



European Economic and Social Committee

LIAISON GROUP WITH EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND NETWORKS

OPERATING RULES

1. Membership

The Liaison Group shall comprise:

- 16 members of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), including the EESC President, the EESC Vice-President in charge of communication, the three group presidents, the six section presidents, the president of the Consultative Commission on Industrial Change, the President of the European Semester Group and the presidents of the three EESC Observatories;
- a wide range of organisations and networks representative of the main sectors of organised civil society at European level based on existing organisations and networks within these sectors.

2. Mandate

The Liaison Group shall have the following mandate:

- Exchange of information and views on the respective work programmes and relevant events.
- Identification of themes on which cooperation would be appropriate and possible.
- Examination of the feasibility of, and practical arrangements for, greater involvement of the networks in the EESC's consultative work. Consultation or cooperation on the preparation of certain hearings, seminars, conferences, etc.
- Examination of any other issues of common interest, particularly as part of the dialogue with the EU institutions.

3. Work programme

Each year, the Liaison Group shall adopt its work programme.

The political priorities and the respective work programmes of the EESC and the European civil society organisations and networks which are members of the Liaison Group shall be taken into consideration when devising the work programme.

4. Presidency

The presidency of the Liaison Group shall be constituted jointly by the EESC President and a Co-chair from the European civil society organisations and networks which are members of the Liaison Group (hereinafter the "Co-chair").

5. Appointment of the Co-chair

The Co-chair shall be appointed by a simple majority of all members of the Liaison Group from European civil society organisations and networks.

The appointment of the Co-chair shall be ratified by all members of the Liaison Group.

The Co-chair shall be appointed for a term of two and a half years, ending at the same time as that of the EESC President. This term may be renewed.

This election shall take place in accordance with the following procedure:

- The Liaison Group secretariat will open the call for candidates from civil society member organisations at least a month before the meeting where the Co-chair is to be elected. This meeting should take place up to four weeks after the beginning of the new mandate;
- The voting procedure is anonymous. Each member organisation has one vote. A member organisation that is unable to participate can appoint another member organisation of the Liaison Group as proxy to cast its vote. Each member organisation can hold a maximum of two proxy votes each;
- Whoever obtains the simple majority of the eligible votes cast in person at the meeting shall be elected;
- In the event of a tie between at least two candidates, a second ballot shall be held and whoever obtains an absolute majority of the votes cast shall be elected. Should this not be achieved, the relative majority decides in the third ballot. In the event of another tie, the decision shall be made by drawing lots.

In case the Co-chair resigns before the end of the mandate, an interim Co-chair shall be elected until the end of the term of office, following the standard procedure.

6. Timetable for meetings

The EESC President and the Co-chair shall jointly draw up the timetable for meetings.

7. Notice of meetings

Liaison Group meetings are convened by the EESC President and the Co-chair.

8. Meeting agendas

The EESC President and the Co-chair shall jointly decide on the draft agenda of meetings.

Each member of the Liaison Group shall have the right to propose, at the latest a week in advance, the inclusion of an item on the agenda for a given meeting.

9. Chair of meetings

Meetings shall be chaired jointly by the EESC President and the Co-chair.

If the EESC President is unable to attend, he/she shall be replaced by one of the EESC Vice-Presidents.

10. Alternates

The presidents of the EESC groups, sections, CCMI European Semester Group and of the EESC observatories may appoint an alternate to replace them at meetings, if they are unable to attend.

11. Changing the membership

Decisions on Liaison Group's membership shall be taken by all members on the basis of a joint proposal by the EESC President and the Co-chair.

12. Participation criteria

In order to represent a sector of European organised civil society, the relevant organisation or network must meet the following criteria for representativeness:

- Members representing a sector of activities covered by civil society organisations and networks that form a de jure or de facto "family" of associations must be from European organisations or networks that have a permanent legal structure;
- The "family" must have members in more than half of the EU Member States;
- The "family's" member organisations must be non-profit making;
- The "family's" member organisations must be non-governmental;
- The "family's" member organisations must be independent, in particular from political parties;
- The "family's" member organisations must be engaged in activities that are not covered by the institutional framework for social dialogue.

13. Representation of the Liaison Group

Only the EESC President shall be entitled to represent the Liaison Group in external relations which may have a bearing on the EESC.

The Co-chair shall be entitled to use his or her position in external relations that do not have a bearing on the EESC.

Any member of the Liaison Group may, with the joint agreement of the EESC President and the Co-chair, be authorised to present the results of the Liaison Group's work and assess the implementation of its mandate.

14. Attendance at meetings

To ensure the good organisation and smooth running of the Liaison Group's work, any members who are unable to attend a meeting to which they have been convened are asked to send their apologies to the Liaison Group's secretariat in advance.

If an organisation or network representing civil society does not participate in three consecutive meetings, including the meetings of the civil society organisations component of the Liaison Group, without having apologised, it will lose its membership.

In the absence of over half of the Liaison Group's members at a meeting, the EESC President and the Co-chair shall take a decision on whether to hold the meeting or not.

15. Appointment of rapporteurs

The Liaison Group may appoint one or more rapporteurs and set up working groups drawn from its members to investigate any item included on the agenda.

16. Decision-making

Decisions shall be reached on the basis of a consensus, unless otherwise specified in the operating rules. If a consensus is not reached, a vote by simple majority will take place.

17. Working languages

The Liaison Group's working languages shall be English and French.

Where possible, documents may be made available to Liaison Group members in other languages.

Any additional interpreting needs shall be assessed in the light of the composition of the Liaison Group.

18. Public access to meetings

The Liaison Group's meetings shall be public.

Any request to attend a meeting must be made in advance to the Liaison Group's Secretariat.

The EESC President and the Co-chair may jointly decide to grant observer status to any European civil society organisation or network that makes such a request.

In particular, this status may be granted when the relevant organisation or network:

- is active in a sector of European organised civil society which is already represented by the Liaison Group;
- does not fulfil the criteria for representativeness laid down in the operating rules.

19. Minutes

A record of each Liaison Group's meeting shall be drawn up by the Liaison Group's secretariat. These minutes shall then be submitted for the Liaison Group's approval at its next meeting.

20. Publication of work

To ensure that the work of the Liaison Group is as widely available as possible, all documents pertaining to its work shall be accessible on the EESC's website.

The Liaison Group may, however, decide that certain documents of a provisional nature should not be posted on the EESC's website.

21. Secretariat

The secretariat of the Liaison Group shall be provided by the Unit responsible for *Relations with National Economic and Social Councils and Civil Society* within the EESC's Secretariat.

22. Access to EESC premises

Members of the Liaison Group shall have free access to EESC premises.

The practical arrangements for this access shall be decided by the EESC.

23. Adoption and amendment of operating rules

The Liaison Group shall adopt its operating rules by consensus and, if need be, amend them in the same manner, on the basis of a proposal from the EESC President and the Co-chair.
