



European Economic and Social Committee | Comité économique et social européen

PERIOD **END OF MANDATE**
2020 **REPORT**
2023 **SECTION FOR THE SINGLE**
MARKET, PRODUCTION
AND CONSUMPTION

**DIRECTORATE C – LEGISLATIVE
WORK**

PRESIDENT: ALAIN COHEUR

Introduction

The functioning of the single market has been severely strained over the past three years, as major crises profoundly change the face of Europe. Over a short timespan we have faced challenges that have affected our industrial production capacities, our standard of living, our well-being and the physical and mental state of many European citizens. As we celebrate the single market's 30th anniversary, we must give thought to the necessary changes that are needed for its future, in view of the changes that are taking place.

Thanks to the enthusiasm and proactivity of our members, our section was very active during this period, particularly on key topics covered by the section. We were the first section in the EESC's history to approve its 1000th opinion on 10 November 2022. We also renewed relations with the European Parliament and the Chair of the Parliament's Committee on Internal Market, in order to make sure our opinions are taken into account.

In addition, we strengthened and improved cooperation with the other sections and with the CCMI, being the first to organise a series of joint events with the various sections on the industrial strategy between 2021 and 2022. This cooperation led to the current Blue Deal initiative.

Finally, we have deeply mourned the loss of our Head of Unit, Luis Lobo, a man praised for his human qualities and his in-depth knowledge on the functioning of the Committee. Since this profound loss we have regularly raised the issue of mismatches between the human resources necessary for the proper functioning of the section and the ever-increasing workload. Legislative work is, after all, the cornerstone of the functioning of our institution.

Many challenges are at our doorstep, but together we can face them.

Alain Coheur

President of the INT section

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For a digital single market

*The completion and proper functioning of the European single market remains the INT section's main focus. In this context, we can no longer talk about the single market without talking about the digital transition, which has guided the section's activities throughout its mandate. The section has adopted opinions on key initiatives related to **regulating the digital single market**, including the [Digital Markets Act](#) and the [Digital Services Act](#), the [Artificial Intelligence Act](#) and the [Data Act](#). As part of its **Observatory of the Digital Transition and the Single Market**¹, the section established links with the European Parliament's Special Committee on Artificial Intelligence in the Digital Age. A joint conference on artificial intelligence was organised in November 2021, bringing together 400 participants and highlighting the Committee's positions on this major topic.*

*The end of the current mandate was marked by the **30th anniversary of the single market**. In December 2022, the Czech Presidency organised a conference on the future of the single market, with the participation of the INT section president. In April 2023, the section organised a debate on the single market with the participation of Mario Monti. During its presidency the section maintained regular relations with the Swedish Presidency of the Council, which requested an exploratory opinion on [improving of the functioning of the single market](#).*

Socially and environmentally responsible companies

*Entrepreneurship in all its forms and sectors is essential for economic growth, innovation, employment and social inclusion. The section has adopted a number of opinions on the **SME strategy** ([SME strategy](#); [SMEs, social economy enterprises, crafts and liberal professions Fit for 55](#); [Business transfers as promoters of sustainable recovery growth in the SME sector](#)) calling on the European Commission to place SMEs at the heart of all key political decisions. Since the SME strategy has not been updated since the COVID-19 crisis, the INT section prepared an own-initiative opinion calling for a [Next generation SME strategy](#), with follow-up missions organised in Sofia and Brussels.*

*The INT section has also been very active in the **social economy area**. Both the Portuguese and the French presidencies requested exploratory opinions on the role of*

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See the DSMO End of Mandate Report.

the social economy in [creating jobs](#) and [using innovative financial instruments as part of the development of social impact companies](#). The Commission's adoption of the **EU Social Economy Action Plan** in December 2021 was a huge milestone. The EESC had called for its adoption for many years, and has been actively involved in its implementation through the organisation of an interinstitutional conference in Strasbourg in May 2022 under the patronage of the French Presidency, and the adoption of an [opinion](#) calling for the action plan to be taken even further.

An industrial policy in transition

Europe's industrial fabric is the backbone of its economies. In March 2020, the European Commission presented its Communication "**A new industrial strategy for Europe**", which was updated in May 2021 following the COVID-19 crisis. The INT section prepared an opinion on each of these key initiatives ([Industrial strategy](#), [Updating the new industrial strategy](#)) and organised a series of events between June 2021 and March 2022: [The path to our industrial future](#). Each event addressed a specific aspect of the strategy, involving all sections and the CCMI.

In May 2022, the EESC adopted three opinions on the **Chips Act package** ([A Chips Act for the EU](#), [Europe's semiconductor ecosystem](#) and [Chips Joint Undertaking](#)), which was at the heart of the European debate on strategic autonomy. In the area of competition policy, the section is in drafting every year its opinion on the **Annual Competition Report** ([Report on Competition Policy 2020](#), [Report on Competition Policy 2021](#)). In 2022, the section also adopted an opinion on [reviewing competition policy](#) and on State subsidy rules for health and social services / SGEI ([State Aid Rules Applicable to Health and Social Services SGEI in a Post Pandemic Scenario](#) and [State subsidy rules for health and social services / SGEI](#)).

Research and innovation are key drivers of industrial transformation. In this context, the EESC has issued opinions on [A new European Innovation Agenda](#), a [Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe](#), [European Missions](#) and a [New European Research Area](#). The European Commission has also asked the Committee to contribute to the Horizon 2020 evaluation ([Ex-post evaluation of Horizon 2020](#)).

A modern and responsible consumer policy

Consumer protection and the promotion of **sustainable consumption and production patterns** are key priorities for the EESC. A number of opinions on these issues were adopted during the mandate, namely opinions on [A new consumer agenda](#), the [Product Safety Directive](#), [Empowering the consumer for the green transition](#), the [Revision of the product liability directive](#) and an own-initiative opinion on [Advertising for modern, responsible consumption](#). The section also organised two editions of its traditional **European Consumer Day**. In 2021, the day focused on [digital and green transitions](#). In 2022, the theme of the day was "[empowering consumers for a more sustainable world](#)". These events brought together the expertise of representatives of civil society, national authorities, and consumer and business organisations, and served to present the Committee's proposals on the main objectives of the Commission's New Consumer Agenda. At the Consumer Summit organised by the Commission in March 2023, the EESC was invited to participate in a workshop focused on the links between digitalisation and the green transition.

Interinstitutional echo

The INT section maintains regular relations with the various directorates-general of the European Commission. In 2021 and 2022, the Commission invited the EESC to organise a workshop as part of its annual event **European Industry Days**. The **European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform**, jointly managed by the two institutions, remains an example of successful cooperation between the EESC and the Commission.

Several INT members were allocated **observer seats** in various European Commission structures, namely the Expert Group on Social Economy and Social Enterprises (GECES), the Fit for Future Platform, the European Research Area Forum for Transition, and the Industrial Forum.

The INT section also cooperates with the **European Parliament**, in particular with the IMCO and ITRE committees. The section rapporteurs meet regularly with the rapporteurs of these two committees to present positions put forth in EESC opinions. Additionally, the Observatory of the Digital Transition and the Single Market has cooperated closely with the European Parliament's Special Commission on Artificial Intelligence in the Digital Age, with a joint conference organised in November 2021. On the occasion of the 30th

anniversary of the single market, the EESC was invited to speak at the IMCO hearing in October 2022, and during an event organised by the Czech Presidency in December 2022.

Communication achievements

*The INT section is present on social media, especially on Twitter, where it has 2 000 followers. The most active account is that of the **European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform**, with 7 400 followers. During this mandate, three high-profile annual conferences were held, the platform's coordination group organised around 40 webinars (#EUCircularTalks), and in 2022, its website welcomed more than 120 000 visitors, gathered over 750 best practices and 62 strategies, and boasted a knowledge centre with more than 400 publications.*

***The section's flagship events**, namely the European Consumer Day, the European Day of Social Economy Enterprises, and the Artificial Intelligence Stakeholder Summit, made great impacts as far as communication was concerned. The closing conference on the new industrial strategy had a great impact on social networks, notably through the participation of high-level speakers (Commissioners Vestager and Breton, as well as MEPs).*

***The Social Economy, the Future of Europe** interinstitutional conference, held in Strasbourg in May 2022, was another clear example of successful communication. It was organised jointly with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the French Presidency, and the City of Strasbourg. The event, in which the EESC played a central role, was a great success, with nearly 2 000 participants.*

Perspective/outlook

The succession of the various crises in recent years has had a profound impact on European citizens, all of whom expect concrete and effective responses. Unlocking the full potential of the single market is essential for the reconstruction process, and remains one of the section's top priorities. The single market cannot be perceived today without its digital and green dimensions and the related challenges they bring. These challenges,

which were already very present in the section's work, must continue to be clearly reflected in the section's future priorities. The section, and in particular its Observatory of the Digital Transition and the Single Market, must continue to work on topics related to the digital transition by cooperating with institutional actors at European and local levels.

These priorities must also be taken into account when selecting own-initiative opinions and the themes of events organised by the section. Great attention should continue to be given to cross-cutting issues and cooperation between the sections. As part of the EESC's new communication strategy, the section will focus its work on its priority topics and cooperate with the other institutions to increase its visibility. The section should focus its efforts on the reinforced follow-up of opinions, in areas such as the digital single market, consumers, and the green transition, as well as the competitiveness of EU businesses.

Appendix – Key statistics

	From 29 October 2020	2021	2022	Until 25 April 2023	Total
Section meetings	2	9	9	3	23
Section Bureau meetings	2	11	9	4	26
Study Group meetings	3	93	56	19	171
Permanent Study Group meetings	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Observatory meetings	1	3	3	1	8
Opinions	3	47	38	11	99
Referrals	2	38	25	10	75
Exploratory opinions	1	3	5	0	9
Own-initiative opinions	0	6	8	0	14
Information reports	0	0	0	0	0
Evaluation reports	0	0	0	1	1
Studies	0	0	0	0	0
Fact-finding missions	0	0	3	1	4
Conferences and hearings organised by the section	1	14	8	2	25
Participation of members in meetings / events / conferences	9	49	51	18	127
Meetings between EESC/EP rapporteurs or section / EP Committee presidents	1	14	3	6	24
Meetings between EESC members and commissioners, members of cabinets, Commission directors-general or directors	0	1	1	0	2
Meetings between EESC members and Council representatives, permanent representatives or EU presidency representatives	0	5	6	1	12