



The **EESC**'s activities during the **Portuguese Presidency**



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European Economic
and Social Committee



A word from the President

Christa Schweng, EESC President

The EESC is looking forward to cooperating closely with the Portuguese Presidency, especially since our own priorities are very much in line with theirs: we are advocating for an EU that prospers economically, and that is socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable.

The COVID-19 pandemic has turned our labour markets upside-down, both in terms of employment and forms of work. We are committed to provide grassroots-level input to the informal EU Social Summit planned for May 2021, through exploratory opinions on teleworking, vocational training and skills.

The digital and green transitions continue to be of the utmost relevance, topics that should be mainstreamed into every policy area. Sustainable development should become a mindset and the basis of a competitive European economy, leaving nobody behind.

The virus has also sped up the digitalisation of numerous aspects of our lives and I am glad that the Portuguese Presidency will be addressing this trend. Putting forward a Charter of Digital Rights, fostering the uptake of digital tools by governments across the EU, and using funds from the EU's recovery package are interesting and much-needed initiatives. The EESC is willing to contribute to these proposals through the expertise of its members.

I am looking forward to our joint initiatives and discussions. I would like to wish the Portuguese leadership every success in guiding the EU into the post COVID-19 era!

United for the Future of Europe.

Christa Schweng, EESC President

The EESC's activities during the Portuguese Presidency



Economic and Monetary Union, Economic and Social Cohesion – ECO

- The economic response to the COVID-19 crisis
- A Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-27, with the recovery plan embedded in it, to contribute to economic recovery
- Creating stable, integrated and resilient European financial markets for sustainable growth
- Strengthening Europe's economic and financial sovereignty
- Implementation of the new territorial and urban agenda
- Cohesion policy as a driving force in the post Covid-19 period
- Combatting tax fraud, tax avoidance, money laundering and tax havens
- Green growth: EESC policy proposals on taxation mechanisms for reducing CO₂ emissions
- Annual sustainable growth strategy and recommendations on the economic policy of the euro area, including national contributions



Single Market, Production and Consumption – INT

- Industrial policy and SMEs
- The social economy as an important pillar of the European economy
- Consumer policy
- Digital Economy and Society
- Circular Economy



Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society – TEN

- A Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility, and building a resilient European transport system in response to the COVID-19 crisis
- 2021 European Year of Rail: moving towards a Single European Railway Area
- A Renovation Wave for buildings to ensure energy performance, social and affordable housing
- Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights for Services of General Interest that work for people
- Moving towards more integrated and clean EU energy systems
- Strengthening cybersecurity through the review of the directive on security of network and information systems (NIS Directive)



Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship – SOC

- Economic and social recovery in the context of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic
- Strengthening the rule of law and fundamental rights in the EU
- Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights
- Future of work, working conditions in the platform economy, social dialogue and minimum wages
- Lifelong learning, employee training and green skills
- Gender equality and equal opportunities
- Socio-economic inclusion of migrants and refugees



Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment – NAT

- Sustainable food strategy “From Farm to Fork”
- Balanced territorial development
- Climate: Climate neutrality, European Climate Pact, COP26
- Youth engagement in sustainability and climate
- Implementation of the SDGs in the EU
- Circular economy (European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, ECESP)
- Biodiversity as a key element of the European Green Deal



External Relations – REX

- Partnership with the African Union and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States
- Monitoring and enhancing the role of civil society in the EU enlargement process (Western Balkans)
- Managing institutional and non-institutional civil society dialogue with neighbouring countries (Eastern and Mediterranean countries)
- Trade policy, including multilateralism and WTO: sharing of key EU policies (such as the New Green Deal) with partner countries and addressing the post Covid-19 recovery
- Managing institutional civil dialogue with major trading partners (Japan, South Korea, Canada, etc.) and new ones (Singapore, Vietnam)
- Enhancing civil society dialogue with key global actors (North America, China, Russia, Turkey)
- Encouraging more effective regional and bilateral cooperation and a modernised partnership with Latin America



Consultative Commission on Industrial Change – CCMI

- Post-COVID recovery plan and the EU industrial sectors
- Enhancing the global competitiveness of EU industry
- A green transition for European industry (such as the eco-friendly packaging industry)
- A comprehensive effort to digitalise the European productive sectors
- De-carbonisation and digitalisation of resource- and energy-intensive industries
- Critical Raw Materials Resilience



EESC opinions requested by the Portuguese Presidency

1. Challenges of teleworking: organisation of working time, work-life balance and the right to disconnect
2. Vocational training: the effectiveness of systems in anticipating and matching skills and labour market needs and the role of social partners and different stakeholders
3. The role of the social economy in the creation of jobs and in the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights
4. Teleworking and gender equality
5. Single European Railway Area
6. How to promote, based on education and training, from a lifelong learning perspective, the skills needed for Europe to establish a more just, more cohesive, more sustainable, more digital and more resilient society
7. How to implement a harmonisation of market entry for food supplements in the EU: Solutions and best practice



A word from the Portuguese Presidency



Ana Paula Zacarias, Secretary of State for European Affairs of Portugal

Portugal is taking over the presidency of the Council of the EU at a difficult time for Europe, marked by the pandemic crisis and its far-reaching socio-economic consequences.

Against this backdrop, we shall be focusing our work on three key areas: (1) economic recovery based on the twin digital and climate transitions; (2) strengthening the social dimension of the EU; and (3) the strategic autonomy of a Union that is open to the world. At the same time, we will strive to make Europe resilient, green, digital, social and global.

The first priority of our presidency will be to contribute to the EU's recovery and to the practical implementation of the next Multiannual Financial Framework and the Next Generation EU programme, as well as the national recovery and resilience plans. We want to ensure that the digital and climate transitions safeguard the well-being of Europeans and confidence in the European social model, promoting a Union based on the common values of solidarity, convergence and cohesion.

The social dimension will be the cornerstone of the Portuguese presidency. We will throw our weight behind implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan in order to respond to the social dimension of the crisis, including responses in the area of public health.

In this connection, we will be hosting a two-part European Social Summit in Porto on 7 and 8 May 2021. The first part will consist of a high-level conference bringing together the European institutions, academic institutions and the social partners. We are counting on the EESC's participation and contribution. The second part will take the shape of an informal meeting of Heads of State and Government and will also focus on social issues.

Our motto will be: "Time to deliver: for a just, green and digital recovery"

The contribution of the EESC, as a political forum representing the interests of employers, workers and civil society organisations, is essential for boosting the democratic legitimacy of the EU's decision-making process and bringing the citizens closer to the European project.

During the Portuguese presidency we will rely on the EESC's collaboration and input in laying the foundations for this new decade and a post-COVID EU cycle.

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