



**European Economic  
and Social Committee**

## **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

between

**the European Economic and Social Committee**

(hereinafter "EESC" or "the Committee")

represented by Christa Schweng, President of the EESC

Rue Belliard 99-101, B - 1040 Brussels, Belgium

and

**civil society organisations of**

**the Liaison Group with European civil society organisations and networks (LG)**

(hereinafter "the LG CSOs")

represented by Brikena Xhomaqi, Co-chair of the LG

**For cooperation in the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe**

(hereinafter "the Conference")

## Preamble

### I. The partners

- **The EESC**, which was set up in 1957 by the Rome Treaties to strengthen the democratic legitimacy and effectiveness of the European Union (EU) by enabling civil society organisations from the Member States to express their views at European level. It is a consultative body which currently comprises 329 members from 27 Member States coming and walks of life. It is composed of three main groups: employers, workers and civil society at large.
- **The following 35 civil society organisations that are represented in the Liaison Group:**  
ACE (Architects' Council of Europe); AGE Platform Europe; CEV (European Volunteer Centre); COFACE Families Europe; CONCORD (European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development); Cooperatives Europe; CPME (Standing Committee of European Doctors); Culture Action Europe (CAE); ECAS (European Citizen Action Service); ECF (European Civic Forum); EDF (European Disability Forum); EEB (European Environmental Bureau); EFC (European Foundation Centre); EFIL (European Federation for Intercultural Learning); ELEN (European Language Equality Network); EPA (European Parents' Association); ESU (European Students' Union); EURAG (European Federation of Older People); EUCIS-LLL (European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning); EUROCHILD; EVBB (The European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training); FEANI (Federation of professional engineers); FERPA (European Federation of Retired and Elderly People); Front Line Defenders; IUT (International Union of Tenants); JEUNE (Young entrepreneurs' organisation of the European Union); SDG Watch Europe; SEE (Social Economy Europe); Social Platform; SOLIDAR; Social Services Europe; UEF (Union of European Federalists); UIPI (International Union of Property Owners); Volonteuropé; YFJ (European Youth Forum).

The Liaison Group was set up in 2004 to provide a framework for political dialogue and cooperation between the EESC and the European organisations and networks the Group liaises with, as well as other EU institutions, on cross-cutting issues of common interest. The Group provides a unique bridge between civil society organisations and the European institutions, enabling civil dialogue and promoting participatory democracy. It is a channel through which civil society can discuss and influence the EU agenda and decision-making processes (as envisaged under Article 11 TEU).

### II. The EESC and the above-mentioned LG CSOs seek reinforced cooperation in the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe. Such a partnership is based on the following elements:

- The Conference represents a unique opportunity for Europe to reconnect and engage with European citizens, including through civil society actors, and to provide them with a meaningful say on their common future. It will be key for the success of the Conference to be a wide, participative and bottom-up process, with a concrete and not pre-determined outcome;
- The conference provides an unique opportunity to work on a strong, shared narrative for the European Union, with a view to position Europe as: 1) guardian of shared fundamental values, such as freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, 2) global promoter of sustainability, open and fair trade and multilateralism, 3) haven for a unique economic and social model based on fair competition and

solidarity in an area without internal borders and 4) driver of a sustainable prosperity; with a strong European civil society at its heart.

- The Conference on the Future of Europe should be the vehicle through which we can bring about long-lasting change in the EU, including an increased and more meaningful involvement of citizens and of organised civil society in the European public sphere. As a first step in this process, civil society must work in partnership, closely collaborating, networking, exchanging good practices and seeking consensus in order to achieve tangible results.
- The EESC, as EU institutional representative of organised civil society and in view of its observer status in the steering board of the Conference and its participation in the Conference Plenary, is committed to effectively involve civil society organisations in the Conference and to make sure that their voice is heard and followed upon;
- With this objective in mind, the EESC adopted, at its Plenary session on 27 April 2021, a Resolution on "A new narrative for Europe", as well as an action plan for the Committee's involvement in the Conference, adopted by Bureau Decision on 26 April<sup>1</sup>. Article 1 of the action plan provides that the EESC seeks cooperation with, *inter alia*, Civil Society Organisations [...]", whose role would be "to facilitate Conference events, physical gatherings or digital / hybrid debates, that will be organised at different levels [...]". Article 1 also states that "the EESC should make full use of its Liaison Group, in order to keep an open dialogue with the European organisations and their networks on cross-cutting issues of common interest". The action plan further specifies that the EESC may invite civil society organisations' "representatives to participate in the steering board [the EESC ad-hoc group on the Conference] as guests" (Art.3) and that "the national delegations of the EESC form national planning committees in the Member States, with the help of [...] relevant partners" (Art. 4).

## Subject

**III. Within this framework, the objective of this Memorandum of Understanding is to join forces in view of the Conference on the Future of Europe and to partner up the organisational and visibility efforts of the EESC and of the above-mentioned LG CSOs at the maximum possible extent. The aim is to enhance the democratic foundation of the EU, strengthen the transparency and inclusiveness of its decision-making process and ensure the best possible result for the Conference, whilst fully respecting each other's different political and institutional roles.**

## Areas of cooperation

**IV. To this end, in the framework of the Conference, the EESC and LG CSOs endeavour to:**

- **Co-organise**, when appropriate and if relevant at the national / regional / local level concerned, joint activities, debates and events, including ones with a transnational character in Brussels;

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<sup>1</sup> See dedicated [web page](#)

- Whenever co-organisation is not possible or desirable, **support** each other's visibility and outreach efforts by cross-inviting speakers and relevant representatives to each other's events and debates, including high-level ones;
- **Cooperate** in the framework of the EESC's local events, namely in order to identify and raise awareness with relevant target groups and other logistical and organisational matters;
- **Join** communication efforts in order to raise awareness around the Conference on the future of Europe, the debate on the future of Europe and each other's role in it. This may take the form, for instance, of mutual information given on the relevant websites, mutual sharing of social media activities on official channels and other relevant outreach activities.
- **Mutually reinforce** joint views towards the Conference of the Future of Europe its bodies and members.
- The EESC may **invite the co-chair of the Liaison Group or another representative of the LG CSOs** to participate in the EESC's Bureau and steering board of the Conference, i.e. the EESC ad-hoc group on the Conference on the Future of Europe, as guests.
- The LG CSOs will **share relevant contacts** from their national networks, which will be put in touch with the EESC national planning committees, although the central steering group should always be kept informed.

## Final Provisions

- V. This Memorandum does not provide for any exclusivity in cooperation nor involve a commitment to disburse funds. Each signatory will implement the envisaged activities at its own cost and using its own resources in accordance with the signatories' regulations.

Signed in Brussels on 14 September 2021

**For the European Economic and Social Committee:**

Christa Schweng, President



**For the civil society organisations:**

Brikena Xhomaqi, Co-chair of the Liaison Group





ACE (Architects' Council of Europe)



AGE Platform Europe



CEV (European Volunteer Centre)



COFACE Families Europe



CONCORD (European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development)



Cooperatives Europe



CPME (Standing Committee of European Doctors)



Culture Action Europe



European Civic Forum



ECAS (European Citizen Action Service)



EDF (European Disability Forum)



EEB (European Environmental Bureau)



EFC (European Foundation Centre)



EFIL (European Federation for Intercultural Learning)



ELEN (European Language Equality Network)



EPA (European Parents' Association)



ESU (European Students' Union)



EURAG (European Federation of Older People)



EUCIS-LLL (European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning)



EVBB (The European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training)



FEANI (Federation of professional engineers)



FERPA (European Federation of Retired and Elderly People)



Front Line Defenders



IUT (International Union of Tenants)



JEUNE (Young entrepreneurs' organisation of the European Union)



SDG Watch Europe



SEE (Social Economy Europe)



Social Platform



Social Services Europe

**solidar**

SOLIDAR



UEF (Union of European  
Federalists)



UIPI (International Union of  
Property Owners)

**volonteurope**

Volonteurope



YFJ (European Youth Forum)