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| Introduction Since 2020, I have had the privilege of working with European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) colleagues on several opinions and activities covering the areas of transport, energy, infrastructure and the information society. During these two and a half years we have experienced the COVID-19 crisis, the war in Ukraine, mounting energy prices and inflation rates and an increase in energy poverty.  In order to better understand the TEN section members' needs and expectations, and to get acquainted with TEN section members' (especially "new" members) areas of expertise, online meetings of the national delegations were held in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis. At that time, members admitted that there is a need to rethink the energy strategy and dependency on Russian energy. At EESC level, initiatives could be organised in order to discussed possible options on how to diversify national energy mixes and the supply of different materials.  As a consequence of the war in Ukraine, energy became the most pressing issue on the TEN section's agenda of the 2020–2023 mandate. In this context, I intend to put forward the voice of EESC on European energy policies in the next mandate.  My efforts as president were supported by a strong TEN section bureau and secretariat whom I want to thank gratefully. Collectively we aimed at three main goals:   * to safeguard the TEN's role, which is nowadays central for the EU overall advisory architecture both in a strategic view (the digital and green revolutions and the relevant transitions) and in a short-term perspective (the energy crisis, its impact on the Green Deal, the need to support Ukraine in material fields such as transport, energy and infrastructure, the reshaping of the EU's role in view of deglobalisation); * to streamline works, a need deriving from continuous stress-tests imposed by more and more stringent deadlines and robust workload, coupled with the limited resources available from our administrative structure; * to develop inclusion and reciprocal respect among members, since the more complex and sensitive the issues to be dealt are, and the more controversial are necessarily the views expressed, we nonetheless have to find a smooth and convivial arrangement for the benefit of our work.   Reconciling the three different goals was not easy and we surely did our best to ensure the smooth work of the TEN section.  Before entering into the details of this end-of-mandate report, I want to stress how important it is, in view of our role of representatives of the EESC, to work while bearing in mind that we have to provide an example for EU citizens, for taxpayers, for men and women whose trust and faith in EU institutions is challenged every day by difficult times. I will never be tired of renewing the message to treat each other with mutual respect and empathy, since despite the different views we may have, we all work for the same cause – Europe!  Baiba Miltovi***č***a President |

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First priority of the section: The Green Deal as the way out of the energy crisis and into a fair energy transition – the case of energy poverty

Tackling energy poverty has been on top of the agenda of the TEN section, with the organisation of high-level annual conferences on the topic ([*Energy poverty at the crossroads of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Green Deal*](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/conference-energy-poverty-crossroads-european-pillar-social-rights-and-european-green-deal) in 2021; [*Tackling energy poverty at the heart of the ecological and energy transition*](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/tackling-energy-poverty-heart-ecological-and-energy-transition) in 2022; [*Tackling energy poverty for a just transition*](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/tackling-energy-poverty-just-transition) in 2023). These events took stock of existing measures and developed recommendations for the future. They strengthened dialogue and cooperation between civil society organisations and different levels of governance. The annual conferences benefited from the support of the rotating presidencies of the Council of the European Union, in particular the French and Spanish Presidencies, as well as the Energy Poverty Advisory Hub.

In parallel, tackling energy poverty has been taken into account in all TEN section opinions promoting the achievement of the energy transition. With the aggravation of the energy crisis due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, energy poverty was widely addressed through TEN section opinions, both in the context of the energy transition and as a single topic.

To tackle the current energy poverty crisis, the EESC called for the establishment of a broad and ambitious political coalition to analyse and address energy poverty in a holistic approach with the objective of achieving zero energy poverty by 2030. In this context, the Committee strongly advocated for the development of indicators to allow tailor-made measures and social protection schemes for the most vulnerable at national and European level. Another important dimension in tackling energy poverty is the boosting of the renovation of buildings to support the lowest income groups and address housing exclusion. Therefore, the EESC recommended investing in fair and efficient energy to alleviate the phenomenon in the long-term. Finally, the Committee has repeatedly stressed the need to involve citizens in the energy transition, thus encouraging them to create energy communities and to produce clean energy for themselves.

Furthermore, the TEN section initiated work on the gender perspective of energy poverty, and a first thematic debate on [Women in energy poverty](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/women-energy-poverty) was held at the TEN section meeting in November 2022. Along this same lines, a panel at the next annual energy poverty conference will be dedicated to gender mainstreaming measures to tackle energy poverty.

The TEN section took a leading role in the coordination of the EESC sectorial own-initiative opinions covering different aspects of the energy transition, which was the EESC's key political priority for 2022. The section elaborated the umbrella opinion on *A strategic vision on energy transition to enable sustainable development,* setting out the EESC's vision on the energy transition and its role in achieving the EU's strategic autonomy, focusing on speeding up decarbonisation, reducing dependency on energy imports, increasing ownership of the energy transition by people and businesses and supporting vulnerable households.

Second priority of the section: Housing

The energy supply crisis triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the unprecedented increase in energy prices, on top of the economic and social consequences of COVID-19, have intensified the severity of the affordable housing crisis that EU Member States have been facing for years. Therefore, the TEN section pursued work recommending measures aimed at the provision of housing assistance of good quality for those in need and the right to access essential services of good quality.

The section focused on the Commission's new strategy on *A Renovation Wave for Europe* to boost renovation of both public and private buildings and held a high-level roundtable at its meeting in February 2021 to discuss this new strategy. The Committee expressed its support for the renovation wave strategy, as it is a "win-win-win" strategy for the European Union – a threefold win for the climate, also for the recovery thanks to the local jobs created, and finally for the fight against the pandemic and energy poverty and in favour of sustainable housing for all, including vulnerable people.

The TEN section integrated in its work the [*New European Bauhaus (NEB) Initiative*](https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en). The Committee endorsed the concept, convinced that it will help bring the EU closer to Europeans and their local areas through appropriate communication and grassroots initiatives. The TEN section president presented the EESC recommendations of the New European Bauhaus at the Ministerial Conference on Housing and Construction in Nice on 7-8 March 2022. In the framework of the New Bauhaus Festival in June 2022, the section organised a [webinar](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/bauhaus-service-citizens) on *Bauhaus at the service of citizens*, which aimed at inserting the values of services of general interest in relation to social and health services, assistance for the elderly, etc. into the Bauhaus project approach.

In July 2022, the section in conjunction with the Ministry of Economic Affairs of Latvia held a high-level conference in Riga and brought together local, national and European actors to discuss the different approaches to defining households in need of support in terms of access to housing, different practices for funding access to housing and the ways to boost investment in the energy efficiency of buildings. The Committee stressed that at national level, governments should boost efforts to provide energy-efficient housing and underlined that partnerships between government and relevant industries, social partners and civil society were necessary when implementing the national building renovation plans.

At the beginning of 2023, the section looked into the benefits of timber construction in relation to the EU's sustainable carbon cycles, the EU's bioeconomy strategy and the New European Bauhaus and formulated recommendations at the request of the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU on the "Wooden construction for CO2 reduction in the building sector". The Committee underlined that an increase in the use of sustainable wood in construction, especially in public buildings, was essential to reduce carbon emissions. To that end, it stressed the huge importance of an active and sustainable forest management across the EU.

Third priority of the section: Achieving sustainability in maritime, railway and air transport

In the field of transport, the TEN section continued to focus on EC proposals from the *Green Deal, Fit for 55* *package* and *Sustainable and smart mobility strategy*. The issue of COVID-19 marked several EESC opinions at the beginning of the mandate, with the aim of increasing the resilience of the transport sector, in particular of railways and air transport, which were hardest hit by the pandemic.

The Committee overall advocated a just transition, environmental and social sustainability in all modes of transport, development of efficient and sustainable intermodal transport and multimodal logistics, including with third countries via new developments in the TEN-T network. It supported interoperability, better planning, investment in infrastructure and digitalisation, and also investment in skills development and good working conditions. In several opinions the EESC encouraged the promotion of green and sustainable fuels for all transport modes, as well as an increased role of public transport in the green recovery.

The TEN section provided the EESC's overall perspective on the Fit for 55 package in its opinion on *Fit for 55: delivering the EU's 2030 Climate Target on the way to climate neutrality* stressing that in transiting towards a climate-neutral society, Europe needs to embark on a model that is just and sustainable from an economic, social and environmental viewpoint.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine was tackled in the opinion on *Solidarity Lanes EU-Ukraine* highlighting the urgent need to assist Ukraine, but also in *Amended Revision of the TEN-T and Rail Freight Corridor Regulation*, where the EESC welcomes that the extension of TEN-T core network corridors in Russia and Belarus is being replaced by corridors in Ukraine and Moldova.

The TEN section established an excellent cooperation with the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), and in February 2023 TEN bureau members visited the Agency in Cologne, where an exchange of views took place on the Drone Strategy 2.0.

Fourth priority of the section: Information society: cybersecurity and data sovereignty as key components of the EU's strategic autonomy

The TEN section endorsed the deployment of 5G networks and the launch of commercial services in Europe, highlighting also the issues linked to its social and environmental components. In the field of cybersecurity, the section made an important contribution to the renewed European Union cybersecurity strategy, which included a review of the Directive on the security of network and information systems (the NIS Directive). It was considered essential to reach a coordinated and consistent approach to cybersecurity for critical technologies and networks in the European Union, especially in the context of cyberattacks engineered by a wide range of threat actors.

In the field of digital transformation, the TEN section focused on the European strategy for data, which aims at the creation of a dynamic and advanced data market. The EESC supported high standards of data protection, cross-sectoral and responsible data sharing which respects intellectual property rights, sector-specific governance, greater control of data by individuals and a "human-in-command" approach. At the same time, the TEN section went beyond regulatory activity in its own-initiative opinion on *Digital identity, data sovereignty and just digital transition*, calling for full respect for EU fundamental values and rights, European technological sovereignty, and coexistence of digital and traditional tools and services.

The section also focused on the new media and audiovisual action plan proposed by the European Commission in the framework of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), which deals with all audiovisual media, both traditional TV broadcasts and on-demand services, and the section contributed to the legislative proposal for the *Union Secure Connectivity Programme for the period 2023-2027.*

Interinstitutional echo

The TEN Section enjoyed good cooperation with the **rotating presidencies of the Council of the EU**. The EESC exploratory opinion on *The Single European Railway Area*, elaborated at the request of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council, was presented at the Council Working Party on Land Transport on 16 April 2021. The 2021 edition of the energy poverty conference was an integral part of the French Presidency programme, with the participation of Emmanuelle Wargon, French Minister Delegate for Housing, attached to the Minister for Ecological Transition. Blaž Košorok, Slovenian State Secretary from the Ministry of Infrastructure also participated at this event on behalf of the Slovenian Presidency.

Regarding cooperation with the **European Parliament**, Mr Coulon, Rapporteur of TEN/757 on the *New European Bauhaus* (NEB), presented the EESC's recommendations on the initiative in the presence of commissioner Mariya Gabriel at the exchange of views on the NEB jointly organised by CULT and ITRE in February 2021. The EESC opinion on the *Revision of the TEN-T* *and Rail Freight Corridor Regulation* was presented at a meeting of the EP TRAN Committee in October 2022. Several EESC rapporteurs met with a number of MEPs of the TRAN Committee in 2021 and 2022. With regard to energy, EESC members took part in various key exchanges with MEPs. More particularly, MEP Ville Niinistö took the floor at the 2022 energy poverty conference and MEP Lina Gálvez Muñoz participated at the section debate on the *Women in Energy Poverty* in November 2022. TEN section president Baiba Miltovica also had the occasion to discuss the priorities and future activities of the EESC with MEP Cristian-Silviu Buşoi, president of the ITRE Committee, at a bilateral meeting held in October 2022.

As regards cooperation with the **European Commission**, Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis gave a keynote speech at the TEN section meeting on 20 November 2020 and stressed the importance of the transport and energy sectors in the economic recovery, and in particular the importance of the Trans-European Networks. European Commissioner for Energy Kadri Simson took part in EESC and TEN section events on a number of occasions. She joined, for instance, the debate *Beyond the crisis: which way forward for the EU energy policy?* in March 2023, where she exchanged with various EESC members in the framework of the discussion on opinion TEN/791 *State of the Energy Union 2022*. She continuously manifested her support for the EESC's engagement in the fight against energy poverty by participating to the annual conferences of 2021 and 2022, and she is also set to take part in the energy poverty conference taking place in July 2023. In addition, she also participated in the 2021 conference on the *Geopolitics of the Green Deal*, held together with the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and in a number of EESC debates and exchanges, including in relation to the launch of the *Fit for 55 package* in 2021. European Commissioner for Transport Adina Vălean joined the debate on the EESC's response to the *Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy* during the EESC's plenary session in April 2021. Another high-level Commission representative, Walter Goetz, head of cabinet of the European Commissioner for Transport, Adina Vălean, participated in the TEN Section debate on the *Fit for 55 legislative package: Opportunities and challenges for the transport, energy and building sector* in September 2021.

Communication achievements

Besides high-level conferences, public and expert hearings, the TEN Section has organised significant moments of reflection, in the form of discussions and thematic debates, involving high-level EU officials, academics and witnesses (e.g. Debate on Russia's aggression against Ukraine in March; Discussion of the priorities of the new Energy Taskforce with deputy director-general Matthew Baldwin in June 2022; Debate on Energy Regulation with Prof. L. Meeus in September 2022).

In November 2021, the TEN Section held an event promoting the European year dedicated to rail and explaining its potential to become a fully sustainable and competitive transport option, thereby helping to achieve the Green Deal targets. High-level speakers from civil society and politicians shared their views on the subject, including Tālis Linkaits, Latvian Minister for Transport, Aleš Mihelič, State Secretary, Slovenian Ministry of Infrastructure and Barbara Thaler, MEP. The event also included a presentation of the historical "Women in Rail" agreement, signed by the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) on 5 November 2021.

In September 2022, the TEN section organised with the University of Debrecen a high-level, prestigious international scientific-professional conference on *Co-creation and services of general interest in the field of health and well-being* in Debrecen, Hungary. The event received an excellent coverage in local media.

On the occasion of the 2021 conference on *Energy poverty at the crossroads of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Green Deal*, an EESC [report](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/publications-other-work/publications/conference-energy-poverty-crossroads-european-pillar-social-rights-and-european-green-deal#downloads) was published on the context, objectives and outcomes of the conference.

The TEN section carried out a study on *Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS) in the residential sector* in order to assess the introduction of MEPS in different types of buildings, with the focus on the residential sector, and the impact on consumers experiencing energy poverty or in a vulnerable situation. A study on *Gender-disaggregated data on energy poverty* was also launched in January 2023.

Perspective/outlook

The energy market reform will remain high on the agenda of the TEN section following the 2023 Commission work program. The EESC is currently working on two opinions on the topic and will hold a thematic debate at the TEN section meeting in April 2023 on *Reforming the EU's electricity market* with the participation of Commission representatives as well as external stakeholders. Tackling energy poverty and protecting vulnerable households will remain a priority topic in the TEN section, and the third edition of the energy poverty conference will be organised in July 2023 under the Spanish Presidency.

In the context of the European Green Deal and building on the previous efforts in the field of sustainable mobility, the TEN section will focus on cutting greenhouse gas emissions and on investments into new green technologies for transport.

In the field of mobility, digitalisation is the key to seamless multimodality and improved sustainability. A common European mobility data space will boost the digitalisation of the mobility sector and encourage innovative solutions. To prepare for emerging mobility solutions, the section will follow attentively the proposals for an EU regulatory framework for hyperloop, a high-speed and low-carbon transport solution.

Following the successful conference on services of general interest (SGIs) in the field of public health and well-being in September 2022 in Debrecen, as well as the steps taken by the Czech EU Council Presidency towards an EU strategy for rare diseases, the TEN section will organise a conference on the topic during the Spanish Presidency. The conference will aim to bring together local, regional, national and European actors to encourage the setting up of a European policy framework for rare diseases, bring together a concerted strategy across research, digital, healthcare, social welfare complementing existing legislation and encourage continued investment in the field of rare diseases at both European and national levels.

Building upon the previous EESC opinions which tackle different aspects of the increased use of remotely piloted aircraft systems, the EESC will formulate recommendations in an own-initiative opinion on the *European Drone strategy 2.0* in light of the European Green Deal, Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy and Digital Strategy. The Committee will assess the strategy from the overall perspective of civil society trying to find a common ground for the civilian and non-civilian industry, consumers and citizens in general, paying particular attention to environmental and health aspects of drone deployment.

In 2023 the TEN section will concentrate on the next *New Radio Spectrum Policy Program (RSPP)* legislative initiative, which will concern very important and strategic aspects of radio spectrum management and the harmonisation of its use in the European Union. The section will also continue to focus on telecommunications infrastructure, including 5G deployment and the legislative negotiation of the *Gigabit Infrastructure Act*, while continuing to monitor EU policies in the field of cybersecurity and resilience of critical entities.

The TEN section will progress with a study on the *EU space policy and involvement of civil society*, which will look in particular at the roles of the three main players responsible for the space sector: the new European Commission Directorate-General for the Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS), the European Union Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA) and the European Space Agency (ESA).

Appendix – Key statistics

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|  | **As of 29 October 2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **Until 25 April 2023** | **Total** |
| **Section meetings** | 2 | 9 | 9 | 3 | 23 |
| **Section bureau meetings** | 2 | 11 | 12 | 3 | 28 |
| **Study group meetings** | 5 | 40 | 40 | 17 | 102 |
| **Permanent study group meetings** | - | 6 | 7 | 1 | 14 |
| **Opinions** | 3 | 33 | 34 | 3 | 73 |
| Referrals | 3 | 30 | 26 | 2 | 61 |
| Exploratory opinions | - | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Own-initiative opinions | - | 2 | 6 | - | 8 |
| Information reports | - | - | - | - | - |
| Evaluation reports | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Studies** | - | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| **Fact-finding missions** | - | - | 10 | 1 | 11 |
| **Conferences and hearings organized by the section** | 1 | 7 | 10 | 6 | 24 |
| **Participation of members in meetings/events/conferences** | 1 | 16 | 31 | 7 | 55 |
| **Meetings between EESC/EP rapporteurs or section/EP Committee presidents** | - | 2 | 3 | - | 5 |
| **Meetings of EESC members with Commissioners, members of Cabinet, Commission directors-general or directors** | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Meetings of EESC members with Council representatives, permanent representatives or EU presidency representatives** | - | 2 | 3 | - | 5 |