

**EN**

Brussels, 21 February 2020

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| **PLENARY SESSION 19 AND 20 FEBRUARY 2020** **SUMMARY OF OPINIONS ADOPTED** |
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The plenary session of 19 and 20 February 2020 was attended by **Guy Ryder**, Director-General of the International Labour Organisation; **Paolo Di Stefano**, Head of Coldiretti EU Liaison Office; and **Maroš Šefčovič**, Vice-President of the European Commission - Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight.

The following opinions were adopted at the plenary session:

# **ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COHESION**

* ***Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2020***

**Rapporteur:** Tommaso Di Fazio (Diversity Europe Group – IT)

**Reference:** COM(2019) 650 final

EESC-2019-05232-00-00-AC

**Key points**

## The EESC:

## welcomes the approach taken by the annual growth strategy for 2020, based on the four key pillars that are the environment, productivity, stability and fairness and also welcomes the inclusion of the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals;

## welcomes the announced change in the annual strategy, moving away from the current thinking that focuses on programming and short- and medium-term objectives to finally make provision for long-term strategies. This is made necessary by the investment needed to implement the environmental sustainability strategy by means of complex, integrated energy and climate plans drawn up by the Member States and approved by the Commission;

## agrees with the indications made in the annual strategy concerning investment in the intangible sectors of education, training and skills development, as it sees them as absolutely crucial and decisive;

## strongly supports the aim of boosting research and innovation and of increasing the funds earmarked for them - these are long-term strategic investments for the competitiveness of the EU as a whole at international level;

## regrets that the Communication from the Commission gives little space to the annual report on growth in the Union. In the EESC's view, the greatest priority of all is to restore sustainable growth, above all in the weakest countries and regions, with a strong increase in European Gross Domestic Product in order to generate prosperity and the wealth that is crucial to supporting the strategy;

## hopes that measures governing investment will be studied and adopted and that they will, while taking account of the constraints of the Stability Pact – or by way of exception from them and from the State aid rules – enable all countries to invest the amounts needed to meet their own objectives set in the integrated energy and climate plans;

## welcomes the proposal set out in the 2020 growth strategy to make use of every means and financial leverage that is already available through the current instruments under the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework. It also hopes, however, that the financial means will be increased where there is needed to meet the objectives;

## agrees on the need to strengthen the stability and resilience of the financial system and tighten the rules governing the financial markets in order to reinforce the international role of the European currency and to take precautions against any future crises that may emerge elsewhere in the world and have an impact on Europe as a result of globalisation. This can be done by beefing up macro prudential rules and other measures aimed at safeguarding the financial stability of the Member States. In addition to the ongoing process of completing the Banking and Capital Markets Unions, the upcoming strategic review of the ECB monetary policy should focus more specifically on fostering economic growth in the euro area and strengthening the international role of the euro;

## highlights the importance of keeping the well-being of people at the heart of the 2020 growth strategy, by preserving and strengthening the social advances that make the EU a world leader;

## welcomes the fact that these social rights are highlighted in the 2020 growth strategy. The EESC hopes that, among the objectives of the European Semester, special attention will be given to the gender issue, particularly concerning women's rights at work, the achievement of pay parity, employment protection for mothers – not least to counter the negative demographic trend – and the introduction of significant enhancements to legislation protecting the family;

## believes that more robust single market governance infrastructure needs to be put in place at EU and national level, together with thorough-going administrative simplification, an ambitious process of digitalisation and intensive capacity-building initiatives for all stakeholders;

## advocates new governance structures across a range of levels that can ensure the involvement of the local economy and civil society in designing and implementing fair measures that reflect the circumstances in which they operate.

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* ***Euro area economic policy 2020***

**Rapporteur-general:** Petr Zahradník (Employers' Group – CZ)

**Reference:** COM(2019) 652 final

 EESC-2019-04990-00-00-AC

**Key points**

The EESC:

* notes with concern the euro area's economic downturn and the gradual end to a fall in unemployment, wedded to the persistent higher incidence of risk factors affecting economic performance;
* is convinced that the structural reforms and investments required by the European Green Deal could do much to further the economic prosperity of the euro area and the EU as a whole;
* is concerned about the shortfall in proposed funding for the Just Transition Fund and Mechanism;
* points out that national public and private resources will have to be enlisted and the mechanism provided for these to be allocated to meet the Green Deal goals;
* stresses the continuing need for a cautiously aggressive fiscal policy in the coming period, especially with a view to the expected economic slowdown, while at the same time ensuring a balanced interplay between economic policy and the pillars on which the Economic and Monetary Union of the European Union is based;
* believes that adopting the "golden rule" for public investment would help to achieve these goals;
* recommends that greater attention be given to tailoring the tax system to future needs, in terms both of encouraging more environmentally friendly behaviour, limiting discrepancies in the level of income and wealth, and preventing tax fraud, evasion and avoidance;

## points out the need to strike the right balance between enabling financial innovation and setting rules for financial market supervision and regulation;

## points out the high importance of ensuring financial market stability by implementing the remaining key elements that are essential to completion of the financial union.

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