

# EESC Liaison Group

Promoting civil dialogue  
and participatory  
democracy



**Liaison  
Group**

*European Economic and Social Committee*

## ORIGINS

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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

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The Liaison Group is composed of two parts – 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;
- 27 existing organisations and networks representing the main sectors of organised civil society at European level.

## A FORUM FOR CIVIL DIALOGUE

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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

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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**<sup>1</sup>, by providing input and experts, and to EESC **studies**<sup>2</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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*.

<sup>2</sup> Including, among others, on *The future evolution of civil society in the European Union, Improving the social media outreach of civil society organisations* and the *EESC: EU consultation in a digital age, Societies outside Metropolises: the role of civil society organisations in facing populism* and *Youngsters and the EU: Perceptions, Knowledge and Expectations*.



## 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, dealing with subjects of great political and societal relevance.

The Civil Society Days 2019 focused **on Sustainable Democracy in Europe**. This was a perfect opportunity for civil society organisations to reflect on how to strike a balance, and enhance synergies, when addressing environmental and social issues (including the economic dimension). Other subjects discussed were the importance of sustaining democracy in a context of growing populism and the challenges/opportunities of new technologies.

Previous Civil Society Days have dealt with the challenges of the digital world for the European Union and the expectations of European citizens and organisations in relation to 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

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

## MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

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- **AEDH** (European Association for the Defence of Human Rights)
- **AGE Platform Europe** (European Older People's Platform)
- **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**
- **ECAS** (European Citizen Action Service)
- **EDF** (European Disability Forum)
- **EEB** (European Environmental Bureau)
- **EFC** (European Foundation Centre)
- **EFIL** (European Federation for Intercultural Learning)
- **EMI** (European Movement International)
- **ESU** (European Students' Union)
- **EURAG** (European Federation of Older People)
- **EUROCHILD**
- **EUCIS-LLL** (European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning)
- **FCE** (European Civic Forum)
- **FRONT LINE DEFENDERS** (Human Rights)
- **IUT** (International Union of Tenants)
- **RED** (International Association Rurality – Environment – Development)
- **SEE** (Social Economy Europe)
- **SOCIAL PLATFORM** (Platform of European Social NGOs)
- **SOCIAL SERVICES EUROPE**
- **UEF** (Union of European Federalists)
- **VOLONTEUROPE**
- **YFJ** (European Youth Forum)



## 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>



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