

The EESC Liaison Group

Promoting civil dialogue
and participatory
democracy



**Liaison
Group**

European Economic and Social Committee

ORIGINS

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) represents a wide range of national civil society organisations, from employers' organisations and trade unions to consumer groups and social, educational, development and environmental organisations, just to name a few.

In 2004, the Committee decided to set up a Liaison Group with European civil society organisations and networks in order to be more open, representative and effective, playing to the full its role as a bridge and major channel of communication between the EU and these European organisations.

Aiming for stronger and more structured cooperation with these organisations and networks, the Liaison Group is designed to forge links and provide a forum for political dialogue.

COMPOSITION

The Liaison Group is composed of two groups – EESC members and European civil society organisations – broken down as follows:

- 15 members of the EESC, including its president, the three group presidents, the six policy section presidents, the presidents of the three observatories, the president of the Consultative Commission on Industrial Change and the president of the European Semester Group;
- 33 existing organisations and networks representing the main sectors of organised civil society at European level. To ensure broad involvement of different players from organised civil society, a group of alternates has been appointed, which may also take part in Liaison Group meetings.

A FORUM FOR CIVIL DIALOGUE

The Liaison Group provides civil society organisations with their only institutional bridge to the EU institutions, thereby establishing vertical civil dialogue allowing them to discuss and influence the EU agenda and decision-making processes (in accordance with Article 11(1) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU)).

In addition, the Liaison Group also offers these European organisations and networks a forum in which to meet and discuss issues relevant to them, effectively establishing a dialogue among them, contributing to creating synergies between different players on issues of common interest, and thus creating a place for horizontal civil dialogue (Article 11(2) TEU).

In order to fulfil its twin mission of promoting both vertical and horizontal civil dialogue, the Liaison Group meets roughly twice a year in plenary, in addition to holding a number of other meetings of its civil society organisation component throughout the year.

ACTIVITIES

The Liaison Group is actively involved in the Committee's activities, notably in advising the other European institutions. Lately, it has been focusing increasingly on priority themes for the EESC and the EU, especially on cross-cutting issues of common interest.

It contributes every year to the EESC's proposals for the **Commission Work Programme**, to EESC **opinions**¹, by providing input and experts, and to EESC **studies**² and hearings on topics regarding civil society organisations.

In 2018, in fulfilment of its mission of promoting civil dialogue, the Liaison Group hosted the official launch of the *Report on Civil Society Space in the EU*, produced by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

Furthermore, it drafted an **Action Plan for the implementation of Articles 11(1) and 11(2) of the Treaty of the EU**, as a follow-up to the relevant roadmap adopted by the NGO Forum in Riga in 2015. This action plan outlines the specific actions needed to ensure better civil dialogue in the EU as well as to involve citizens and their associations, and reflects citizens' calls for better decisions, better policy-making and better governance responding to citizens' needs.

¹ For example, *Financing of civil society organisations by the EU* and *The Impact of the social dimension & the European Pillar of Social Rights on the future of the EU*.

² Including, among others, on *The future evolution of civil society in the European Union* and on *Improving the social media outreach of civil society organisations and the EESC: EU consultation in a digital age*.



The Civil Society Days

The annual Civil Society Days are the major Liaison Group initiative, organised jointly with the EESC. They bring together key players in European and national civil society organisations, entrepreneurs, academics, EU policy-makers and the media, and provide a forum for dialogue on issues that are of concern to civil society stakeholders at European level.

The **Civil Society Days 2018** focused on **'Citizenship, Democracy and Culture in a digitalised Europe'** and represented an outstanding occasion for civil society organisations to discuss and reflect on how citizenship, democracy and culture can develop and be promoted in the digital world, in order to shape our future while fully respecting EU fundamental rights, values and principles.

Previous Civil Society Days have dealt with the new challenges for the European Union and the expectations of European citizens and organisations, covering economic and social issues, democracy and active European citizenship.

For more information, see: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/civil-society-citizens-participation/civil-society-days>



THE CO-PRESIDENTS



Luca Jahier, EESC president, and **Conny Reuter**, secretary-general of Solidar, on behalf of Social Services Europe

THE MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

- **AEDH** (European Association for the Defence of Human Rights)
- **AGE** Platform Europe (European Older People's Platform)
- **AIM** (International Association of Mutualities)
- **BEUC*** (European Consumer Organisation)
- **CECODHAS*** (European Federation of Public, Cooperative and Social Housing)
- **CEV** (European Volunteer Centre)
- **COFACE** (Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union)
- **CONCORD** (European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development)
- **COOPERATIVES EUROPE**
- **CULTURE ACTION EUROPE**
- **EDF** (European Disability Forum)
- **ECAS** (European Citizen Action Service)
- **EEB** (European Environmental Bureau)
- **EFC** (European Foundation Centre)
- **EFIL** (European Federation for Intercultural Learning)
- **EMI** (European Movement International)
- **EPHA** (European Public Health Alliance)
- **ESU** (European Students' Union)
- **EURAG*** (European Federation of Older People)
- **EUROCHILD***
- **EWL** (European Women's Lobby)
- **EUCIS-LLL** (European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning)
- **FCE** (European Civic Forum)
- **FRONT LINE DEFENDERS*** (Human Rights)
- **IUT** (International Union of Tenants)
- **PLATFORM FOR INTERCULTURAL EUROPE***
- **RED** (International Association Rurality – Environment – Development)
- **SEE*** (Social Economy Europe)
- **SOCIAL PLATFORM** (Platform of European Social NGOs)
- **SOCIAL SERVICES EUROPE**
- **SOLIDAR**
- **UEF*** (Union of European Federalists)
- **VOLONTEUROPE***
- **YFJ** (European Youth Forum)

* Alternates



For more information

For more information, visit the Liaison Group's website:
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.liaison-group>

Keep up-to-date with our newsletter published after every plenary session:
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.liaison-group-newsletters>



Stay tuned and follow us on Twitter:
[@EESC_LiaisonG](https://twitter.com/EESC_LiaisonG)





European Economic and Social Committee

Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 99
1040 Bruxelles/Brussel
BELGIQUE/BELGIË

Published by: "Visits and Publications" Unit
EESC-2018-56-EN
www.eesc.europa.eu

© European Union, 2018

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

For any use or reproduction of the photos, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holders:
p. 4 - 7: © Shutterstock.



Print:
QE-01-18-615-EN-C
ISBN 978-92-830-4135-1
doi:10.2864/78341

Online:
QE-01-18-615-EN-N
ISBN 978-92-830-4134-4
doi:10.2864/938102

EN