



# Making civil society a driving force in the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Position paper – July 2018

## Introduction

During the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, in September 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This unprecedented action plan aims at ending poverty and fighting inequality worldwide while respecting planetary boundaries for people, planet and prosperity.

The EU has been a leader in the establishment of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, which require transformational governance, economic, environmental and societal changes.

## The EESC involvement

Following the introduction of the 2030 Agenda and following a recommendation from the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) the European Commission set up the Multi-stakeholder Platform on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU (MSP). The objective is to work with organized civil societies to receive their input and expertise for realizing the 2030 Agenda at EU level.

The Committee is an active member of the Commission's Multi-stakeholder platform (MSP), currently tasked with helping the European Commission to prepare a sixth Reflection Paper: 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030' on the follow-up to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including on the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (expected publication late 2018/early 2019).

At the international level, the EU takes part in the annual High Level Political Forum (HLPF) - the UN international gathering to assess progress on implementing the 2030 Agenda through the SDGs. The 2018 Forum theme is "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies".

The EESC co-hosts side events each year with organized civil society groups and Member States. For 2018, one side event is on: Involving civil society in the Circular Economy, where the [European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform](https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/) (https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/) will be presented, showcasing initiatives by civil society organisations, businesses and trade unions to achieve SDG 12 – Achieve sustainable production and consumption. Another side event aims to look at how to best monitor the implementation of the SDGs with civil society's input, with focus on locally-applicable types of indicators suited for this purpose.

***"The EESC recommends that the EU use the 2030 Agenda to build a new vision for its future, for a more sustainable and socially inclusive Europe that benefits all citizens and leaves no one behind."***<sup>1</sup>

**Peter Schmidt**, chair of the EESC's Sustainable Development Observatory

## The EESC's position

The Committee has been actively promoting an ambitious agenda for sustainable development, assisting with strengthening SDG implementation and involving the Committee's strong civil society organisation networks and acting as a platform for dialogue.

The EU has a key role to play in integrating the 2030 Agenda into European policies, communicating it, and monitoring its implementation. In order to achieve these objectives, the EESC takes the view that a much deeper review of EU policies is necessary in order to meet the SDGs internally and externally; the EESC also considers that the EU should use the 2030 SD Agenda to build a new vision of its future and of a more sustainable and socially inclusive Europe that benefits its citizens and leaves no one behind.

The EESC is concerned that since the adoption of the UN 2030 Agenda no overarching plan with forward-looking measures to mainstream the SDGs across all EU policies and programmes has been presented. In order to harmonise EU policies with the SDGs, efficient governance mechanisms have to be put in place at regional, national and local level. These must be based on a participatory approach, building upon the principles of transparency, accountability and empowering local communities, businesses, NGOs and other civil society players to take an active role at all policy levels.

## The EESC's Recommendations

- The push for the establishment of an overarching EU sustainable development strategy to mainstream the SDGs across all EU policies and programmes.
- Harmonization and consistency of EU policies with the 2030 Agenda in order to achieve the goals requires a more integrated and coherent approach across policy areas.

- The necessity to have civil society fully involved and engaged in the EU sustainable development strategy and its different components.
- Civil society must be involved in the monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all policy levels: from local and national to European and international level.

*“There is need to create prosperity and social coherence domestically, while pursuing the transition of the EU economy towards low-carbon, nature-friendly and circular production and consumption patterns to ensure sustainable well-being for all”*

**Peter Schmidt**, chair of the EESC's Sustainable Development Observatory

## The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in a nutshell

The EESC is a Brussels-based institution of the European Union (EU), representing the organised civil society. Its role is to express the views of the European civil society on the EU's policies and legislation. With 350 Members from 28 Member States distributed among three groups (employers, workers and various interests), the EESC contributes to the policy-making of the EU in an advisory capacity, hence ensuring a broader democratic legitimacy and effectiveness of the European Union.

The EESC has been and continues to be very active on issues related to the 2030 Agenda, in particular through its Sustainable Development Observatory, closely following international negotiations linked to sustainable development in a broad perspective, in cooperation with other Economic and Social Councils and representatives of the United Nations' Major Groups.

### More information on the EESC:

[eesc.europa.eu](http://eesc.europa.eu)

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## Further information

### EESC Information Report: "Civil society involvement in the implementation of the post-2015 agenda":

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.nat-opinions.35521>

### EESC opinion – Sustainable Development: A Mapping of the EU's internal and external policies:

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.nat-opinions.40384>

### EESC opinion – A European Sustainable Development Civil Society Forum:

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.nat-opinions.38299>

### EESC opinion – Next steps for a sustainable European future:

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.nat-opinions.41277>

### EESC opinion – The 2030 Agenda – a European Union committed to sustainable development globally:

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.rex-opinions.38393>

### EESC opinion – Transition towards a more sustainable European future – a strategy for 2050:

<http://webapi.eesc.europa.eu/documentsanonymous/eesc-2016-06805-00-02-ac-tra-en.docx>

### EESC opinion – Indicators better suited to evaluate the SDGs – the civil society contribution:

<http://europa.eu/!NR79tw>

<http://webapi.eesc.europa.eu/documentsanonymous/eesc-2016-06805-00-02-ac-tra-en.docx>