



# Discover what the **EESC** can do **for you**

2018 Edition



*European Economic and Social Committee*





## Get to know the European Economic and Social Committee

The EESC is not like other EU bodies. It is a unique forum for consultation, dialogue and consensus between representatives from all the different sectors of "organised civil society", including employers, trade unions and groups such as professional and community associations, youth organisations, women's groups, consumers, environmental campaigners and many more.

The EESC has always been an integral part of the EU: it was set up in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome, to advise EU decision-makers and ensure that ordinary people across the continent have a say in Europe's development.

## What is organised civil society?

"Organised civil society" comprises all the groups and organisations in which people work cooperatively – whether at local, national or European level. These groups often act as intermediaries between decision-makers and citizens, and enable people to get actively engaged in improving their living conditions.



## The EESC mission

The EESC's aim is to help ensure EU policy-making and legislation is more democratic, more effective and genuinely reflects the needs of EU citizens.

### It has three key tasks:

- to advise the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission;
- to make sure the views of civil society organisations are heard in Brussels and to increase their awareness of the impact of EU legislation on the lives of EU citizens;
- to support and strengthen organised civil society both inside and outside the EU.

## The EESC's soul is its members

Based in Brussels, the EESC is made up of 350 members from 28 EU Member States. The members come from all social and professional backgrounds and have a vast range of knowledge and experience. They are appointed by the Council for a term of five years on a proposal by Member States but they work independently for the EESC in the interests of all EU citizens. Members are not based full-time in Brussels: most continue to do their own jobs in their home countries, meaning that they can stay in touch with people "back home".

# How the EESC works

The European Parliament, Council and Commission are legally obliged to consult the EESC when passing new laws on a wide range of topics. The EESC examines the proposals and draws up **opinions** based on agreement reached between its members.

In addition, the EESC adopts **own-initiative** opinions on topics members believe to be important in the interests of EU citizens. It also produces **exploratory** opinions, requested by EU law-makers when they want an overview of civil society's views, and publishes information reports on topical issues. The EESC also develops ideas reflecting the demands of civil society on a project basis and carries out impact assessments to monitor the effect of EU legislation.

The EESC is made up of **three groups**: Employers' Group (Group I), Workers' Group (Group II) and Diversity Europe Group (Group III). The aim is to build consensus between these groups so that EESC opinions truly reflect the economic and social interests of EU citizens.

- **Employers' Group (Group I)**
- **Workers' Group (Group II)**
- **Diversity Europe Group (Group III)**

The EESC has **six sections**, covering different aspects of the EU's work, ranging from the economy to social affairs, from transport to environment, from the internal market to external relations. Members sit on one or more of these sections depending on their areas of expertise:

- **Economic and Monetary Union, and Economic and Social Cohesion (ECO)**
- **Single Market, Production and Consumption (INT)**
- **Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society (TEN)**
- **Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC)**
- **Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment (NAT)**
- **External Relations (REX)**

In these sections the members do the groundwork, drafting opinions on proposals for EU legislation. During this process, all the different participants have to negotiate to reach a **consensus**. This is what makes the EESC unique, because it has to reflect the wishes of all interests in society, through a process of compromise and mutual respect.

The EESC also has a **Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI)**<sup>\*</sup>, which has been important in helping EU industry anticipate and adapt to the impact of globalisation.

- **Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI)**

The opinions are debated and adopted by simple majority at EESC **plenary sessions**, which take place nine times a year in Brussels. The opinions are then sent to the EU law-makers in the Parliament and in the Council and contribute to the law-making process by influencing their thinking.

The EESC has set up three specialist **observatories**: on the Single Market, the Labour Market and Sustainable Development, plus a **Group** to coordinate support for the **European Semester** – a cycle of economic and fiscal policy coordination within the EU – and to take into consideration proposals

- Single Market Observatory (SMO)
- Sustainable Development Observatory (SDO)
- Labour Market Observatory (LMO)
- European Semester Group (ESG)

from European civil society on growth and employment.

Every two-and-a-half years, EESC members elect a **President** and **two Vice-Presidents**, the latter of whom are responsible for communication and the budget. The current President is Luca Jahier (Diversity Europe Group), from Italy, and the Vice-Presidents are Isabel Caño Aguilar (Workers' Group), from Spain, and Milena Angelova (Employers' Group), from Bulgaria.

<sup>\*</sup>CCMI: acronym used only in French for *Commission consultative des mutations industrielles*.

## The EESC President



On 18 April 2018, **Luca Jahier**, Diversity Europe Group, from Italy, became the EESC's 32<sup>nd</sup> President. During his mandate he will work on creating a more sustainable, democratic and culturally-inclusive future for Europe, especially for the next generation of European citizens so that they may live in a more socially and economically prosperous society.

[www.eesc.europa.eu/president](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/president)

*"Today we need a 'rEUnaissance': a European agenda of progress and sustainable growth, rooted in a shared cultural space and strengthening our open democratic societies."*

Luca Jahier, EESC President



## EESC opinions touch many aspects of life

During 60 years of existence, the EESC has adopted thousands of opinions to help improve the lives of EU citizens. These range from protecting EU consumers from dangerous or inappropriate products to championing equal rights for all EU citizens (especially the most vulnerable), from promoting good practice in areas like the environment and energy policy to encouraging the principles of democracy, freedom and human rights throughout the world.

To find any one of these go to:  
[www.eesc.europa.eu/opinions](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/opinions)

## Young Europeans

The EESC has made working with young people ([www.eesc.europa.eu/youth](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/youth)) one of its top priorities. Specific initiatives include:

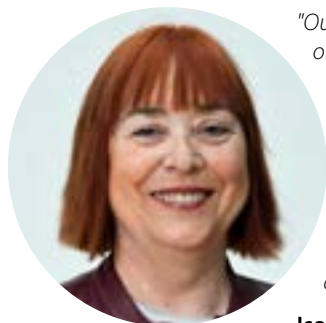
- "Your Europe, Your Say!" debate with school students from all EU Member States and from the candidate countries:  
[www.eesc.europa.eu/yeys2018](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/yeys2018)
- The "R EU Ready?" online educational game and Android and iOS app which teaches young Europeans how the EESC works:  
[www.eesc.europa.eu/R-EU-READY](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/R-EU-READY)
- EESC members regularly visit schools and universities "back home" to explain how the EU works, and listen to young people themselves.

# The challenges facing Europe and the EESC



*"The European Union needs to show it is capable of recognising, and embracing, change as opportunity; transition towards the fourth industrial revolution, circular and low-carbon economy and new models of work and society are the future for our young generation. We need to partner with young people to find the right social and economic design."*

**Luca Jahier**, EESC President



*"Our roots are in each trade union, business or citizens' organisation helping to build Europe day by day. Our main aim is to bring this tangible social and economic life closer to the European institutions while promoting our work to improve the lives of Europeans. In giving a voice to workers, employers and organisations representing farmers, consumers and disability concerns we are including life on the ground in the political debate, as the EESC promotes initiatives that respond to the day-to-day needs of citizens and make them visible."*

**Isabel Caño Aguilar**, EESC Vice-President



*The EESC possesses unique potential to generate balanced ideas for how to improve the competitiveness of the European economy, thus enhancing growth and sustainable jobs creation and to promote the implementation and ownership of these measures with the support and active involvement of all stakeholders of organised civil society. As the voice of European social partners and citizens, the EESC is an indispensable platform for providing more Europe in everyone's life."*

**Milena Angelova**, EESC Vice-President





## The EESC makes a difference

EESC opinions have a real impact on EU policy-making. European Commission reports show how EESC views have been integrated into vital areas of legislation; EU presidencies and Member States have paid tribute to EESC work and many civil society organisations recognise the value of the work that is done in their interests.

Each year, the EESC organises over 340 meetings in Brussels and "back home" in EU Member States, and publishes some 150 opinions in 24 languages. To maximise synergy, the EESC shares many resources with other EU bodies, such as the Committee of the Regions with whom it shares the same premises.

Over the years, the EESC has notched up many achievements. It has taken a leading role in measures to help immigrants to integrate into European society. For 20 years it has organised the annual European Consumer Day. The Committee has been very active in the 2018 European Year of Cultural

Heritage (EYCH) and has kept on reflecting on the role of culture as crucial foundation for peace and stability. The Committee continues to push for an EU focus on youth unemployment and poverty as well as growth and entrepreneurship. It works for greater recognition for the role of women in the workplace, for a more coordinated approach to EU energy policy, to build food security and discourage food waste, to encourage a more pro-active EU approach to global peace-building and much, much more.

## The EESC vision

The EESC is dedicated to promoting participatory democracy, alongside parliamentary democracy, in Europe. The EESC's vision of society is one where everyone is included and actively involved. This means citizens having a meaningful say in their own future and that of their children. It means young people believing they have the hope of a job and a decent life and it means people feeling empowered, engaged, equally respected and safe and secure in their daily lives.

## Up to the minute

Making the most of opportunities for dialogue with EU citizens means keeping up to date with the latest communication technologies. The EESC is always eager to use social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn to reach the widest audience, especially among young people, as well as blogs and videos. You can find out more on the EESC website.

We want to make it as easy as possible for European citizens to find and contact us:

**EESC website:** [www.eesc.europa.eu](http://www.eesc.europa.eu)

**EESC President's website:**  
[www.eesc.europa.eu/president](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/president)

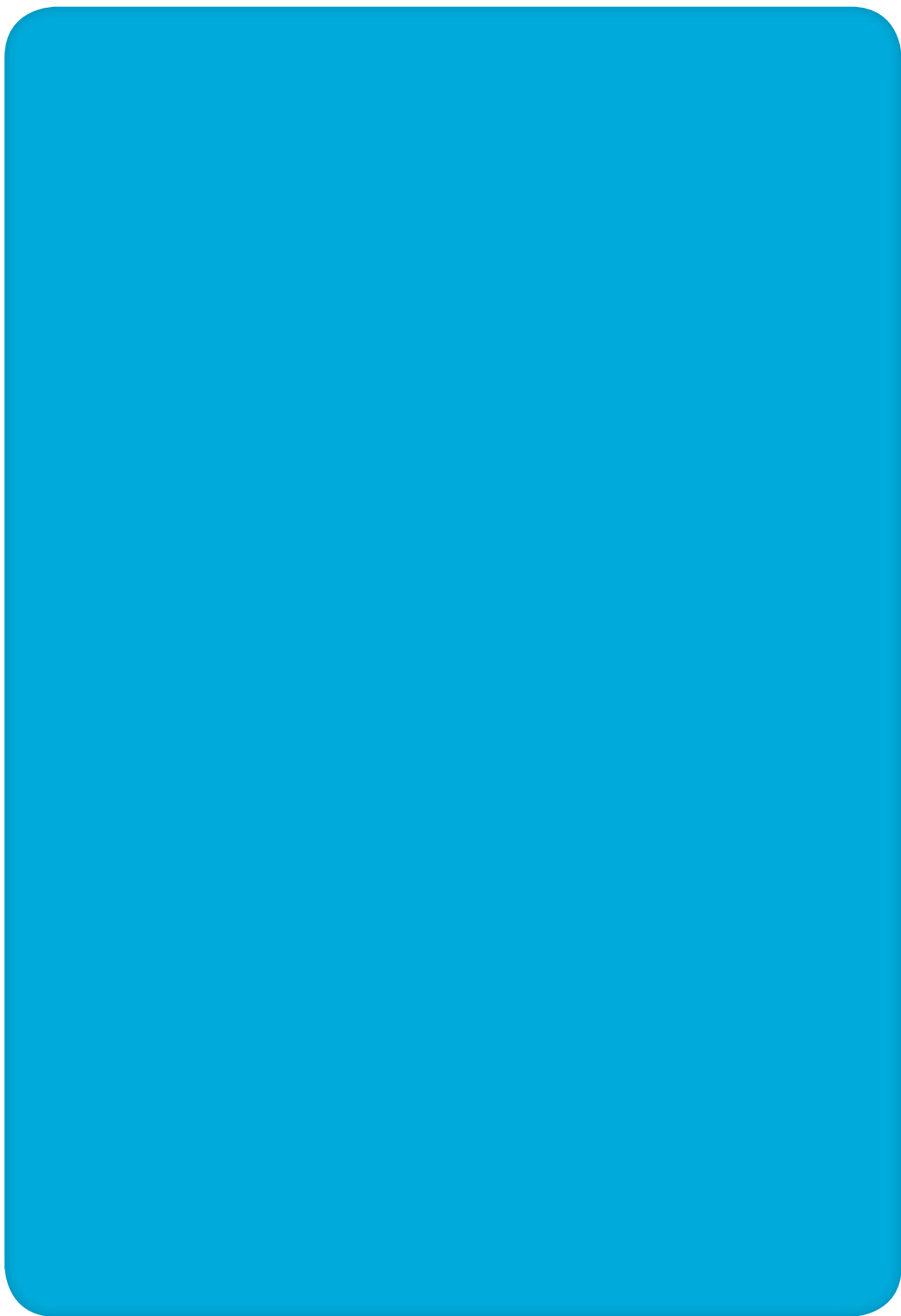
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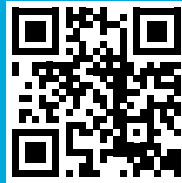


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