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Brussels, 29 May 2020

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| **REMOTE ADOPTION OF OPINIONS 5 AND 7 MAY 2020** **SUMMARY OF OPINIONS ADOPTED** |
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The remote adoption of opinions took place on 5 and 7 May, in three stages: voting on the ***Confirmation of the President's decision on a temporary derogation from the European Economic and Social Committee's Rules of Procedure in view of the extraordinary preventive and containment measures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the European Union*** on the morning of 5 May, voting on the amendments tabled to the draft opinions and compromise proposals on the afternoon of 5 May, and voting on the final texts of the opinions on the morning of 7 May.

The following opinions were adopted via the remote procedure:

# **EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND CITIZENSHIP**

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| Custom comment # 001/005 inserted by Dlouhá Petra on 28-04-20 08:42:19.Please do not edit/delete/copy this comment: use always the macro instead. |
| (\* see SOC/646Réf.TRAD : EESC-2019-04762-00-00-NISP-TRA point 3. Gist of the opinion \*) |

* ***Employment guidelines 2020***

**Rapporteur-general:** Ellen Nygren(Workers' Group – SE)

**Reference:** COM(2020) 70 final – 2020/0030 (NLE)

EESC-2020-01835-00-00-AC

**Key points**

The EESC welcomes the proposed revised employment guidelines and acknowledges their role to serve as a long-term compass for the employment policies of EU Member States. The Committee considers that the EU and its Member States must make further efforts to eliminate disparities and improve convergence.

In the current context of Covid-19, the EESC finds that more is needed in terms of coordinated action. Only a comprehensive European economic recovery plan would allow us to best face the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and rebuild a more sustainable and resilient European economy. The Committee asks that the Employment Guidelines for 2020 contain an additional and extraordinary/emergency employment guideline in order to guide necessary adaptations of employment policies in the EU Member States.

As regards Guideline 5, the EESC considers that the employment guidelines should seek to translate the trends associated with new forms of work into fair employment opportunities. The call for setting up adequate and fair wage systems, either through improving statutory minimum wages mechanisms where they exist or through collective bargaining, should be welcomed. The involvement of social partners is key. The guideline should in this respect include at the very end proposals to strengthen the effectiveness of collective agreements by enhancing their coverage.

Regarding Guideline 6, the EESC calls for more effective European and national strategies on ensuring sustainable financing for reskilling and up-skilling of all adults through life-long learning focusing in particular on providing effective support to workers and the unemployed.

Regarding Guideline 7, the EESC believes that more needs to be done to facilitate and promote social dialogue, both at national and European level. Advances have been made in the involvement of civil society in the European Semester process, and it should be built upon. The EESC considers that this guideline should also include the need for better occupational safety and health provisions. In the current context of Covid-19, public authorities, businesses, employees and social partners must all play a role in order to protect workers, their families and society at large. Small and micro enterprises should be provided with practical, financial and tailored support for occupational safety and health programmes for them to adapt workplaces, and to quickly implement new procedures and practices to protect workers.

Concerning Guideline 8, the Committee recalls that discrimination must be fought. Social protection and health care must be provided to all. Promotion of women's participation in the labour force, as well as active ageing for all, should be supported. The employment guidelines should also consider social protection objectives like full and effective coverage, adequacy and transparency.

***Contact***: *Ana Dumitrache*

*(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 81 31 – email:* *Ana.Dumitrache@eesc.europa.eu**)*

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| (\* see SOC/628 \*) |

* ***Demographic challenges in the EU in light of economic and development inequalities***

**Rapporteur:** Stéphane Buffetaut (Employers' Group – FR)

**Corapporteur**: Adam Rogalewski (Workers' Group – PL)

**Reference:** Exploratory opinion

EESC-2019-04587-00-00-AC

**Key points**

The EU's present demographic situation requires a holistic approach that embraces social and economic policies, active labour market and cohesion policies, policies supporting families and especially the possibility of reconciling private and family life with working life, special measures for ageing workers, active and healthy ageing policies, sustainable and integrated immigration policies and measures and policies to prevent brain drain.

Another baby boom is unlikely, and so it is paramount that labour market participation be improved in order to face the consequences of Europe's demographic situation. The level of unemployment, under-employment and the inactivity rate are too high in too many Member States especially for young people. The EU needs to make combating unemployment a priority.

Demographic dynamism also comes down to confidence in the future; this is why the EU needs a strong economy and a strong social policy. The implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights is a very important factor in improving the EU's demographic situation.

Having children must not be an obstacle to pursuing a professional career or a reason for impoverishment or the loss of purchasing power especially for large families. It is important to maintain or implement stable and proactive family policy and human-centred labour market policies.

Internal mobility is a fundamental freedom of the EU that strengthens European competitiveness and provides opportunity for its citizens. As regards intra-EU mobility and the brain and labour drain related to internal migration, the social and economic upward convergence of Member States is the best answer but this needs time.

Immigration alone might not be the solution to Europe's demographic challenge but it can help address it provided that it is accompanied by fair and sustainable integration policies to help newcomers become established and avoid integration difficulties.

The COVID-19 crisis will have important implications for the future EU policies addressing demographic challenges and growing inequalities between Member States. The Committee urges the EU to prepare relevant policies with ambitious funding to protect citizens from the detrimental effects of the pandemic and most importantly the economic crisis which will follow, in order to mitigate the negative social impacts.

***Contact***: *Triin Aasmaa*

*(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 95 24 – email:* *Triin.Aasmaa@eesc.europa.eu**)*

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| (\* see SOC/629 \*) |

* ***Sustainable funding for lifelong learning and development of skills***

**Rapporteur:** Tatjana Babrauskienė (Workers' Group – LT)

**Corapporteur**: Pavel Trantina (Diversity Europe Group – CZ)

**Reference:** Exploratory opinion

EESC-2019-04762-00-00-AC

**Key points**

This opinion was requested by the Croatian Presidency, which has highlighted the need to strengthen lifelong learning in the current context of an increasingly dynamic labour market.

In its opinion, the Committee calls on the European Commission and the Member States to ensure quality and inclusive lifelong learning as a right for all citizens in Europe at workplaces and beyond and to support the implementation of these principles with sustainable public funding agreed with the social partners and civil society.

The EESC believes that there is a need for financing mechanisms which mobilise national resources and involve adequate sharing of costs between public authorities and private entities as well as, individuals and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. social partners, training providers, NGOs).

The EESC reiterates its call for a greater focus on social investment inter alia in education, training and lifelong learning. The EESC suggests discussing whether the "golden rule", i.e. on excluding future-oriented public investments from the calculation of net public deficits under the European Monetary Union’s fiscal rules, could also be applied to social investment supported by the EU Structural Funds.

The Committee believes that the democratic governance of lifelong learning policy development and implementation, including effective social dialogue and consultation with organised civil society, makes investment more effective in terms of achieving policy aims.

The EESC calls on the Member States to ensure effective support for the employed and unemployed people who face difficulties in accessing quality and inclusive adult education and training by ensuring targeted funding for those in need, such as the unemployed, the non-standard workers, the low-skilled, people with disabilities, older workers and people from socio-economically disadvantaged groups, while taking into account the gender dimension.

In addition, the EESC calls on the EU institutions to agree on a single inclusive Key Competences framework going beyond school education, thus addressing the need for adult learning and acquiring life skills, and emphasising in particular the skill of learning to learn and the skills for democratic citizenship that are essential to support adults in taking an active role in society. The EESC also calls for increased investment in non-formal and informal learning environments, which are particularly relevant in terms of acquiring these competences.

The EESC calls for a more nuanced understanding of learning environments' needs to be integrated into education, training and lifelong learning policies, guided by the overarching principle of supporting learners' individual and unique potential. This means recognising, including through sustained investment, the value of learning environments beyond formal education.

The Committee notes that in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was seen that learning can adapt quickly to changes in circumstances. Learners develop a variety of new approaches, such as independent or project learning, become more curious and enhance their IT skills to engage in remote learning. A number of digital platforms are being used, provided free of charge. Essential transversal skills are helping both learners and teachers adapt to this change. When life returns to "normal", society should draw lessons from this experience and continue to develop these approaches and skills, investing in them sufficiently, in order to enable every learner, whatever their social situation, to get involved and benefit from them.

Finally, the Committee appeals to all EU and national decision-makers to address the current challenges for lifelong learning environments – that the opinion is detailing – and to financially support solutions for these issues.

***Contact***: *Ana Dumitrache*

*(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 81 31 – email:* *Ana.Dumitrache@eesc.europa.eu**)*

# **AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT**

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| (\* see NAT/780 \*) |

* ***EAFRD and EAGF transitional provisions***

**Rapporteur:** Arnold Puech d'Alissac (Employers' Group – FR)

**Reference:** COM(2019) 581 final - 2019/0254 (COD)

EESC-2019-05784-00-00-AC

**Key Points**

The EESC congratulates the Commission on its proposal for a transition year for the Common Agricultural Policy (first and second pillars) in 2021; a year without direct aid from the first pillar would have resulted in deficits for all farmers; a year without aid from the second pillar would have interrupted commitments for high environmental and climate objectives and put back investment for modernisation.

The EESC is pleased that the conditions for receiving aid between 2020 and 2021 are remaining in force, as EU farmers have already got to grips with conditionalities and greening.

The EESC warns of the risk of setting the deadline for notifying changes at 1 August 2020. Too late an agreement on the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework might fail to allow timely decisions to be taken at national level.

The possibility of extending the rural development programmes by a year has to go hand in hand with the possibility of using all second pillar funds not used during the period 2014-2020 after 2020.

The EESC welcomes the fact that second pillar multiannual measures (organic farming and agri-environment-climate measures) are extended by a year, but calls for the duration of the related commitments to be extended to five years, as in the 2014-2020 period. The proposal to limit this to three years will certainly generate red tape and certainly not lead to results for the environment.

The Committee particularly stresses the urgent need to ensure rapid uptake of the second pillar with a view to getting activity going again after the crisis triggered by COVID-19. This would entail supporting young farmers setting up in business, the short supply chains which have been so important during the crisis, collective production and marketing initiatives and agrotourism. In this situation, particular attention must be given to outermost, island, mountain and remote regions which are heavily dependent on tourism.

***Contact:*** *Arturo Iniguez*

*(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 87 68 – email:* *Arturo.Iniguez@eesc.europa.eu**)*

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| (\* see NAT/782 \*) |

* ***Multiannual management plan for bluefin tuna***

**Rapporteur:** Gabriel Sarró Iparraguirre (Diversity Europe Group – ES)

**Reference:** COM(2019) 619 final -2019/0272 (COD)

EESC-2020-00223-00-00-AC

**Key Points**

The EESC welcomes the adoption of a multiannual management plan for bluefin tuna fisheries in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, since the current level of biomass for this population, at a historic high, means that the emergency measures introduced under the earlier recovery plan can be dropped.

The Committee considers that laying down a multiannual management plan in the European Union, that ensures the application of the measures set out in Recommendation 18-02 adopted at the 21st special meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas in 2018, is the best way of maintaining stocks above biomass levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield, taking account of the specificities of the different types of gear and fishing techniques used in these fisheries.

The EESC would suggest that the legislators update the proposal for a regulation in order to incorporate the amendments agreed in 2019 by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas in its Recommendation 19-04.

***Contact:*** *Arturo Iniguez*

*(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 87 68 – email:* *Arturo.Iniguez@eesc.europa.eu**)*

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