



## **Séamus Boland from Ireland is the new President of the EESC Diversity Europe Group**

**Poverty and the role of civil society organisations in combatting it will be the focus of his Presidency**

**With the start of the 2020-2025 term of office of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), Séamus Boland takes over the Presidency of the its [Diversity Europe Group](#). Members confirmed his new role for the next two and a half years during the first group meeting of the new term held today, 27 October. Mr Boland's Presidency will focus on the topic of "Poverty and the role of civil society organisations in combatting it".**

As of today, Séamus Boland will chair the EESC Diversity Europe Group, which alongside the Committee's Employers' and Workers' Groups, enables social, occupational, economic and cultural organisations that make up civil society in the Member States to participate in EU policy-making and legislation.

The Members of the group backed the Irishman's candidacy for the 2020-2023 Presidency, which was driven by a wish to **advance the case for civil society and to strengthen its voice**. Mr Boland suggested addressing civil society's broad needs and ensuring quality work and robust procedures at the EESC to this end.

"We need animated discussion and debate at the EESC and in our group, but we also need to adopt the Irish phrase 'Ní neart go cur la chéile': we cannot be strong, unless we are united. It will be my job, with the help of the Vice-Presidents, to ensure that this happens. People rely on us and we must not let them down", said **Séamus Boland** in his inaugural speech, after his Presidency was confirmed at the first group meeting of the 2020-2025 EESC term. Due to the pandemic situation he, as well as most Members, participated in the meeting remotely.

In his address, Séamus Boland also announced the **topic and the priorities** of his term. The group will focus its work on "Poverty and the role of civil society organisations in combatting it".

"I would like to frame the problem in the broader context of the European Green Deal and on the impact of COVID-19 on our lives", said the new President. He added that "COVID-19 and the ensuing economic, social and health challenges will provide the framework for our work. The Green Deal will provide the solutions".

In line with the overall topic of his Presidency, **priorities include:**

- Addressing the impacts of COVID-19 on society.
- Implementing the Green Deal with all stakeholders, based on the Sustainable Development Goal "End poverty in all its forms everywhere".
- Involving civil society organisations, including European platforms, with the group's work.
- Including all group Members in the work as well as maintaining a strong gender balance.
- Promoting the group's work to other institutions and the wider public more efficiently.

Séamus Boland will chair the Diversity Europe Group together with **seven Vice-Presidents:** Pietro Vittorio Barbieri (IT), Jan Dirx (NL), Kinga Joó (HU), Rudolf Kolbe (AT), Ariane Rodert (SE), Simo Tiainen (FI) and Ioannis Vardakastanis (EL).

### **The new President**

Séamus Boland has been **Member of the EESC** since 2011. He has held different roles at the Committee, including the Vice-Presidency of the Diversity Europe Group (2018-2020). In line with his policy and political interests – the eradication of poverty, social exclusion and inequality –, Mr Boland has chaired study groups on topics such as minimum wages, migration and sustainable development and was rapporteur for various EESC opinions related to agriculture, rural development, energy, social affairs and Brexit, e.g. [SOC/530 Fighting poverty](#) and [NAT/672 CAP simplification](#).

When asked about his **political convictions**, Séamus Boland answered: "I am a strong believer in sustainable living in rural and urban areas and believe that can be achieved by using the principals of 'Just transition' or 'Leaving no one behind'. I am a strong advocate of the EU and believe in its values as espoused by the founders. The EU must never leave its core values or compromise on them".

The new President's principles are connected to his **professional background**: he is a farmer and has worked in civil society for over 40 years. This has included young people, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and rural people living in rural isolation. He is a trained Speech and Drama Educator.

At present, Séamus Boland holds several other **roles** in addition to the group Presidency. He is CEO of [Irish Rural Link](#), a national network of organisations and individuals campaigning for sustainable rural development in Ireland and Europe. Moreover, Mr Boland is a Board Member of [Inland Fisheries Ireland](#), an Irish state agency responsible for the conservation, protection, management, marketing, development and improvement of inland fisheries and sea angling resources in Ireland. Lastly, Mr Boland is also Chair of [Peatlands Council](#), an advisory body to the Irish government on the protection and conservation of important peatland habitats.

### **Further background information**

The **Diversity Europe Group** is made up of a wide range of representatives and stakeholders from the economic, civic, professional and cultural fields, including farmers', consumers' and environmental organisations, the professions, social economy actors, associations representing persons with disabilities, women, young people and many others. For the **2020-2025 term of office**, it will be composed of **105 Members**, 50.5% of whom have been appointed to the EESC for the first time. Members were nominated by their national governments and then appointed by the Council of the EU. They then work independently in the interests of all EU citizens.

Unlike EESC Members, who are elected for a five-year term of office, presidencies are elected for a two-and-a-half-year term. Presidential terms are linked to the EESC's renewal and mid-term renewal. Séamus Boland is the successor of Arno Metzler, who led the group from April 2018 to September 2020.

The **EESC itself has a rotating Presidency system**. The 2020-2023 EESC President will come from the Employers' Group, the Vice-President in charge of the budget from the Workers' Group, and the Vice-President in charge of communication from the Diversity Europe Group. They will occupy these roles until April 2023. The next EESC Presidency for the Diversity Europe Group is due in September 2025.

### **For more information, please contact:**

Jasmin Klötzing - Communication Officer  
Secretariat of the Diversity Europe Group (III)  
+ 32 (0) 2 546 9067  
[jasmin.kloetzing@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:jasmin.kloetzing@eesc.europa.eu)

*The European Economic and Social Committee is an institutional consultative body established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome. It represents the various economic and social components of organised civil society. Its consultative role enables its members, and hence the organisations they represent, to participate in the EU decision-making process.*

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