



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



July – December 2021



European Economic
and Social Committee



A word from the President

Christa Schweng, EESC President

Slovenia now holds the Presidency of the Council of the EU for the second time. And for the second time, the presidency comes at a challenging moment: in 2008, it was just after the onset of the financial crisis, and in 2021, Europe is still dealing with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is no wonder that one of the presidency's key priorities focuses on the EU's preparedness for and resilience to crises – particularly in the areas of pandemics and health, but also of cybersecurity.

The EESC is looking forward to working closely with the Slovenian Presidency, especially since our priorities are closely aligned: the EESC is also focusing on recovery, on fair, green and digital transitions, and on defending the rule of law.

Another central topic is the Conference on the Future of Europe, as the majority of its tasks will need to be implemented during the Slovenian presidency, with a view to concluding the Conference in 2022. I welcome the presidency's supportive stance, having stated that the voice of the EESC must be heard.

I am convinced that the EESC's exploratory opinions on adult learning, sustainable quality work during and after recovery, inclusive digitalisation, and fair food chains will provide valuable input to the Slovenian presidency's work in these fields.

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



#United4FutureEU

The EESC's activities during the Slovenian Presidency



Economic and Monetary Union, Economic and Social Cohesion – ECO

- The National Recovery and Resilience Plans: optimising the economic response to the COVID-19 crisis
- Reaping the benefits of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-27, with the recovery plan embedded in it, and introducing additional genuine own resources
- Ensuring the stability, integration and resilience of European financial markets for sustainable growth
- Reshaping 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 a digital levy
- The 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

- Building a sustainable, smart and resilient European transport system
- 2021 European Year of Rail: moving towards a Single European Railway Area
- Recovery of the aviation sector, a catalyst for economic prosperity, connectivity, job security and freedom of movement for European citizens
- Ensuring a clean, just and citizen-centred energy transition
- Alleviating energy poverty and access to clean and affordable energy without leaving anybody behind
- The Renovation Wave Strategy as a key component of Europe's post-COVID-19 recovery
- Strengthening cybersecurity through the security of network and information systems (the so-called NIS Directive)
- The societal and ecological impact of the 5G ecosystem



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
- The social and economic inclusion of migrants and refugees



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, 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
- The economy of wellbeing – post-COVID-19 sustainable reconstruction and recovery



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 Southern Neighbourhood)
- Trade policy, including multilateralism and the WTO: monitoring trade agreements, notably TSD chapters, sharing key EU policies (i.e. the European Green Deal, Farm2Fork, etc.) with partner countries and advising on the post-COVID-19 recovery
- Managing institutional civil dialogue with major trading partners (the UK, Japan, South Korea, Canada, etc.) and new ones (Singapore, Vietnam)
- Enhancing civil society dialogue with key global actors (the United States, China, Russia, Turkey)
- Encouraging more effective regional and bilateral cooperation and modernised partnerships



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
- Synergies between the civil aviation, defence and space industries
- Updated EU Industrial Strategy
- Textile, glass and automotive 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 Slovenian Presidency

1. Adult learning
2. Key components of sustainable quality work during and after recovery
3. Exploiting the economic and social opportunities of digitalisation and improving the digital transformation of the economy, especially among SMEs, focusing on human-centred artificial intelligence and data
4. Upgrading inclusive, secure and trustworthy digitalisation for all
5. Towards a fair food supply chain



A word from the Slovenian Presidency



***Gašper Dovžan, State Secretary at the Slovenian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs***

In the last few years, the European Union has faced a variety of challenges that have taken a heavy toll on our lives. An exceptional, additional test has emerged with the pandemic, to which the European Union has responded with unity, solidarity and – we can hopefully now say – success. Now the time has come for recovery, for building a crisis-resilient Europe, a safe and credible Europe that respects its fundamental values and principles, and for turning to Europe's future again.

The Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU will focus on adopting decisions and measures that will allow us to move forward successfully on the path to recovery and together shape an even better, greener, fairer and more socially-oriented future for Europe, where it is strong both on the inside and in its relations with the outside world.

A key task for Slovenia during its EU Council presidency will be to strengthen the Union's resilience in crises, including by ensuring the EU's open strategic autonomy and the recovery of the European economy, based on the digital and green transitions. We will be paying particular attention to pandemic preparedness and also to other strategic challenges, one of which is cybersecurity.

The Conference on the Future of Europe will be taking place during Slovenia's presidency; a key element of which will be a debate with the European public as to what kind of Union they want. During our Council presidency, we will be endeavouring to ensure an open, inclusive debate aimed at finding answers together to the challenges that lie ahead.

During its presidency, Slovenia will be steering discussions with a view to promoting the rule of law as a shared European value and will strive to preserve the European way of life. Respect for the EU's fundamental values and principles is indeed essential for the functioning of the EU as a whole and for its legal order.

We will also be contributing to bringing EU interests and values to bear effectively on the world stage. In the EU's external relations, two key priorities in particular will be to strengthen transatlantic relations and to support the countries of the Western Balkans in their convergence with the European Union. At the core of our work will be efforts to step up the EU's security, the debate on the future of the Schengen area, and the issue of migration.

Europe is facing major challenges, but there are also opportunities for progress, which we can only achieve if we act in as coordinated a manner as possible. The European Economic and Social Committee's support for the Slovenian presidency's ambitious objectives is therefore of the utmost importance because, as the voice of organised civil society, the EESC is making a valuable contribution to tackling the difficult challenges that lie ahead.

The Slovenian members of the EESC



GÖTZ Nadja

Group II – Employees

Deputy Secretary General of the Education, Science and Culture Trade Union of Slovenia (ESTUS), Confederation of public servants
info@eesc.europa.eu



SMOLE Jože

Group I – Employers

Secretary General of the Association of Employers of Slovenia (ZDS)
info@eesc.europa.eu



POČIVAVŠEK Jakob Krištof

Group II – Employees

Chairman of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Slovenia PERGAM
Jakobkristof.pocivavsek@eesc.europa.eu



SOJČ Urška

Group I – Employers

Senior Legal Advisor at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia
info@eesc.europa.eu



RAVNIK Branko

Group III – Diversity Europe

Senior Agriculture Adviser, Turizem Bohinj, Institute for the Promotion of Tourism
Branko.Ravnik@eesc.europa.eu



ZORKO Andrej

Group II – Employees

Executive Secretary to the Presidency of the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia (ZSSS)
Andrej.Zorko@eesc.europa.eu



REPANŠEK Neža

Group III – Diversity Europe

Trainer and facilitator at National Youth Council of Slovenia
Neza.Repansek@eesc.europa.eu



**European Economic
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Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 99
1040 Bruxelles/Brussel
BELGIQUE/BELGIË

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