The EESC's activities during the French Presidency

January – June 2022
A word from the President

Christa Schweng, EESC President

The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union comes at a vital moment: Europe is shaping its post-crisis future through its economic recovery and resilience plans at a moment when a positive economic outlook is heavily dependent on how the pandemic evolves.

We, the members of the EESC are committed to working closely with the French presidency on common goals, while moving Europe’s strategic agenda forward towards an economically prosperous and socially inclusive recovery. We will deliver our contribution through our exploratory opinions and we are committed to making the voice of European civil society organisations heard throughout the presidency.

First of all, we want to join forces to secure an economic and social recovery based on solidarity. The green and digital transitions encompass the social dimension and are an opportunity to deliver a sustainable, fairer world for all.

Maintaining Europe’s competitiveness and creating resilient, inclusive and sustainable societies will require, now more than ever, the active engagement of civil society organisations. This applies especially to the youngest generation, with 2022 marking the European Year of Youth.

Moreover, the French presidency will have one more important task: wrapping up the work of the Conference on the Future of Europe. The closing event, being held in early spring 2022, will be the time to draw conclusions and provide guidance on the next steps to take. Tangible results and concrete follow up measures are needed to make Europe a truly great place to be and prosper.

We should consider the end of the Conference as a new beginning for the EU: an opportunity for all Europeans to rediscover a sense of belonging to our common project, with a strong organised civil society at its heart.

I am very much looking forward to working together with the French Presidency for a strong and future-proof European Union.

#United4FutureEU
Economic and Monetary Union, Economic and Social Cohesion – ECO

- Actively working on the National Recovery and Resilience Plans and contribute to the reshaping of the European Semester process in order to optimise the economic recovery
- Reaping the benefits of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, with the recovery plan embedded in it, and introducing additional genuine own resources
- Ensuring the stability, integration and resilience of European financial markets, and redirect investment flows to support sustainable growth
- Contributing to the revision of the EU fiscal framework for a sustainable recovery and a just transition
- Implementing the new territorial and urban agenda
- Cohesion policy as a driving force in the post-COVID-19 period and its connection and synergy with the recovery and resilience plans
- Combating tax fraud, tax avoidance, money laundering and tax havens
- EESC policy proposals on business taxation for the 21st century and on a digital levy
- Annual sustainable growth strategy and recommendations on the economic policy of the euro area, including national contributions
- EESC contribution to the discussion about a new strategic approach towards the EU Outermost regions

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
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, equal opportunities and youth
• The social and economic inclusion of migrants and refugees

Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society – TEN

• Building an efficient and green European transport system with a view of transition towards zero-emission mobility
• Implementing digital solutions to support more integrated and sustainable mobility, using the combined use of transport modes
• Revision of TEN-T regulation and development of urban transport systems that are safe, accessible, inclusive, affordable, smart, resilient and emission-free
• Placing European citizens, especially young people, at the heart of European energy policy
• Creating an energy union that enables EU consumers – both households and businesses – to access safe, clean and affordable energy
• A comprehensive and consistent European political strategy to tackle energy poverty needs
• Supporting the renovation of the EU’s building stock to eradicate energy poverty
• Protecting citizens through cybersecurity and resilience of critical entities
• A global and secure strategy for space communications
Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment – NAT

- A sustainable agriculture and food strategy “From Farm to Fork”
- Sustainable rural/urban development
- Climate: Climate neutrality, European Climate Pact
- 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
- The economy of wellbeing – post-COVID-19 sustainable reconstruction and recovery

External Relations – REX

- Enhanced involvement of civil society in the EU Partnership with the African Union and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States
- Active contribution 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 the WTO: organisation of stakeholders’ conference on trade and sustainable development
- Managing institutional civil dialogue and contributing to the work of Domestic advisory groups in the EU Trade agreements
- Enhancing civil society dialogue with key global actors
- Encouraging more effective regional and bilateral cooperation and modernised partnerships with Latin America
- Reflecting on how civil society can contribute for increasing of the EU capacity to act independently in external relations
Consultative Commission on Industrial Change – CCMI

- Post-COVID-19 recovery plan and the EU’s industrial sectors
- Enhancing the global competitiveness of EU industry
- A green and digital transition for European industry
- Roadmap on security and defence technologies
- Updated EU Industrial Strategy
- Textile, packaging and furniture industrial ecosystems
- De-carbonisation and digitalisation of resource- and energy-intensive industries
- New forms of employment and anticipation of structural change in industry
- Critical Raw Materials and batteries

EESC opinions requested by the French Presidency

1. Innovative financial instruments as part of the development of social impact companies
2. Social dialogue as a tool to foster health and safety at the workplace
3. Improving the EU’s capacity to react in the face of extreme events occurring outside its territory
4. How will the industrial ecosystems identified contribute to the strategic autonomy of the EU and the well-being of Europeans?
5. Food security and sustainable food systems
6. What conditions are needed for the energy and low-carbon transition to be socially acceptable?
7. The benefits of the outermost regions for the European Union (joint EESC-CoR opinion)
In the last few years, the European Union has faced many challenges – health, social, economic and environmental. In this changing world and in the face of sometimes hostile powers, the best response is a European one.

In this respect, the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union sets as its main ambition the idea of a more sovereign Europe. In relation to migration, defence, and our neighbourhood policy, we face common challenges: we will therefore launch initiatives to enable Europeans to develop new capacities to act. For example, France will seek to bring to fruition the Strategic Compass launched by the German Presidency, which will define European defence and security ambitions.

Our second priority will be to work towards a new European model by 2030. Let us work to strengthen it by developing strategic sectors, reconciling economic development and climate ambitions with a carbon tax at Europe’s borders, monitoring the digital rules of tomorrow, or finalising the directive on minimum wages, so essential for the reality of a social Europe.

Finally, we want a more humane Europe. New initiatives for our schools, universities, culture and values must be implemented to support the raison d’être of the European project: our shared sense of belonging. These issues are already at the heart of the Conference on the Future of Europe. During its presidency of the Council of the European Union, France will pay particular attention to the voice of young people, citizens of today and of tomorrow, who will be celebrated in 2022 with the European Year of Youth.

The work ahead of us in the coming months will be essential for strengthening and promoting our European model. In this respect, close cooperation between the French Presidency and the European Economic and Social Committee will be of key importance. France welcomes this, as dialogue with the social partners and organised civil society is absolutely necessary in order to build a Europe close to its citizens and to strengthen our common sense of belonging.
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