

The leadership of the Civil Society Organisations' Group is made up of experienced members, elected democratically every two-and-a-half years.

The Presidency of the Group for the 2023-2025 term of office:



Séamus BOLAND (Ireland)
President



Krzysztof Stanisław
BALON (Poland)
Vice-President



Pietro Vittorio BARBIERI
(Italy)
Vice-President



Jan DIRX
(Netherlands)
Vice-President



Sif HOLST
(Denmark)
Vice-President



Ileana IZVERNICEANU
DE LA IGLESIA (Spain)
Vice-President



Rudolf KOLBE
(Austria)
Vice-President



Lidija PAVIĆ-ROGOŠIĆ
(Croatia)
Vice-President

The administration of the Group is ensured by an active and dynamic team which you can contact, should you be interested in finding out further information on the activities of the Group.

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The Civil Society Organisations' Group (Group III) is one of three major groups that make up the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The Committee, established as a consultative body to the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament as part of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, gives representatives of organised civil society a formal platform to express their points of view on EU issues and to participate in the Union's decision-making process. The EESC is a forum for consultation and representation that enables representatives of Member States' social, occupational, economic and cultural organisations to play an integral part in the process of shaping EU policies and preparing EU decisions.

The added value of the EESC's work includes:

- considerable expertise under one roof, from the whole European civil society spectrum;
- through the opinions issued, the EESC's work ensures that the EU's legislation and programmes reflect the experiences, expectations and proposals of representative economic, social, occupational and civic organisations;
- divergent interests find a place for compromise and consensus for the benefit of healthy participatory EU governance.

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Civil Society Organisations' Group

GROUP III



European Economic
and Social Committee



DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY

The presence of the Civil Society Organisations' Group (Group III), alongside the Employers' Group and the Workers' Group, ensures that the Committee is a dynamic force and is empowered to give full voice to the concerns of the various economic, social, occupational and civic organisations that make up civil society in the Member States.

In line with the changes introduced in the Lisbon Treaty, the Group is made up of «other representatives and stakeholders of civil society, particularly in the economic, civic, professional and cultural field».

Its members come from organisations representing the following fields:

- Academia (natural scientists, economists, sociologists, etc.)
- Citizens' Participation and Empowerment
- Civil Society Development
- Consumers
- Environment, Heritage and Sustainable Development
- Farming, Fisheries and Coastal Communities, Forestry
- Human Rights Protection (Issues concerning children, elderly, families, gender equality, marginalised and underprivileged groups, migrants and refugees, minorities, persons with disabilities, women and young people)
- Liberal Professions (lawyers, doctors, engineers, etc.)
- Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Crafts
- Social Economy (charities, cooperatives, foundations, mutual societies and social enterprises)



EUROPEAN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT - LOCAL ACTION

In democratic governance, it is the people who determine in which direction they want to go, and the role of their representatives and government in getting them there.

The overall aim of the Group is to truly strengthen participatory democracy across the European Union and to make sure that EESC opinions on EU legislative proposals reflect the interests of all Europeans.

The Civil Society Organisations' Group consists of 106 members from all 27 Member States of the European Union. Its members are nominated by their national governments and formally approved and appointed by the Council of the European Union for a renewable five-year term of office. They work independently in the interests of all EU citizens.

The membership of the Civil Society Organisations' Group comprises much more than representatives of organisations with a presence in Brussels or at the EU level. This is the added value it brings to the EU policy-making process. The members of the Group take discussions on EU legislative proposals home to their organisations and networks. They reach out to civil society organisations in their communities, regions and countries. They listen to their views and ideas and involve them in discussions.

Nevertheless, a regular exchange with other European civil society organisations is particularly important to the Group. Hence, the Group cultivates fruitful working relationships with the members of the EESC Liaison Group and with other European civil society networks, that have a broad representation at European level. The Group tries to involve them in its activities to establish effective civil dialogue and advance its own priorities and common interests. It also offers them logistical support for their meetings at the Committee's headquarters in Brussels.

WORK PROGRAMME OF THE GROUP 2023-2025

The fight against poverty and the role of civil society organisations in combating poverty is the overriding priority of the Civil Society Organisations' Group for the current two-and-a-half year mandate (2023-2025).

The emphasis on poverty eradication is all the more relevant given that it constitutes the first objective of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and that the EU has a relatively high percentage of its population in poverty, or at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, prevailing downward demographic trends in Europe will necessitate increased investment in care and the elderly, in order to

avoid even greater levels of poverty and social exclusion.

During the current term of office, the Group will plan its annual work along a limited number of thematic areas, which will feed into the overall objective of poverty eradication. All of the policy instruments available to the Group (studies, own-initiative opinions, events, thematic debates at ordinary Group meetings, etc.) will be used to simultaneously advance its policy contribution on these specific topics.

OUTREACH TO THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONAL ACTORS

The Civil Society Organisations' Group strategically and proactively engages with the European Institutions, notably in relation to the European Commission, the European Parliament and the presidencies of the Council of the EU.

The overall aim is to promote the thematic areas of its work programme. The Group's own-initiative opinions and studies, EESC resolutions, Group events, conclusions and recommendations provide the opportunities for establishing these contacts.

Its outreach activities regarding the European Parliament concern MEPs, relevant inter-groups, political groups and committees. As regards the forthcoming presidencies of the Council of the EU, the objective of the Group is to establish contacts several months prior to the presidencies in order to influence, inter alia, the priorities of the forthcoming presidencies and/or the exploratory opinions requested from the EESC.

With its outreach activities, the Group continuously tries to strengthen its working relations with relevant institutional third parties, e.g. in the context of EU-UK civil society relations.

CATEGORIES – THE STRENGTH OF THE GROUP

The Group supports, through its secretariat, the activities carried out by five of the Committee's categories. Categories bring together members who represent a particular sector or community and its interests. Their role is to add value to the EESC's consultative work through the high level of expertise they offer in their respective fields.

ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE | CONSUMERS & ENVIRONMENT | FARMERS | LIBERAL PROFESSIONS | SOCIAL ECONOMY