fair transition

**Lutz Ribbe (DE)**

Director for the Department of Nature Conservation Policy

Environmental foundation EuroNatur  
Member of the Diversity Europe Group

As in previous years, the EESC was present at COP25, the **annual Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change**, which this year took place in Madrid, Spain, and which was concluded on 15th December 2019. Unfortunately, countries failed to agree on many of the expected outcomes, including rules to set up a global carbon trading system and a system to channel new finance to countries facing the impacts of climate change.

During the second week of the COP25, the European Commission came forward with its **European Green Deal - a top priority and a new growth strategy for the EU**. A strong commitment on climate neutrality by 2050 and a clear ambition in EU's contribution for the COP26 in Glasgow are necessary if we are serious about dealing with the climate crisis.

**Mr Ribbe** participated in the EESC delegation and shares some of his thoughts on the event with us:

"The world community of States does not have the strength nor the will to solve the climate problem. This is a very similar situation as we know from the EU (there is no clarity about the climate targets; after the European Council of December 19<sup>th</sup> even though with the new Commission some movement can be expected). Even in Germany there are very different views of how quickly and with which instruments we should proceed in climate protection.



I ask myself why we as "observers" of these processes are so keen on agreements. We know how quickly these political agreements will be broken again. These promises aimed at "tomorrow" and "the day after tomorrow". In my opinion, **we should work much more intensively on replicating actions that have already brought positive results: e.g. specific climate protection activities in Denmark. Such actions help demonstrate that solutions work, even without international agreements.**

Why do we defend so strongly the 1.5°C target of Paris, when already at 1.2°C warming the damage is immeasurable? The climate framework convention of 1992 already called for the stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.

Why is no one bothered by the fact that this promise / qualitative goal was broken and replaced by a much too high quantitative goal, which will probably also not be kept? Why is the

COP not discussing how to reduce environmentally harmful subsidies? When the phase out was promised already at the Rio Conference in 1992?

**For me, the consequence should be: if you do not act on climate protection, we do no "deals" with you! That means: no Mercosur agreement, as long as Brazil stands in the way!**

Finally, **climate protection must be communicated differently in order to gain people's support.** If citizens are worried because the energy prices are rising, driving is becoming more expensive and flying may be prohibited, they will resist rather than support. **That means climate protection has to be sexy, and there are already many good examples that we can use to make it so!"**

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)

# NGO transparency in the Netherlands

**Jan DIRX (NL)**

Liaison officer for the Groene11  
(Green11)

Dutch nature and environmental  
organisations

Member of the Diversity Europe Group

In various EU countries, **NGOs are under pressure from their national governments**. Their work is made more difficult and their financing is stopped or prevented. One of the arguments used for this (rightly or wrongly) is the accusation that NGOs lack openness and transparency. In the **Netherlands**, the NGO sector has been able to **build up a high degree of transparency**. Below is an overview of how the sector has achieved this, and can perhaps serve as inspiration for NGOs in other EU countries.

The **term “NGO” is also not clearly defined in the Netherlands**. It often refers to nature, environment, animal welfare and development organisations. **“Charity” is a more frequently-used term**. This includes the above-mentioned nature, environmental, animal welfare and development organisations, but also, for example, health or cultural organisations, etc.

There are **three systems for transparency among charities**. These **schemes are voluntary**, but many charities and certainly the larger ones are affiliated with one or more of these schemes.

## ANBI arrangement

Many charities would like to acquire the so-called **ANBI status** (ANBI is the abbreviation for a public benefit organisation, <https://anbi.nl/>). ANBI status can be granted to charities by the tax authorities in the Netherlands. The advantage here is that **donations to an organisation with ANBI status by a giver (under certain preconditions) can be deducted from the giver’s taxable income**. In addition, the receiving institution does not have to pay tax on the donations received.

To gain ANBI status, a charity must meet a **large number of conditions**, although they are not particularly complex or difficult. About 50,000 organisations have this



© Shutterstock

ANBI status, ranging from small bodies that run with a few volunteers, to the Cancer-fight organisation with a revenue of EUR 147 million in 2018, 200 paid employees and 100,000 volunteers.

Regarding **transparency**, every organisation with ANBI status **must publish the following information on a website**: the name and contact details of the organisation, a clear description of the objective and the main points of the policy plan of the organisation, the names and functions of the directors, the remuneration policy for directors, management and employees, an annual activity report and an annual financial statement.

Apart from the above tax scheme, there is **no other government supervision of charities in the Netherlands**. That is why the sector has two forms of self-regulated supervision, which I will discuss below.

## CBF Recognition

The **CBF is an independent standards organisation set up and funded by charities**. Charities that meet the strict quality requirements of the CBF receive “CBF Recognition”. **Each year, the CBF assesses whether the recognition is still justified**. With this recognition, donors and others know that the charity in question actually contributes to a better world, handles every euro with care, is accountable and can be independently audited. Almost 600, mainly larger organisations have CBF Recognition.

**Transparency** is one of the most important quality requirements that the charities wishing to obtain recognition must meet.

The essence is that the **charity must publish numerous documents on a website, such as the articles of association, policy plans, budgets, annual reports, annual accounts and auditors’ reports**. The CBF publishes an annually updated summary of this information on its site (<https://www.cbf.nl/>).

## Charities Netherlands

**Charities Netherlands** (GDN, <https://www.goededoelennederland.nl/>) is the **trade association of charities of which approximately 180 larger charities are members**. To become a member of this trade association, a charity must have the aforementioned CBF Recognition. **GDN promotes the interests of charities with the government and with the general public**.

It is of great importance that the **GDN member organisations undertake to publish the total remuneration of their directors in their annual reports**. The organisations are also bound by **ceilings for these salaries** based on a calculation method developed by GDN based on aspects such as turnover, size and role. These ceilings are related to government salaries for comparable positions. This transparent method has put an end to reports that have regularly appeared in the past about directors of charities who earned excessively high salaries, from a social point of view.

**With the above regulations, the charity sector in the Netherlands has adopted a respected and reliable position, both towards the government, companies and towards the general public.**

# Highlights of the December plenary session

## From development to partnership

On the occasion of the adoption of the **EESC draft Own-initiative Opinion 'External aid, investment and trade as instruments to reduce the reasons for economic migration, with special focus on Africa'** (REX 516, **rapporteur Mr Metzler** and co-rapporteur **Mr Wagnsonner**), a debate was organised at the December plenary on the topic **'From development to partnership'**. The topic was particularly timely, given the fact that Ms von der Leyen visited Ethiopia only one week after taking office as EC President.



**Mr METZLER**, President of the Diversity Europe Group  
**Ms DURANT**, deputy secretary-general of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)  
**Mr JAHIER**, President of the EESC  
**Ms SONGWE**, Executive secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)  
**Mr DOWGIELEWICZ**, permanent representative of the EIB to the European institutions in Brussels  
**Ms BONELL DE PASCUAL**, representative of the Business and Job Creation cluster  
**Mr OGINNI**, representative of the Peace and Security Cluster

The speakers on the panel included the rapporteur and co-rapporteur of the draft EESC Opinion, in addition to **Ms Jutta Urpilainen**, European Commissioner for international partnerships, **Ms Isabelle Durant**, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and **Mr Mikolaj Dowgielewicz**, permanent representative of the European Investment Bank (EIB) to the EU. The **AU-EU Youth Cooperation Hub**, was also represented by **Ms Elena Bonell de Pascual**, representing the Business & Job Creation cluster and **Mr Oyewole Oginni**, representing the Peace & Security cluster.

**Mr Metzler** introduced his draft Opinion and highlighted the objective of **examining why European investors did not invest more in Africa**. The rapporteur noted the **key obstacle of corruption** and the **necessity for civil society to combat this corruption**. Mr Metzler also stressed the importance of a **well-functioning legal system, equal rights for women, the respect of rights of workers and partnerships with European civil society**. The rapporteur added that only when such reliable structures are in place, will **public-private partnerships and European investment** be possible.



**Mr METZLER**, President of the Diversity Europe Group



**Dilyana SLAVOVA**, President of the REX Section, Member of the Diversity Europe Group



**Simo TIAINEN**, Member of the Diversity Europe Group



**Pirrko RAUNEMAA**, Member of the Diversity Europe Group

In the ensuing discussion, interventions were made by **Ms Slavova**, President of the REX Section of the EESC, **Ms Raunemaa** and **Mr Tiainen**. Ms Slavova highlighted the **timely shift in EU policy towards partnership**, as also reflected in chapter 7 of the draft EESC Opinion.

The REX President stressed that the EESC has always placed **African development policy high on its agenda**, notably through its **ACP-EU Follow-up Committee**. Ms Slavova also commented on the fact that a recent Eubarometer survey revealed **wide-spread support for development cooperation among EU citizens**.

**Ms Raunemaa** commented that **climate and trade negotiations are currently paralysed** and called for a **new beginning in international cooperation**. **Mr Tiainen** congratulated the new EC Commissioner for international partnerships and stressed the necessity for more private investment in African rural development. Mr Tiainen added that cooperatives could play a key role in **food security and poverty eradication**, notably in rural areas.

## 2019 EESC civil society prize – empowerment of women and gender equality



During the December plenary session, the **EESC awarded prizes to five civil society organisations which promote equal opportunities for women and men, raise awareness about women's potential, achievements and contribute to their empower-**

ment in Europe's society and economy.

The prize of EUR 50 000 was shared among **five winning projects**. The Italian organisation "**Women's Toponymy**" walked away with the first prize of EUR 14 000. The other four runners-up each received EUR 9 000: the **Polish Women's Strike**, the Bulgarian **Association NAIA** with its **Fairy Tales** project, the Finnish **Software and eBusiness Association** and its **Women Code** programme, and **The Brussels Binder** from Belgium.



Family picture of the 2019 Civil Society Prize

This year's winner, **Women's Toponymy** (*Associazione Toponomastica femminile*) strives to **place more women on city and town maps, thus giving women greater public recognition and raising awareness of their contribution to society and history**. The association's recent research into the names of public places found that in 90% of Italian municipalities, **for every 100 streets named after men, only 7.8 were named after women, of which some 60% referred to religious figures**. There are almost no places featuring the names of notable female scientists, entrepreneurs, artists and sports-women and Women's Toponymy is set to change that. The project has received a very positive response, with many municipalities participating and now the organisation is **teaming up with associations elsewhere in Europe, in order to spread these good practices**.

[www.toponomasticafemminile.com](http://www.toponomasticafemminile.com)

# DIVERSITY EUROPE MEMBERS in the spotlight



## MAJALAT Initiative: New Opportunities for Civil Society in the South of the Mediterranean

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



*Dilyana SLAVOVA, President of the REX Section, Member of the Diversity Europe Group*

On 2 & 3 December, the REX Section of the EESC hosted the **Majalat Forum** for a second time. It has become a tradition for the more than 180 civil society organisations' representatives from the **southern shore of the Mediterranean** to gather at the EESC. The **REX Section President, Ms Dilyana Slavova**, opened the event pointing out that one of the main aims of the Forum is to **reinforce cooperation between civil society organizations in the north and south of the Mediterranean**.



The **Brussels Civil Society Forum** is organized by civil society itself through the **MAJALAT initiative**. The word "Majalat" is very well chosen in this context. As many of you are aware, "Majalat" is Arabic and stands for "spaces, opportunities, fields and domains."

The **Majalat Initiative aims to create spaces for a constructive dialogue between the European Union and civil society organizations**, including trade unions, social movements and academics on both shores of the Mediterranean. The Majalat Initiative is all the more important in times of shrinking space for dialogue with civil society organizations.

We often assume that **civil society** enjoys a lot of freedom north of the Mediterranean. However, this space is **shrinking due to restrictions to the access of public spaces** and due to an attack on the right of the Assembly. These unfortunate developments are often justified with security measures after the terrorist attacks in the past few years. In some cases, even a state of emergency has been used as a pretext to ban gatherings and demonstrations.

**South of the Mediterranean**, the state of emergency and the fight against terrorist groups are recurrent justifications to restrict the activities of civil society organizations. In addition, current and past military conflicts still take their toll on actors of civil society.

Hence, the participants in their debates tried to make the best use of the **Majalat Initiative** and fight for more space for civil society on both shores of the Mediterranean.

The event was followed by an **award ceremony for the best video** to highlight the commitment and the concrete action on the ground, of the civil society actors of the southern neighborhood. Majalat organized this contest of short videos (3 minutes) in linkage with its priority themes: **good governance and rule of law, economic development and social dialogue, migration, climate and social justice, security and the fight against violence**

## DIVERSITY EUROPE MEMBERS in the spotlight

### Civil Society for Rights and Equality - Towards a Democracy that Gives a Voice to All

**Jean-Marc ROIRANT (FR)**

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

On 4 December 2019, the European Civic Forum (ECF) was hosted by the Diversity Europe Group (Group III) of the EESC, at a conference with civil society organisations from across Europe, to present the ECF's first annual report 'Activizeship - Stories of resistance on the state of civic space in Europe'. The report was based on the findings of Civic Space Watch – an online collaborative tool aimed at monitoring the state of civic space and civil liberties, alerting media and policy makers and building solidarity and resilience inside civil society.



As the ECF President and Member of the EESC's Diversity Europe Group, Mr Jean Marc Roirant highlighted at the beginning of the event, one of the principle objectives was to review the state of associative life in Europe, with the active participation of grassroots organisations from across Europe. Mr Christian Moos, also Member of the EESC's Diversity Europe Group, highlighted the terminology we use and rightfully pointed out that we should avoid calling "illiberal democracies" those political systems that do not respect neither the rule of law, nor intermediary bodies, as they do not deserve the term 'democracy'.

Ms Karolina Dreszer-Smalec, Member of the Diversity Europe Group, Vice-President of the National Federation of Polish NGOs and of the EESC's Group on Fundamental Rights and the Rule of Law (FRRL Group), emphasized the necessity for CSOs to join forces in solidarity, in order to stand up to the attacks that have become more and more frequent in Europe. Finally, in a context where organisations face growing obstacles to advocate better policies, Mr Arno Metzler, President of Diversity Europe Group of the EESC, reminded participants of the important role of the Committee in protecting civil society in Europe. The President also referred to the possibility of making this an annual event, which would assess the state of play for associations in Europe and raise awareness on key issues linked to democratic life in the EU.

### The Western Balkans: a clear roadmap for the way forward

**Dilyana SLAVOVA (BG)**

*President of the External Relations (REX)  
Section  
Member of the Diversity Europe Group*

On 13 December in Sofia, Bulgaria, the EESC with the support of the Bulgarian Parliament, organised a high-level event entitled "The Western Balkans: a clear roadmap for the way forwards". The conference was the very first EESC initiative following the resolution adopted by the EESC Plenary in October, relating to the non-decision of the EU Council to open the accession negotiations with Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia (EESC resolution 'Opening accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania: EU credibility and geostrategic interests should be upheld').

The event in Sofia brought together EESC Members and civil society representatives from the region, members of the Bulgarian Parliament and high-level officials from



*Mr VIGENIN, Deputy Chair of Bulgarian Parliament  
Ms SLAVOVA, President of the REX Section – Member of the  
Diversity Europe Group  
Ms GABRIEL, EU Commissioner – Innovation, Research, Culture,  
Education and Youth*

the region, who discussed how to offer European prospects to the Western Balkans partners after the negative Council decision.

The audience was addressed by a number of VIPs, including:

- Ms Mariya Gabriel: EU Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth
- Mr Kristian Vigenin, Vice-President of the Bulgarian Assembly
- Ms Dilyana Slavova, President of the External Relations Section, EESC
- Ambassadors of the Republic of North Macedonia, Albania and Germany to Bulgaria
- Mr Arno Metzler, President of the Diversity Europe Group, EESC
- Mr Lalko Dulevski, President of the Economic and Social Council of Bulgaria
- Ms Dzhema Grozdanova, Chair of the Commission on Foreign Affairs in the National Assembly of Bulgaria
- Mr Dragomir Stoyne, Chair of the Commission on European Affairs in the National Assembly of Bulgaria
- Mr Vlado Buckovski, Former Prime Minister of North Macedonia

In her intervention, Ms Slavova stressed the necessity for European and Western Balkan civil society to step-up and strengthen existing structural civil society platforms (EESC Civil Society Joint Consultative Committees and Follow-up Committee on the Western Balkans, Western Balkans Civil Society Forums, etc.). The President of the REX



Section of the EESC stated that the **role of civil society is unique and strategic, especially today and therefore, it needs to be encouraged, promoted and strengthened.**

## Supporting the institutionalisation of civil dialogue in Poland

**Krzysztof BALON (PL)**

*Chairman of the Programming Committee of the Working Community of Associations of Social Organisations (WRZOS)  
Vice-President of the Diversity Europe Group*

On 17 December 2019 the seminar ‘Supporting the institutionalisation of Civil Dialogue in Poland – Best Practices from EU Member States’, chaired by the **President of the Diversity Europe Group, Mr Arno Metzler**, took place at the EESC premises. The Polish delegation included **Mr Wojciech Kaczmarczyk, Secretary of the Public Benefit Committee**, in addition to **Mr Radosław Podogrocki, Director** and **Mr Paweł Filip, Head of Unit of the Department for Civil Society Development**, at the **Chancellery of the Prime Minister**. Other participants included **Ms Christiane Basset**, Member of the Diversity Europe Group and **Mr Antoine Renard**, representing the **French Economic, Social and Environmental Council**. **Ms Dilyana Slavova**, President of the EESC’s External Relations Section and representing the Bulgarian ESC, **Mr José Leirião**, Group III Member and representing the Portuguese ESC, as well as **Mr Krzysztof Balon**, Vice President of the Diversity Europe Group also actively participated. **The seminar focussed on the exchange of best practices in organising civil dialogue at the national level.** For example, the legal basis, the nomination process of Members, the organisation of work, relationships between partners from diverse groups and budgetary issues.

Currently an **Economic and Social Council does not exist in Poland.**

However, there are two important bodies for dialogue at the national level: firstly, the **Social Dialogue Council**, consisting of representatives of Employers, trade unions and the government and which has broad competences. Secondly, the **Public Benefit Council**, consisting of representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the government, as well as regional and local governments. The Public Benefit Council only carries out an advisory function. Since 2018, the **concept of a Civil Dialogue Council has emerged**, which could have competences similar to those of the Social Dialogue Council. It is also possible that in the future, both of these bodies will **merge into a type of national Economic and Social Council.**

During the seminar **Mr Metzler** stressed the **important role of the EESC in supporting the institutionalisation of both social and civil dialogue at the national level.** In turn, **Mr Balon** pointed out the **importance of political and legal equality between social and civil dialogue** and hence, the importance of institutions in which this equality is practiced. **Mr Kaczmarczyk** expressed his appreciation to the EESC for the **very valuable meeting and emphasized the extreme importance of exchanges of experiences with other EU Member States.** In particular, the importance of exchanges with those ESCs which offer full membership status to ‘Group III type organisations’.

## Visit of the Korean Delegation to the EESC

**Dilyana SLAVOVA (BG)**

*President of the External Relations (REX) Section  
Member of the Diversity Europe Group*

On 26 November, the **REX President Ms Slavova** welcomed at the EESC a **high level Korean Delegation** led by **Youngjae Kim**, Director General International Economic Affairs in the Korean Ministry of



*Youngjae KIM, Director General International Economic Affairs in the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
Eun YOUNG CHOIM, Second Secretary at the Ministry  
High officials from the Korean Embassy in Brussels  
With Ms SLAVOVA, President of the REX Section  
and Mr CUISSON, Head of Unit of the REX Section*



Foreign Affairs, **Eun Young Choim** Second Secretary at the Ministry and high officials from the Korean Embassy in Brussels. The discussions focused on **multilateral and bilateral trade** and the **Investment State Dispute System**, which is absent from the **EU – Korea Free Trade Agreement (FTA).**

It became clear from the exchanges that consulting civil society in Korea, especially in relation to the trade negotiations, has not been the traditional practice to date. The Korean delegation underlined the **need for engaging with civil society at the national level** and explained that political views on this matter are progressing in their country. They asked for assistance from the EU in this respect. It was decided to organise an **event on EU – Korea trade relations**, with the participation of EESC Members and Korean civil society representatives, during the **first half of 2020.**

# Overview of our Members' Work in the

## **REX/516 - External aid, investment and trade as instruments to reduce the reasons of economic migration, with a special focus on Africa (Own-initiative Opinion)**

**Arno METZLER (DE)**

*President of the Diversity Europe Group*

The EESC:

- Believes it is now important that continued and even greater engagement by the EESC and its structures becomes a substantial element of the post-Cotonou agreement.
- Stresses that the strengthening of Africa and EU cooperation will benefit from the establishment at the EU level of a one-stop-shop policy and an appropriate consultation mechanism for providing information and contacts to those wanting to invest in and collaborate with Africa.
- Calls for the implementation of a "from aid to invest" approach, meaning changing the focus from handing out benefits, to dealing with and supporting self-reliant, self-dependent economic players and intercontinental economic projects, based on cooperation on a level playing field.
- Considers that EU development cooperation should focus on working towards a people-centred partnership, ensuring the participation of civil society, trade unions and the private sector and delivering direct benefits for African and European citizens.



© Shutterstock

## **NAT/771 - Populism and fundamental rights - suburban and rural areas (own-initiative opinion)**

**Karolina DRESZER-SMALEC (PL)**

*FPresident, National Federation of Polish NGOs (OFOP); Vice-president for National Platforms, European Civic Forum (ECF)*

*Member of the Diversity Europe Group*

The EESC:

- Considers that particular attention should be paid to the situation of civil society organizations which are hit particularly hard when the rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy deteriorate. CSOs are currently experiencing shrinking space for their activities in many countries. The further rise of populism is also likely to mean less economic stability and more inefficient governance and policies, leading to a negative effect on investments.
- Believes that the building of alliances between local authorities, civil society organizations, the social partners and other actors, e.g. local leaders and social movements, is key to addressing the root causes of populism.
- Supports the European Parliament's resolution on addressing the specific needs of rural, mountainous and remote areas "to promote socio-economic development, economic growth and diversification, social wellbeing, protection of nature, and

cooperation and interconnection with urban areas, in order to foster cohesion and prevent the risk of territorial fragmentation."

## **SOC/616 - Shaping the EU agenda for disability rights 2020-2030: a contribution from the European Economic and Social Committee (Own-initiative Opinion)**

**Ioannis VARDAKASTANIS (EL)**

*President of the Greek National Confederation of Disabled People (NCDP); President of the European Disability Forum (EDF); Treasurer of the International Disability Alliance (IDA); Member of the Economic and Social Council of Greece (OKE); Member of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights (EEDA); Vice-President of the Diversity Europe Group*



© Shutterstock

The EESC presents the following recommendations to the European Commission for the drawing up of the Disability Rights Agenda 2020-2030:

- To fully implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to mainstream the principles of the Social Pillar into the Disability Agenda, with concrete proposals for implementing Principle 17, as well as to mainstream disability equality issues into all EU policies.



© Shutterstock



- To set up disability focal points (DFP) in all Directorate Generals, EU Agencies and EU Institutions, with the central DFP located within the general Secretariat of the EC and a strong focal point in DG Justice to support the new Equality Commissioner.
- To provide adequate human and financial resources for the EU Monitoring Framework of the CRPD to ensure it is able to carry out its tasks according to CRPD Article 33(2);
- To put pressure on the Member States, through the European Semester, to develop their own national disability strategies.
- This information report assesses the results over the Environmental Crime Directive's whole lifetime from 2011 to 2018 and with respect to five Member States. The information report covers the criteria of effectiveness, relevance and the added value of involving civil society.
- Taking note of the data collected, the EESC considers that the prevailing suggestion is to improve the implementation of the existing Directive, starting with a comparative analysis of the implementation of the Directive in all Member States, even if there are also good reasons to update it.

## GROUP III MEMBERS working on new opinions

**Elżbieta SZADIŃSKA (PL)** is the co-rapporteur of the study group for the opinion "The annual work programme for European standardisation for 2020" – INT/893

**Gabriel SARRÓ IPARRAGUIRRE (ES)** is the rapporteur-general of the study group for the opinion "Multiannual management plan for bluefin tuna – NAT/782

### NAT/767 - Evaluation on Environmental Crime Directive

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



© Shutterstock

- The objectives of the Environmental Crime Directive (ECD) are to contribute to a more effective protection of the environment and full application of the existing Union environmental legislation through criminal law, to ensure a level playing field in the Member States by approximating the criminal offenses, and to ensure deterrent sanctions and overall effective sanctioning systems in all Member States.

The complete texts of all EESC opinions are available in various language versions on the Committee's website:

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions>

# MEETING WITH DELEGATION GROUP FROM THE MALTA FEDERATION OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

On 4 December Mr Metzler met with a delegation group from the Malta Federation of Professional Associations. They had discussions on how the EESC works, on the Diversity Europe Group and more specifically on the category of the liberal professions and on the impact of artificial intelligence on those professions.



**Arno METZLER**, president of the Diversity Europe Group  
**Demi's CACHIA**, treasurer of MFPA and president of the Malta Association of Occupational Therapists  
**Dr Roberta FARRUGIA DEBONO**, Vice President MFPA and President of the Malta Psychological Association  
**Ben RIZZO**, Member of the Diversity Europe Group  
**Ing Helga PIZZUTO**, President Malta Federation of Professional Associations (MFPA)  
**Gertrude BUTTIGIEG**, Secretary of MFPA and Vice President Malta Association of Speech Language Pathologists  
**Norma CAMILLERI**, President of CIPLOL, European Federation of speech language pathologist and president of the Malta association of speech language pathologists

Like us on facebook:



**EESCdiversityeurope**

Follow us on Twitter:



**@DiversEESC**

**e-mail:** [gr3@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:gr3@eesc.europa.eu) • **URL:** [www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.group-3](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.group-3)

*Editors of this edition:* Susanna Baizou, Isabelle Henin, Fausta Palombelli, Enrica Nardello, Irina Jancova, Brigitte Carmosin, Lukas Jovanovic  
*Editor in Chief:* Marc Beffort

Secretariat of the Diversity Europe Group,  
European Economic and Social Committee,  
99 Rue Belliard, 1040 Brussels  
Tel. +32 (0)2 546 8893

*Print*  
QE-AG-20-001-EN-C  
ISSN 2467-4451  
*Web*  
QE-AG-20-001-EN-N  
ISSN 2467-446X

EESC-2019-104-EN

THE EESC IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONTENT OF EXTERNAL WEBSITES

© European Union, 2019 • Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

For any use or reproduction of the "photos" and "illustrations", permission must be sought directly from the copyright holder(s).