



The EESC in the inter-institutional framework

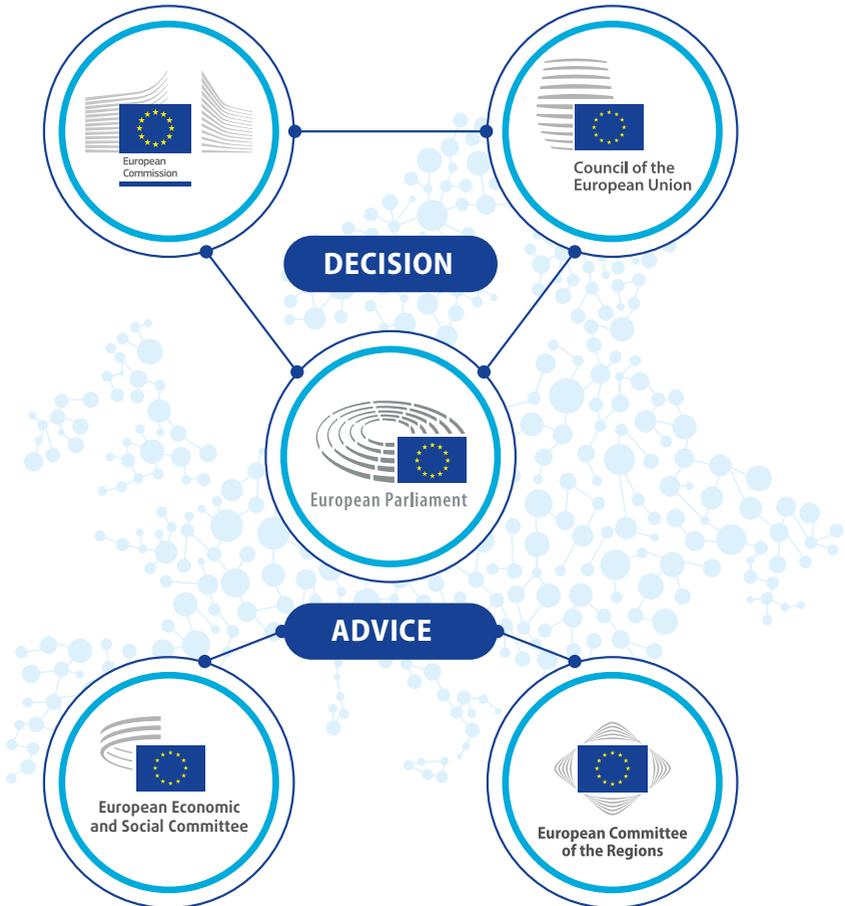


European Economic
and Social Committee

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“ The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission shall be assisted by an Economic and Social Committee (...) acting in an advisory capacity.”

Article 13, Treaty on EU



The Committee adopts around **190 opinions a year** on a wide range of subjects.

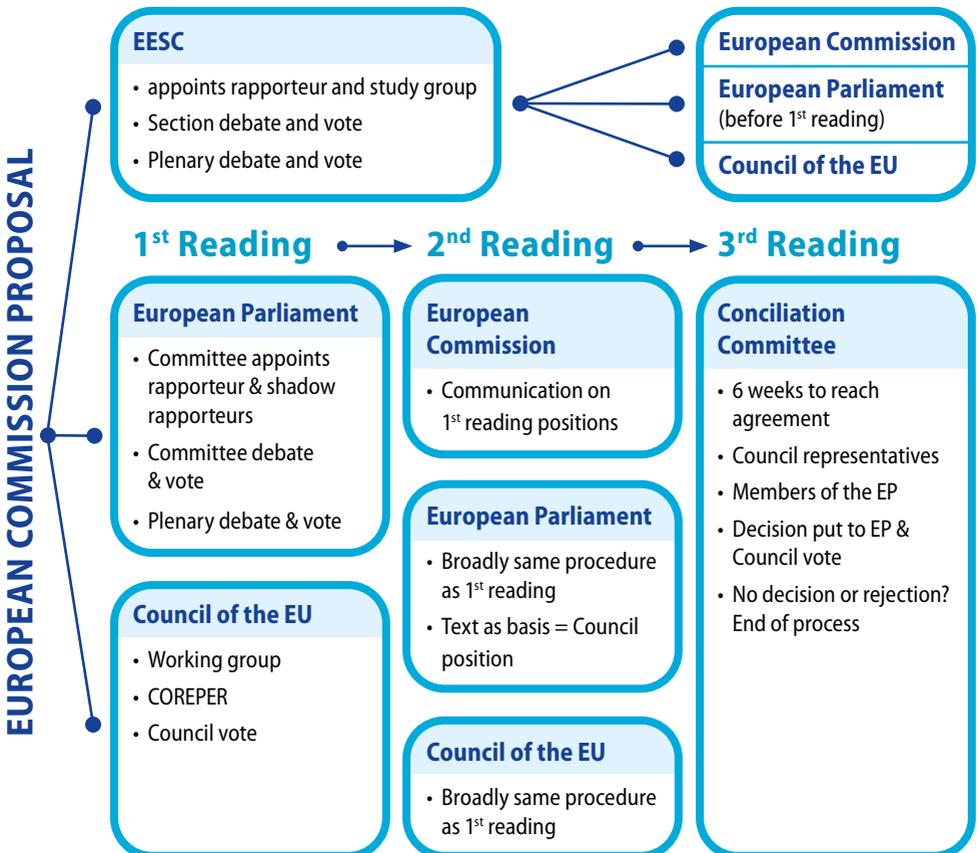
Finding consensus on decisions and legislation is key for the democratic development of the European Union. This makes **the role of the EESC vital**, because it contributes to strengthening the **democratic legitimacy** and **effectiveness** of the EU by **enabling civil society organisations to express their views at European level**. The Committee helps to ensure that European policies and legislation tie in better with economic, social and civic circumstances on the ground, by assisting the European Parliament, Council and European Commission.

How are EU decisions made?

EU legislation is proposed by the European Commission and approved by the Council of the European Union (the Member States) and the European Parliament before it becomes law.

The **ordinary legislative procedure** is the main procedure for adopting directives and regulations. The procedure starts with a legislative proposal from the Commission. The two co-legislators, i.e. the Council and the Parliament, then discuss its merits and may choose to amend it. They then have to agree on a common text as they have equal rights and obligations; neither can adopt legislation without the other's agreement, and both co-legislators have to approve a text which is identical in every respect.

The EESC opinion strives to find a good, consensual position between different interests groups concerned, by reviewing the impacts and opportunities created by a proposed EU legislation.



Since 2009, more than 80% of legislation has been agreed at the 1st reading.

How does the EESC contribute?

In order to issue an opinion, the EESC appoints a rapporteur from amongst its members. As part of the **preliminary work** on the opinion, the rapporteur (assisted by experts and EESC staff) meets both the Commission staff dealing with the legislative proposal and the European Parliament rapporteur. After the final draft is adopted by the EESC Plenary Assembly, it becomes **the official opinion**. It is then sent to the European Parliament **before the first reading at the EP**. Rapporteurs are frequently asked to present their opinion at the EP committee meeting. This inter-institutional networking aspect of the rapporteur's work is key, as it enables them to ensure that the opinion has the greatest possible impact.

There are two main methods by which the Committee expresses its views:

- 1) the Treaties stipulate that it **must be consulted** on certain issues (**mandatory referrals**): agricultural policy; free movement of persons and services; transport; harmonisation of indirect taxation; approximation of laws on the internal market; employment; social policy, education, vocational training and youth; public health; consumer protection; trans-European networks; industrial policy; economic, social and territorial cohesion; research and technological development and space; the environment;
- 2) as stipulated by Article 304 of the TFEU, the Committee may be consulted by the institutions whenever they deem it appropriate (through "**exploratory opinions**" and "**optional referrals**").

The Committee may also issue opinions on its own initiative when it considers this appropriate ("**own-initiative opinions**").



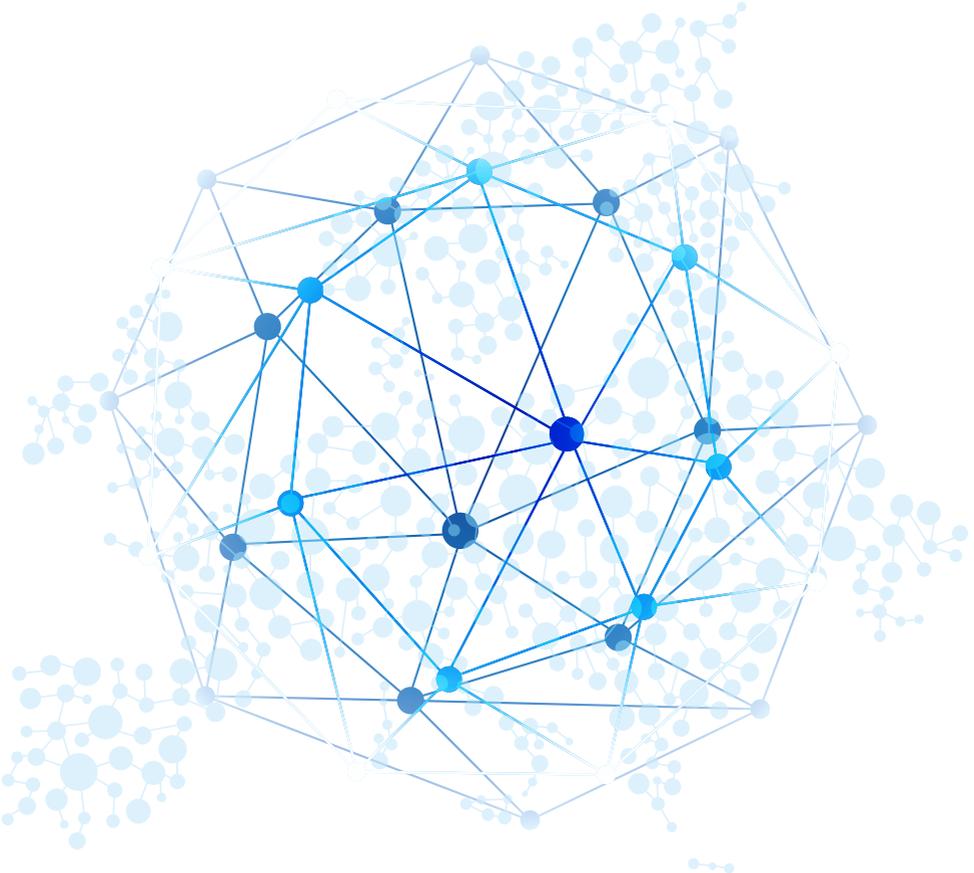
Own-initiative and exploratory opinions are drawn up before the Commission has even drafted its proposals, thus enabling the various components of organised civil society represented within the EESC to express the expectations, concerns and needs of grassroots stakeholders.

Inter-institutional network

Constant **contacts and exchanges**, both formal and informal, **with all the other EU institutions** as well as with **a huge number of organisations** representing broad range of interests in Brussels and in all the EU Member States, gives the Committee an excellent network for **promoting the views expressed in its opinions to EU decision makers**.

This is possible in part thanks to cooperation agreements with the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions and a close relationship with the Council. This means that every year, **Committee representatives take part in meetings at the highest level**, such as the Conference of Committee Chairs of the Parliament, and receive requests for opinions from the rotating presidencies.

Furthermore, one pivotal form of structured dialogue between the EESC and the European Commission is the **EESC's annual contribution to the Commission Work Programme**.





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and Social Committee**

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