

Workers' Group

EESC OPINIONS REVIEW

JANUARY - JULY 2023



Workers' Group
EESC

ADOPTED OPINIONS
with Rapporteurs/Co-rapporteurs
from the Workers' Group



Workers' Group EESC

EESC Workers' Group

Secretariat

Gr2@eesc.europa.eu

Rue Belliard 99

1040 Brussels

Belgium

The summaries of the adopted opinions presented here were prepared by the Secretariat with the only intention of communicating their content, highlighting the key issues for the Trade Union environment, European Workers, and other relevant partners.

Contents

January	11
SOC/741 – The European care strategy	11
ECO/598 – Euro Area.....	11
REX/537 – COVID-19: The role of civil society in the reconstruction and resilience of the Euro-Mediterranean region.....	12
REX/558 – Blue Planet	12
REX/561 – The power of trade partnerships: together for green and just economic growth	12
REX/563 – The implementation of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement, including the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland	13
REX/565 – Forced labour products ban.....	13
CCMI/192 – Addressing structural shortages and strengthening strategic autonomy in the semiconductor ecosystem.....	14
February.....	15
SOC/718 – Energy Policy and the labour market: consequences for employment in regions undergoing energy transitions.....	15
INT/1005 – Instant payments regulation.....	15
ECO/597 – Communication on orientations for a reform of the EU economic governance framework.....	16
March.....	17
SOC/739 – Violation of sanctions/EU crimes.....	17
SOC/744 – Recommendation on Minimum Income	17
SOC/750 – Strengthening the role and independence of equality bodies	18
SOC/753 – Young people's role in the green transition	18
INT/998 – Strategic Foresight Report 2022.....	19
INT/1007 – Enhancing the convergence of insolvency proceedings	19
INT/1008 – Revision of the Design Directive and Regulation	20
NAT/874 – Revision of the EU action plan against wildlife trafficking	20
ECO/601 – Review of the European Market Infrastructure Regulation (EMIR).....	21
ECO/604 – Administrative cooperation in taxation (DAC 8)	21
TEN/791 – State of the Energy Union 2022	22
TEN/794 – Wooden construction for CO2 reduction in building sector.....	22
TEN/798 – Digitalising the energy system – EU Action Plan	23
REX/566 – Youth Action plan in the EU external action	23
June	24
SOC/747 – Green collective bargaining.....	24
SOC/756 – Social Progress Protocol.....	24
SOC/758 – Measures to fight stigma against HIV.....	25
SOC/759 – Cooperation in the youth field.....	25
INT/969 – Green claims.....	26
INT/1029 – Company law / use of digital tools and processes	26

NAT/892 – Towards a European Food Policy Council as a new governance model in the future EU Framework on Sustainable Food Systems.....	27
NAT/901 – Fisheries - NAFO.....	27
ECO/609 – Implementation of EU macro-regional strategies.....	27
ECO/610 – Harnessing talents in EU regions	28
ECO/617 – Second set of new own resources.....	28
TEN/793 – Electricity market reform	28
TEN/805 – EU Hydrogen Bank.....	29
TEN/807 – Driving licences and driving disqualifications.....	29
July.....	30
SOC/760 – Measures to improve mental health	30
SOC/763 – Access to water: tackling water poverty and its implications for social policy	30
SOC/766 – How to engage with the intended public and how to effectively use the results of works of the citizens' panels?	30
SOC/767 – Strengthening collective bargaining power across the European Union.....	31
INT/1026 – Advertising through influencers and its impact on consumers	31
NAT/890 – Measures to reduce child obesity	31
NAT/896 – Revision of the EU pollinators initiative - A new deal for pollinators	32
ECO/608 – Review of the Bank crisis management and deposit insurance framework.....	32
ECO/611 – The economics of an "EU Blue Deal"	32
ECO/614 – Tax policy review - low-income households and the green transition	33
TEN/804 – Sustainable and resilient water infrastructures and distribution networks.....	33
CCMI/201 – Review of the CO2 emission standards for heavy-duty vehicles	33
CCMI/207 – The decarbonisation of European industry and the role of innovation and digitalisation in driving it.....	34
CCMI/217 – Cyber Solidarity Act.....	34

Body	Number	Name	Rapp/Co-Rapp	Country	Plenary
SOC	741	The European care strategy	TZOTZE-LANARA	EL	January
SOC	718	Energy Policy and the labour market: consequences for employment in regions undergoing energy transitions	BARRERA CHAMORRO	ES	February
SOC	739	Violations of Sanctions/ EU crimes	MORENO DIAZ	ES	March
SOC	744	Recommendation on Minimum Income	SOETE	BE	March
SOC	750	Strengthening the role and independence of equality bodies	MERLO	IT	March
SOC	753	Young people's role in the green transition	MERLO	IT	March
SOC	747	Green Collective Bargaining (Good practices and future prospects)	BARRERA CHAMORRO	ES	June
SOC	756	Social Progress Protocol	BARRERA CHAMORRO	ES	June
SOC	758	Measures to fight stigma against HIV	MERLO	IT	June
SOC	759	Cooperation on Youth	MERLO	IT	June
SOC	760	Measures to improve mental health	KOKALOV	BG	July
SOC	763	Access to water: tackling water poverty and its implications for social policy	TRINDADE	PT	July
SOC	766	How to engage with the intended public and how to effectively use the results of works of the citizens' panels?	QUAREZ	FR	July
SOC	767	Strengthening collective bargaining power across the European Union	VON BROCKDORFF	MT	July
INT	1005	Instant payments regulation	LEFÈVRE	FR	February
INT	998	Strategic Foresight Report 2022	PAGLIARA	IT	March
INT	1007	Enhancing the convergence of insolvency proceedings	VON BROCKDORFF	MT	March
INT	1008	Revision of the Design Directive and Regulation	WYCKMANS	BE	March
INT	969	Green Claims	PAGLIARA	IT	June

INT	1029	Company law/use of digital tools and processes	SALIS-MADINIER	FR	June
INT	1026	Advertising through influencers and its impact on consumers	PALMIERI	IT	July
NAT	874	Revision of the EU action plan against wildlife trafficking	YILDIRIM	FR	March
NAT	892	Towards a European Food Policy Council as a new governance model in the future EU Framework on Sustainable Food Systems	KÁLLAY	HU	June
NAT	901	Fisheries – NAFO	PALMIERI	IT	June
NAT	890	Measures to reduce child obesity	CAÑO AGUILAR	ES	July
NAT	896	Revision of the EU pollinators initiative - A new deal for pollinators	MITOV	BG	July
ECO	598	Euro Area	DANDEA	RO	January
ECO	597	Communication on orientations for a reform of the EU economic governance framework	BIEGON	DE	February
ECO	601	Review of the European Market Infrastructure Regulation (EMIR)	MARIN	RO	March
ECO	604	Administrative cooperation in taxation (DAC 8)	DANDEA	RO	March
ECO	609	Implementation of EU macro-regional strategies	PALMIERI	IT	June
ECO	610	Harnessing talents in EU regions	BABRAUSKIENĖ	LT	June
ECO	617	Second set of new own resources	VON BROCKDORFF	MT	June
ECO	608	Review of the Bank crisis management and deposit insurance framework	LEFÈVRE	FR	July
ECO	611	The economics of an "EU Blue deal"	MARIN	RO	July
ECO	614	Tax policy review - low-income households and the green transition	VON BROCKDORFF	MT	July
TEN	791	State of the Energy Union 2022	PAGLIARA	IT	March
TEN	794	Wooden construction for CO2 reduction in building sector	HÄGGLUND	SE	March

TEN	798	Digitalising the energy system – EU Action Plan	KATTNIG	AT	March
TEN	793	Electricity market reform	QUAREZ	FR	June
TEN	805	Hydrogen bank	KATTNIG	AT	June
TEN	807	Driving licences and driving disqualifications	CHARRY	FR	June
TEN	804	Sustainable and resilient water infrastructures and distribution networks	KATTNIG	AT	July
REX	537	COVID-19: The role of civil society in the reconstruction and resilience of the Euro-Mediterranean region	PAGLIARA	IT	January
REX	558	Blue Planet	PALMIERI	IT	January
REX	561	The power of trade partnerships: together for green and just economic growth	BUZEK	DE	January
REX	563	The implementation of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement, including the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland	O'CONNOR	IE	January
REX	565	Forced labour products ban	WAGNSONNER	AT	January
REX	566	Youth Action plan in the EU external action	BABRAUSKIENĖ	LT	March
CCMI	192	Addressing structural shortages and strengthening strategic autonomy in the semiconductor ecosystem	NELISSEN	BE	January
CCMI	201	Review of the CO2 emission standards for heavy-duty vehicles	BERGRATH	DE	July
CCMI	207	The decarbonisation of European industry and the role of innovation and digitalisation in driving it	SITÁROVÁ	SK	July
CCMI	217	Cyber Solidarity Act	FORNEA	RO	July

Summaries of adopted opinions

January

SOC/741 – The European care strategy

Zoe Tzotze-Lanara

The European Care Strategy contains proposals for action to strengthen the care infrastructure in Europe in a sustainable manner, by supporting both care receivers and care providers. The opinion emphasizes the importance of family and informal care as an element of sustainable care systems, calling for a swift mapping of the needs and realities of this type of care. The Workers' Group particularly welcomes the focus on better protection of care workers' rights and the commitment to improve working conditions in the sector, but strongly regrets that the Strategy does not take enough into consideration the many undocumented workers already providing care in Europe, calling for a focus on all care workers living in the EU – regardless of their migration and residence status.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!6hTRYc>

ECO/598 – Euro Area

Petru Sorin Dandea

The European Union is facing an energy crisis leading to high inflation and economic recession, on top of a climate crisis, and which started at the beginning of the post-COVID recovery. Many households are facing difficulties in paying their energy bills, and should be protected. For the Workers' Group, this should be done in a two-tier policy targeting both those below poverty lines, and those from the working and lower middle class. Fundamental to cushion the blow will be the implementation of the Minimum Wages Directive, the use of social dialogue, and the use of prudence with monetary policies, as the current inflation wave is exogenous in origin, to avoid pro-cyclical effects worsening the situation.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!BnmXgg>

REX/537 – COVID-19: The role of civil society in the reconstruction and resilience of the Euro-Mediterranean region

Angelo Pagliara

The global pandemic and ensuing economic crisis hit the Euro-Mediterranean region hard and exacerbated existing problems in addition to creating new ones. The Workers' Group believes that a fair and equitable economic and social recovery is only possible through the involvement of social partners and civil society organisations. The recovery of the region must be guided by principles such as respect for the rule of law, the protection of democratic values and social and human rights, and a commitment to sustainable development and climate neutrality goals. The recovery of the Southern Neighbourhood has been characterised by a large share of employment in the informal economy. There is a need to strengthen professional skills and ensure better pay and conditions for workers.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!VMyCnx>

REX/558 – Blue Planet

Stefano Palmieri

Actions in marine issues must be coherent at different government levels and between sectors, and must be knowledge-based and acknowledge that these issues are not limited to the sea, but also to land activities that result in pollution. To strengthen the Commission Communication, the Workers' Group calls for financial deterrents to the use of flags of convenience and proposes extending the Carbon Adjustment mechanism to cover the pollutants. Likewise, further study of the impact of deep-sea mining and ensuring safety and security and sea are fundamental. For this purpose, the Workers' Group calls for decent living and working conditions specifically for member states to ratify ILO Convention No 188/2007 on Fishing.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!qyhWnv>

REX/561 – The power of trade partnerships: together for green and just economic growth

Tanja Buzek

Since the EU-Korea Free Trade Agreement, all modern EU trade agreements include dedicated chapters on trade and sustainable development (TSD), with a broad set of mutually agreed commitments regarding environmental, social and labour standards. The current EC communication identifies policy priorities and key action points to further enhance the effectiveness of this strategy. In this framework, the possibility of trade sanctions for breaches of core TSD provisions and the commitment to strengthening the role of the Domestic Advisory Groups in TSD application are particularly welcome.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!ByHtpQ>

REX/563 – The implementation of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement, including the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland

Jack O'Connor

The EU-UK Follow-up Committee was set up in 2021 to maintain and strengthen relations between EU and UK civil society organisations, as well as monitor the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement, particularly with regard to crucial provisions such as those governing citizens' rights and the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland which is part of this Agreement. The report examines the state of implementation of the Agreement and particularly the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, based on fact-finding missions on the ground in the UK. It mainly points out the heavily burdened EU-UK relationship due to the impasse over the implementation of this Protocol and regrets the loss of free EU movement arising from the UK's decision not to remain in EU programmes such as Erasmus as well as the fact that so many problems persist as regards the protection of citizens' rights. In the report it is also reminded that unless civil society links are nurtured and sustained through formal structures, they will 'wither away'.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!x4Dx6C>

REX/565 – Forced labour products ban

Thomas Wagnsonner

Important issues underlined are the need for the ratification of the Protocol of 2014 to the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930, by all EU Member States and a corresponding EU legislative initiative based on existing ILO conventions to combat all other forms of child labour. Social partners and civil society have a central role to play in combating all forms of forced labour and their institutional anchoring in this legislation is paramount. The proposal for guidelines to assist companies with identifying, preventing and ending forced labour in their operations and value chains is welcome. The Workers' Group particularly calls for EU support for a binding UN treaty on business and human rights, and for consideration to be given to a possible ILO convention on decent work in supply chains.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!kvXnPB>

CCMI/192 – Addressing structural shortages and strengthening strategic autonomy in the semiconductor ecosystem

Guido Nelissen

Semiconductors fundamental for nearly all economic activities, are for the most part produced outside the EU. The European Semiconductor Strategy should therefore promote all stages of the value chain, reinforcing emphasis on raw materials, circularity of production, and existing dependencies. Existing free trade agreements should also be reviewed to consider European Strategic Autonomy, and investment should be specially targeted where dependency from foreign technology is very high, in an economically efficient manner yet balanced among member states.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!xCwvGF>

February

SOC/718 – Energy Policy and the labour market: consequences for employment in regions undergoing energy transitions

Maria del Carmen Barrera Chamorro

While the energy transitions are necessary to combat climate change, for the Workers' Group the negative economic, occupational, and social effects of the energy transition in the short and medium terms are concerning, and have been exacerbated by the war in Ukraine and the cost of living crisis. The response of the Member states should consider appropriate ways to adjust the labour policies according to the new energy framework (reskilling programs to improve employability; high-quality employment incentives; adequate minimum income and universal access to energy services). We call upon the Commission and the Parliament, the Member States, and the regions of the EU to involve the social partners and other civil society organizations in a more effective way to implement policies with high added value in terms of employment and social protection, and in monitoring and assessing them. Some funds such as the Just Transition Mechanism (JMT) are welcomed. However, other indicators as the Decarbonisation Employment Potential (DEP) at the different territorial units for statistics (NUTS), should be taken into account to improve the relationship between environment and energy transition policies and labour market, development of regions and social protection policies.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!x7Qwg7>

INT/1005 – Instant payments regulation

Christophe Lefèvre

IPs are a form of credit transfer whereby funds pass from the payer's account to the payee's in a matter of seconds, at any time, day or night, on any day of the year. This distinguishes IPs from other credit transfers, which are processed by payment service providers only during business hours, with the funds credited to the payee only by the end of the following business day. The proposal for instant credit transfers in euro is a positive step leading to more secure transactions and supporting innovation and competition in the EU payments market. The reachability of service for European consumers and businesses is crucial for the success of instant payments in the EU, as well as measures to improve the fight against fraud and provisions to ensure the uniform application of EU law and sanctions.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!CWjH47>

ECO/597 – Communication on orientations for a reform of the EU economic governance framework

Dominika Biegon

The Commission aims to address the need for a strong coordination of budgetary and structural policies and effective economic and fiscal surveillance ahead of the Member States' budgetary processes for 2024. The focus on strengthening debt sustainability is to be welcomed; reference values such as the 3% of GDP deficit criterion are maintained, whereas the 1/20th rule that could overburden high-debt Member States is abandoned. The communication focuses on net primary expenditure as the main evaluation parameter. The relevant legislative proposals should establish minimum standards of national parliamentary oversight and organised civil society involvement. It must also be ensured that all governments are committed to a revised framework.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!DjbGP6>

March

SOC/739 – Violation of sanctions/EU crimes

José Antonio Moreno Díaz

The unjustified aggression of Russia against Ukraine has prompted legislation on a European framework of criminal offenses and sanctions. As it has been recently discovered, there have been some violations of those sanctions. On this point, the EESC welcomes the decision to include sanction violation among the list of crimes under article 83 (1) TFEU as well as the proposal of the directive to approximate definitions and minimal penalties in national legislation for sanction breaches. However, we regret that the decision has not been democratically deliberated in the EP and that there was no assessment or consultation with the EESC. We also encourage the EP, the EC, and the Council to exempt humanitarian agencies and personnel from criminal liability, to protect whistleblowers and journalists and to deliver adequate information to the private sector and CSOs to comply with the new legislation. Lastly, we underline the need to guarantee the due process rights of accused persons and express our concern about the fact that serious crimes such as gender-based violence and hate crimes remain outside the scope of Art. 83(1).

More info at <https://europa.eu/!9wXqCf>

SOC/744 – Recommendation on Minimum Income

Jason Deguara / Paul Soete

Discussions about setting criteria to determine a European Minimum Income have been going on for some years, as many countries in the EU lack such a scheme. We welcome further social policies and actions to combat precarity and poverty across the EU and to finance social protection systems through the establishment of a minimum income calculated on the basis of a robust methodology to enable a dignified life. We insist on the need for continuous monitoring of the implementation of the minimum income calculation to keep it in line with inflation, with the support of CSOs, social partners, and welfare organizations. It is also important to take into account the need to design this Directive keeping in mind certain groups such as long-term unemployed groups, and to include safeguards that ensure non-discrimination of potential beneficiaries as well as mechanisms to secure accessibility for vulnerable groups. This social policy should be combined with other social policies to reduce poverty and inequality in the Union.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!Qgckxf>

SOC/750 – Strengthening the role and independence of equality bodies

Nicoletta Merlo

Equality bodies are organizations that promote equality, tackle discrimination, and monitor and report on discrimination issues. The EC has adopted two proposals to strengthen equality bodies (independence, resources, and power) so that they can combat discrimination more effectively under EU directives. We emphasise the importance of striking the right balance between setting out standards for equality bodies and subsidiarity in the proposed directives, while ensuring that the overall objective remains a priority. Moreover, the intersectionality approach should be taken into account in policies at both national and EU level. Member states should also be required to report on actions taken concerning their interactions with equality bodies and the results of those actions. Furthermore, the reporting time frame should be reduced to three years instead of five, for the supervision mechanism to be effective. organized civil society must play a leading role in the implementation of national non-discrimination frameworks and the reinforcement of existing practices.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!YXX4vn>

SOC/753 – Young people's role in the green transition

Nicoletta Merlo

The Green Transition poses new challenges to young people, and therefore, they should play a crucial role in the decision-making processes on policies aimed at building a sustainable future. We therefore call upon the EU institutions and member states to integrate the youth perspective in green policy areas through the full adoption of the EU Youth Test. Moreover, the European Year of Skills framework should provide young people with the necessary skills to face the new challenges of the climate change, as well as organise structural educational programs in schools. Young entrepreneurs can play an important role in the green transition. They should play a key role in guiding the institutions to invest resources to help businesses convert their activities, redeploy workers or train them so that they can acquire new skills.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!WYrbv4>

INT/998 – Strategic Foresight Report 2022

Angelo Pagliara

The Strategic Foresight Report 2022 brings a forward-looking and comprehensive perspective on the interplay between the twin transitions (the green and the digital) towards 2050 in a geopolitical context of uncertainty. The twinning may bring benefits that may help boost both industries, whereas there may be still some challenges to address. The EESC should be involved in the development of the foresight agenda from the very beginning as the building of a new sustainable development model should count on the engagement of civil society. We call on the Commission to set out a clearer picture of the risks involving the scarcity of resources such as raw materials and emphasise the urgent need to strengthen strategic energetic autonomy and develop long-term policies which generate competitiveness, productivity and quality jobs with the adoption of an instrument based on the SURE model.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!BKxv9q>

INT/1007 – Enhancing the convergence of insolvency proceedings

Philip Von Brockdorff

The Insolvency Directive seeks to offer more certainty and create a common minimum standard of insolvency regimes across Member States, encouraging more effective cross-border investment. A new round of convergence of some aspects of insolvency proceedings is welcome. The aim should be to find a balance between premature insolvency and proceedings starting too late, as well as the need for transparency of proceedings and some criteria to discourage lenders from issuing high-risk loans, as they can cause reckless financial decisions. Furthermore, the proposal falls short of providing a harmonized definition of insolvency grounds and the ranking of claims, both of which are key to achieving greater efficiency and limiting the wide fragmentation in national insolvency rules. The proposed special procedure to facilitate and speed up the winding down of microenterprises allowing for a more cost-efficient insolvency process for such enterprises is welcome, although it can cause the overburdening of national judicial systems. Finally, we would welcome any proposal which can address the issue of insolvency of natural persons.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!BKxv9q>

INT/1008 – Revision of the Design Directive and Regulation

Ferre Wyckmans

An effective system of design protection is beneficial to consumers and the general public in that it encourages fair competition and commercial practices and contributes to economic development by enhancing creativity in industry, products, commercial activities and exports. Accordingly, the proposal at hand aims to ensure that design protection is fit for purpose in the digital age and more accessible and efficient for individual designers, SMEs and industries by being cheaper and less complicated, while guaranteeing legal certainty. In this framework, the new definition of a design is to be supported.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!QTJR4C>

NAT/874 – Revision of the EU action plan against wildlife trafficking

Ozlem Yildirim

Wildlife trafficking has become one of the world's most lucrative organised criminal activities, with its worth estimated at up to EUR 20 billion a year globally. The EU is an important final market and transit platform for illegally traded wildlife. With this in mind, the Commission's commitment to provide sufficient financial and human resources to curb this activity by integrating wildlife trade in the EU funds is welcome. However, it is important to dedicate an agreed percentage from these funds including for the training of staff to the fight against wildlife trafficking to help accountability. Moreover, effective and dissuasive sanctions are very important as the current level of sanctions proposed by the Council in the context of the Environmental Crime Directive is too low. The setting up of homogenous structures across the EU in the form of inter-agency committees and specialized units or staff trained to combat wildlife trafficking as well as dedicated channels for communication and collaboration with social partners and civil society are also key elements in this framework.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!3PbVNq>

ECO/601 – Review of the European Market Infrastructure Regulation (EMIR)

Florian Marin

The aim is to boost the strategic autonomy of EU capital markets, increase internal clearing capacity and make the EU clearing system more secure and robust. Considering the latest turmoil in the banking markets, it is essential for the financial stability of the EU capital markets to have a competitive and efficient clearing system. In this framework, the significance of providing enough clearing capacity within the EU in order to rapidly take over clearing activities from the UK after Brexit should be underlined, as it is important to reduce exposure to UK central counterparties (CCPs). More specific rules and incentives are needed to support a switch from UK clients towards EU-based CCPs, and market participants should be obliged to report the exact figures and dependence on foreign clearers. It is also crucial to have specific data about the EU clearing system covering all asset classes and volumes. Social, governance and environmental risks of CCPs must be included in risk models and have the same level of importance. Finally, supervisory authorities should also be provided with supplementary resources to allow them to effectively exercise their supervision tasks, and civil society should be involved in the monitoring mechanism.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!cdFp4g>

ECO/604 – Administrative cooperation in taxation (DAC 8)

Petru Sorin Dandea

This amending directive aims to provide greater tax transparency on crypto assets. For this, it shall expand the reporting and exchange of information between tax authorities to include income or revenue generated through crypto-assets by users residing in the EU, as currently national administrations lack information about these trades. This is a positive step in the fight against tax evasion and avoidance, but for the Workers' Group the directive should not be limited to transactions and should also cover holdings of crypto-assets.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!krXNqm>

TEN/791 – State of the Energy Union 2022

Angelo Pagliara

The State of the Union Report of 2022 assesses the energy supply and demand in the EU, diversification of energy supply, the just transition, and the impact on consumers and businesses. It details the European policy response to diverse challenges, notably through the REPowerEU plan, but also through a range of other measures to address energy prices and ensure security of supply. It also shows how what currently is feasible was labelled as too optimistic before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. For the Workers' Group, however, greater stress is needed on the consequences of energy prices, including the creation of an instrument based on the SURE model. Likewise, the Green Deal is still missing the corresponding social policies to ensure a just transition and future reports should take into account the importance of comprehensive employment, skills and social policies.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!RCMBYG>

TEN/794 – Wooden construction for CO₂ reduction in building sector

Sam Hägglund

The opinion focuses on the advantages of modern industrial wooden construction as an important lever to drive the green transition. The supply of wood should be promoted with active and sustainable forest management and should not be hampered by policy constraints and unnecessary bureaucratic and technical requirements. Training and development on the use of new sustainable construction methods and materials is needed for all those involved in the construction process as well as quality-based procurement procedures that include sustainability and life-cycle criteria, promoting timber construction. The EU should develop a carbon certification scheme that takes full account of the role wood products play in offsetting emissions.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!TBmjmi>

TEN/798 – Digitalising the energy system – EU Action Plan

Thomas Kattnig

The Commission Action Plan is centred around promoting connectivity, interoperability and seamless exchanges of energy data, promoting investment in the smart grid, better services from digital innovation to engage consumers in the energy transition, strengthening cybersecurity and ensuring that the growing energy needs are in line with the Green Deal. While these objectives are well received, for the Workers' Group the silo approach of digitalisation ignoring other factors (such as social cohesion) endangers the feasibility of the project. In particular, the fact that reality is often far away from the Commission's documents. This is particularly problematic in the lack of smart grid investment, and the very small role of self-consumption and energy communities, all suffering from lack of incentives and administrative and regulatory roadblocks.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!gmwXBx>

REX/566 – Youth Action plan in the EU external action

Tatjana Babrauskienė

The Youth Action Plan (YAP) is the EU's operational roadmap for engaging young people in European external action to improve the way the EU works for and with young people worldwide. Some of the new flagship projects will be the Youth and Women in Democracy Initiative, the Youth Empowerment Fund or the Africa-Europa Youth Academy. The EESC should be more actively involved in the implementation of the YAP, as the experience of organized civil society, particularly the youth organizations, can be a great resource. Moreover, it is necessary to monitor the mechanism and collect data to assess the outcomes of the policies with the help of youth organizations. It is important to encourage the youth national councils, to focus education activities on equality and mental health services and to combat child labour in the framework of the YAP.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!FpwTQw>

June

SOC/747 – Green collective bargaining

Maria del Carmen Barrera Chamorro

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) emphasizes the need for businesses and workers to be involved in environmental protection and climate change efforts. The Workers' Group suggests that green issues should be a stronger focus of collective bargaining, allowing negotiable clauses to be included in collective agreements that directly or indirectly impact the environment. These clauses can cover topics such as the environmental impact of companies, worker protection from environmental effects, the impact of the green transition on work organization and skills, and internal monitoring of environmental implementation. The Committee highlights the potential benefits of green collective bargaining in promoting sustainability and combating climate change. It calls for the involvement of social partners, civil society, and for the development of effective information and consultation rights in addressing the challenges of the green transition. Lastly, the EESC also recommends incentives for businesses to designate environmental transition representatives and provide environmental training.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!3cvHxy>

SOC/756 – Social Progress Protocol

Maria del Carmen Barrera Chamorro

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) emphasizes the need to promote a highly competitive social market economy by integrating the single market and social policy. The Workers' Group supports the inclusion of a social progress protocol (SPP) in the Treaties to advance the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and its action plan. The SPP aims to prioritize social and fundamental rights over economic freedoms, protect social partners' autonomy, and prevent regression of social rights. The EESC welcomes the European Commission's proposal for Treaty reform and considers the CoFoE conclusions a suitable roadmap. The EESC urges the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU to drive this proposal and encourage broad institutional involvement. The Committee believes that implementing the SPP will strengthen the autonomy of social partners and contribute to the EU's economic growth and citizens' well-being.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!jdMJ7Q>

SOC/758 – Measures to fight stigma against HIV

Nicoletta Merlo

We welcome the Spanish Presidency's initiative of setting the goal to eliminate HIV related stigma and discrimination in Europe by 2030, as available data clearly show the continuation of its harmful consequences in various parts of the world, in specific social contexts and key populations. In order to overcome stigma, discrimination and false stereotypes, it is essential to promote awareness-raising, training and information actions, especially in schools, with the involvement of organised civil society. People with HIV must have equal opportunities for access and professional growth in the world of work. They should also be able to benefit from specific arrangements such as flexible working hours or extended leave for medical visits with guaranteed confidentiality. At the same time, to control the spread of infection, early diagnosis, early start of treatment and continuity of care are essential.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!kXr4gJ>

SOC/759 – Cooperation in the youth field

Nicoletta Merlo

The EESC emphasizes the need for accurate data to successfully implement the EU youth strategy and address the impact of crises on and policies directed towards young people. Strengthening the EU Youth Dialogue and involving youth representatives in policymaking is crucial, considering also their engagement through technology and social media. Efforts to increase youth participation in politics and improve turnout are encouraged. Social dialogue should be strengthened, particularly among young members, and laws and policies should undergo a Youth Test to prevent discrimination. Priority should be given to integrating young people into the labor market and addressing specifically NEETs. The EESC also believes that mental health support, sports and cultural activities should be provided, and access to decent housing and work-life balance should be ensured. Lastly, young people should be taken into account in the twin transition and intersectionality should be taken into account for marginalized young people.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!7Jkr4j>

INT/969 – Green claims

Angelo Pagliara

The proposal for a directive proposes to supplement the regulatory framework for supporting sustainable consumption by addressing specific aspects of environmental claims as regards their substantiation, communication and verification. This is mostly the phenomenon of the "Greenwashing". As the EESC shares the vision of the Commission about moving quickly towards a circular economy, it claims an increased involvement of the Social Partners and Civil Society Organizations in the process.

The EESC urges the EC to ensure that the requirements set in the Green Claims Directive become a model for a minimum level of protection against greenwashing, and to avoid that sectorial legislation could be a way to opt out of them. It also highlights the risk of the proliferation of environmental claims based on compensation via the use of offsetting credits. Lastly, the EESC urges to increase the legal certainty of these claims and to include microenterprises.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!CdTHdn>

INT/1029 – Company law / use of digital tools and processes

Franca Salis-Madinier

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) supports the European Commission's proposal to enhance the Business Registers Interconnection System (BRIS) for improved company information reliability and transparency. The proposal should benefit SMEs, stakeholders, creditors, consumers and employees in cross-border activities by reducing costs, supplying information needed and improving the functioning of the single market.

The EESC advocates for further digital tool implementation and inclusivity, expanding the scope to include partnerships, business groups, and third-country branches. It also recommends adding additional information, such as employee numbers and activity sectors, and interconnecting BRIS with other systems. The EESC supports preventive control measures and urges stricter compliance penalties. The Committee endorses the European Company Certificate and suggests improvements to the digital power of attorney. Lastly, it conditionally supports the once-only principle (no resubmission of company information when a company from one MS sets up subsidiaries in another MS) and proposes safeguards for information reliability checks between Member States.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!J4WhDW>

NAT/892 – Towards a European Food Policy Council as a new governance model in the future EU Framework on Sustainable Food Systems

Piroska Kállay

The conservation and enforcement measures adopted by the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) should be transposed into EU law, with a view to achieving their uniform and effective implementation within the EU. However, the proposal under consideration does not establish an efficient mechanism for transposing the measures adopted by NAFO, and does not resolve the issue of having to update these measures each year. Accordingly, we call for a more efficient, simpler mechanism, and therefore propose drafting a regulation that contains a single article stipulating that the European Union must, without fail, apply NAFO measures to its fleet.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!8Vx7jR>

NAT/901 – Fisheries - NAFO

Stefano Palmieri

The conservation and enforcement measures adopted by the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) should be transposed into EU law, with a view to achieving their uniform and effective implementation within the EU. However, the proposal under consideration does not establish an efficient mechanism for transposing the measures adopted by NAFO, and does not resolve the issue of having to update these measures each year. Accordingly, we call for a more efficient, simpler mechanism, and therefore propose drafting a regulation that contains a single article stipulating that the European Union must, without fail, apply NAFO measures to its fleet.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!c7h3V3>

ECO/609 – Implementation of EU macro-regional strategies

Stefano Palmieri

Macro-regional strategies (MRS) play an important role in promoting social, territorial, and economic cohesion and fostering the integration of neighbouring countries. The Committee emphasizes the need for cross-sectoral and multi-level cooperation among countries and the various actors involved in MRS to seek for the best national interest and to mitigate the bureaucracy complexities. Efforts should be made to strengthen MRS to inspire confidence, promote European values, and achieve social, territorial, and economic cohesion, as well as the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. The EESC highlights the positive impact of MRS in addressing crises and facilitating integration. It calls for addressing disparities, strengthening the link between green, digital, and social transitions, involving civil society organizations and social partners, and enhancing the governance and involvement of local actors in MRS.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!BmbMRw>

ECO/610 – Harnessing talents in EU regions

Tatjana Babrauskienė

We welcome the Commission's commitment to the design and implementation of regional and territorial strategies based on regions' specific needs, in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights and the long-term vision of the EU's rural areas, and through the targeted use of existing EU funds. At the same time, freedom of movement in the European labour market also needs to be protected, as it needs to remain a choice rather than a pressure due to lack of prospects in people's own regions. In order to better address the labour and skills shortages, long-term solutions are needed to support regional development, such as better infrastructure, support to the unemployed, improved job quality, education and skills development, etc. Sustainable investment in quality jobs, access to training and essential services, social dialogue, and collective bargaining, respecting the social partners, are key in this framework. And stronger coordination is needed among the EU's recovery, resilience and cohesion funds, including the Just Transition Fund, with a view to ensuring that the funds are used to cater for these needs. These points should be taken into consideration in the mid-term review of the multiannual financial framework.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!X9GhHY>

ECO/617 – Second set of new own resources

Philip Von Brockdorff

The EU needs additional funding via its own resources to repay the money borrowed within the NextGenerationEU Scheme, or it risks impacting significantly all the other programmes. There are different options available for additional income, some might include a Financial Transaction Tax or an EU-wide digital transaction tax, provided the OECD/G20 agreement is not respected by other parties.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!tRgrQ6>

TEN/793 – Electricity market reform

Christophe Quarez

Electricity is not an ordinary commodity, but rather a service of general interest, and an essential building block of our societies. The electricity market needs to cover sustainability, affordability, and security of supply. However, the recent crisis has shown that the current liberalised energy market cannot meet these goals and does not create enough incentives for renewables past a certain point. For the Workers' Group, taking into account the three main goals and also ensuring the fight against energy poverty and the protection of the most vulnerable, a hybrid system with a government-established facility must be established. This should guarantee a minimum price for producers, a maximum one for consumers, and eliminate the current state of affairs where the marginal pricing system has produced unfair prices and dysfunctional energy mix configurations.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!Mxh9Y4>

TEN/805 – EU Hydrogen Bank

Thomas Kattnig

The European Hydrogen Bank is proposed as a financial instrument to kick-start and promote the production and import of green H₂ in the EU. Green Hydrogen can be particularly useful in areas where electrification is difficult. It is fundamental to ensure that fossil fuels are not used for intensive electrolysis processes and that H₂ financed by the EU complies with the Taxonomy Regulation. Likewise, the funding should also be subject to companies working in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner: the European Hydrogen Bank goals must be linked to the ones of the Just Transition.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!GfdpNg>

TEN/807 – Driving licences and driving disqualifications

Philippe Charry

The European Commission's legislative package aims to achieve zero fatalities on EU roads by 2050. It focuses on introducing a digital driving licence and enhancing road safety. The package addresses bureaucratic delays in exchanging foreign licences by providing a digital driving licence accessible on mobile devices. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) supports this objective while recommending personalized digital training for all age groups. The EESC suggests removing age-based validity periods for driving licences and implementing non-discriminatory medical assessments for all drivers. The Committee also calls for better safeguards in driving disqualifications to avoid overlap with criminal matters. Lastly, the EESC highlights the need to address road infrastructure management responsibilities and harmonize vocational training for young lorry drivers.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!wKv33j>

July

SOC/760 – Measures to improve mental health

Ivan Kokalov

It is necessary to develop a comprehensive approach to mental health. The EESC recommends reforming health systems to prioritize long-term interventions and multidisciplinary care. It further calls for the integration of mental health promotion, prevention and approach into all policies at EU and national levels. Early diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation are crucial. The Committee emphasizes the importance of lifting discrimination surrounding mental health conditions and improving access to support services.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!XQbnw3>

SOC/763 – Access to water: tackling water poverty and its implications for social policy

Carlos Trindade

The opinion looks into measures to be taken at European, national and local level and the role of organised civil society to tackle water poverty and its effects, notably on the most vulnerable. It also opens a reflection on how to mitigate the social, political and economic effects of water poverty, and its impact on human health, also in view of Europe's turbulent geopolitical situation..

More info at <https://europa.eu/!b8Jv98>

SOC/766 – How to engage with the intended public and how to effectively use the results of works of the citizens' panels?

Christophe Quarez

While representative democracy is the cornerstone of political systems, participatory and deliberative mechanisms open to citizens can help rebuild trust in politics that has been eroded over the years. Moreover, thanks to the digital progress, participatory democracy practices involving citizens' panels have proliferated in the EU. The EESC has specific expertise as a forum of civil dialogue where solutions are found based on consensus and can play a major role in developing participatory democracy instruments such as citizens' panels to support its advisory work. In this case, its Rules of Procedure will need to be adapted to incorporate these instruments.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!fNw7kH>

SOC/767 – Strengthening collective bargaining power across the European Union

Philip Von Brockdorff

The EESC underlines the importance of collective bargaining in reducing income inequalities and promoting economic growth. However, it expresses concern about the declining coverage of trade union agreements, especially with the challenges posed by the platform economy, which weakens their bargaining power. The EESC calls for measures to strengthen social dialogue and collective bargaining, while respecting the autonomy of social partners and national industrial relations. Governments are key actors in facilitating collective bargaining and protecting workers' rights.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!rFhgbc>

INT/1026 – Advertising through influencers and its impact on consumers

Stefano Palmieri

Action needs to be taken to ensure the uniform treatment at European level of the "specific" illegal activities of influencers in the EU in view of their proliferation resulting from the digital transformation in the audiovisual and electronic communications field. The regulatory harmonization should take into account, as a minimum, criteria such as: identifying messages with a commercial purpose to avoid covert advertising; making them subject to specific rules to protect the health and safety particularly of vulnerable groups of consumers; considering the breach of rules to be an infringement committed by the influencer.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!N9pdmC>

NAT/890 – Measures to reduce child obesity

Isabel Caño Aguilar

Childhood obesity and overweight remain one of the major public health challenges, stemming from individual, environmental, and economic factors. In particular, socio-economic inequalities play a fundamental role, with low income households doubling the obesity levels of children and adolescents. Together with this, schools and public and transport infrastructure are key to ensure physical education, healthy lifestyles, and active mobility. For the Workers' Group, the EU should renew the EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity and play a more active role in coordinating efforts and standardisation of policies, and sharing best practices.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!YQXdxc>

NAT/896 – Revision of the EU pollinators initiative - A new deal for pollinators

Veselin Mitov

Pollinators (such as bees) are an essential part of our ecosystems but also the base for life on our planet. The key priority of the revised EU Pollinators Initiative is improving pollinator conservation and tackling the causes of their alarming decline. However, due to the lack of progress in the field, significant funding is needed for R&D&I to amass essential scientific data and undertake appropriate initiatives to reverse this decrease. It is also important for the EU and the Member States to rapidly share knowledge and concentrate research on sustainable agriculture practices and methods of integrated pest management (IPM), while developing appropriate education programmes and trainings.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!nGHY9>

ECO/608 – Review of the Bank crisis management and deposit insurance framework

Christophe Lefèvre

The initiative to complete the bank crisis management and deposit insurance (CMDI) legislation is welcome. In general, banking rules should consider the need of real growth and their long-term impact on growth, social development and employment. Therefore, it is far better to create conditions and tools to prevent a crisis than to intervene with rescue operations afterwards. In case of a crisis, the Committee emphasizes the need to have tools for a quick reaction in place, and calls for a pragmatic and flexible approach. When resolution is more expensive than liquidation, banks should go into insolvency. For those tools, the right balance needs to be found between flexibility and predictability, and the inclusion of smaller or local banks into the resolution framework needs to be carefully considered. Furthermore, the Committee welcomes the enhanced harmonisation of deposit protection tools across the EU.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!wrj6YY>

ECO/611 – The economics of an "EU Blue Deal"

Florian Marin

The EESC highlights the importance of access to safe and clean water as a fundamental right, expressing concern over those who still lack access within the EU. It calls for the development of the EU Blue Deal alongside the EU Green Deal, emphasizing the need for a well-regulated, transparent, and sustainable water economy. A future regulatory framework that integrates social and environmental concerns, encourages innovation, and adopts collaborative business models is strongly recommended.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!Tm3kmP>

ECO/614 – Tax policy review - low-income households and the green transition

Philip von Brockdorff

The likely adverse effects of the ongoing green transition are addressed in this opinion, with a specific focus on social exclusion and income inequalities. The main risks highlighted are growing income disparities and the displacement of industrial sectors and related jobs. The EESC underlines the need for a fair transition able to address both the employment and the distributional effects of a shift to climate neutrality and calls for redistributive measures in favour of low-income. Fiscal transition policy should consist of three components: the "polluter pays" principle with complementary redistributive measures in support of low-income households; targeted income support; and tax credits on energy-saving home products.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!7fPM7h>

TEN/804 – Sustainable and resilient water infrastructures and distribution networks

Thomas Kattnig

The Committee emphasizes the need for measures to reduce water loss, ensure fair water distribution, and promote sustainable water management in response to the climate crisis. The supply of clean and affordable drinking water to the public needs to be prioritized, and the Commission and Member States are urged to adopt a rights-based approach and to address water poverty. The EESC supports public water management over private management, as it is better equipped to guarantee universal access and investment in infrastructure.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!xGPRQN>

CCMI/201 – Review of the CO₂ emission standards for heavy-duty vehicles

Dirk Bergrath

The objective of the proposal to accelerate the pace of decarbonization by setting new CO₂ emission standards for new heavy-duty vehicles is to be welcomed and the EU should seize the opportunity to become a leader in the clean-transport industry by promoting investments into zero-emission technologies. Action needs to be taken also on the demand side in order to make zero-emission-vehicles a viable option for logistic operators.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!WcFHfP>

CCMI/207 – The decarbonisation of European industry and the role of innovation and digitalisation in driving it

Monika Sitárová

The EESC points to the need to couple decarbonisation with enhanced digitisation and stresses the importance of further innovation, which should also be facilitated by speedier permitting processes. Decarbonisation and innovation should be supported by EU measures. Furthermore, the EU needs to guarantee a strong workers' involvement and social dialogue; reskilling and upskilling programmes must be a top priority. Social dialogue and involvement of workers' representatives must play a role in the reskilling and upskilling programmes that will be a prerequisite for the success of new technologies and working methods.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!TxKRnJ>

CCMI/217 – Cyber Solidarity Act

Dumitru Fornea

The EESC welcomes the proposals on cyber security, for which EU coordination is vital, but recommends that greater attention be paid to upholding the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. In the interest of strategic autonomy, only cutting-edge EU technology should be used in national security operations centres. It calls for appropriate funding and staffing of the EU agencies in the cybersecurity field, demands the full involvement of the EU civil society in order to achieve enhanced cooperation between public and private entities, and welcomes the Cybersecurity Skills Academy initiative.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!PGk3Y6>

**FIND
THIS
DOCUMENT
ONLINE**



facebook.com/EESCWorkersGroup



[@WorkersEESC](https://twitter.com/WorkersEESC)



[Workers' Group](https://www.youtube.com/WorkersGroup)