



Studies carried out in **2016**

COMPENDIUM



European Economic and Social Committee



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Culture, Cities and Identity in Europe

The study examines international reports for culture's impact on European cities and its use as a tool for regeneration and development. It provides an overview of the factors in EU city development linked to culture and identity through selective qualitative and quantitative analysis. Culture is examined thematically in terms of its use as a vehicle for economic growth, a tool for reconverting cities, for integration and inclusiveness, and as a pillar of European identity. Attention is drawn to the processes by which culture and city regeneration go hand in hand. The argument of whether culture is best treated in terms of its own importance or as a contributor to other social and economic benefits is discussed. The recommendations request that the EU: recognises cultural rights as fundamental to human development; acknowledges culture as a necessity for sustainable development; supports exchange between cultures for social and economic development; and empowers cities' decisions on culture to shape our future. Cities should rethink their policies with culture as their starting point. Strategies should bring peripheral communities back into the centre by reversing the social geography of cities. Security would be enhanced by the creative use of public spaces for dialogue.

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Impact of Digitalisation and on-demand economy on labour markets and consequences for employment and industrial relations

Digitalisation is transforming business landscapes and the world of work, and redefining the boundaries of production, consumption and distribution. This has created tremendous opportunities, as new products, processes and techniques have emerged, but has also created threats, as new ways of employment pose new challenges to employers and employees. The overall consequences on labour markets are, however, still highly uncertain, which is reflected in the wide variation in the outcomes of the existing research. The initial government responses appear to be reactive rather than proactive, and targeted towards mitigating the side effects of digitalisation instead of aiming to reap its potential benefits.

This study focuses on the impact of digitalisation and the on-demand economy on employment and industrial relations. Traditional businesses and industries as well as new forms of work in the on demand economy are assessed. For both, job creation and destruction, interaction with customers and workers/employees, labour relations in terms of both the organisation of work and industrial relations as well as government responses, with a specific focus on labour conditions, taxation and social security, are discussed. The study emphasises in particular aspects relevant to employers.

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The ethics of Big Data: Balancing economic benefits and ethical questions of Big Data in EU policy context

This study, carried out to support the activity of the EESC, explores the ethical dimensions of Big Data in an attempt to balance them and the need for economic growth within the EU. As a first part of the study an in-depth review of the available literature was carried out (academic articles and books, EU and national opinions) to highlight ethical issues connected with Big Data. At the end of it, five balancing actions were devised as tools to promote the balance described above. The second phase of the study involved interviewing a number of stakeholders within Europe and conducting a survey in order to acquire information on the general knowledge of the issues connected to the use of Big Data and receive feedback on the proposed balancing actions. Lastly, these actions were modified according to the feedback received. Attitudes that emerged from the interviews and survey most often ranged from concerned to worried, while benefits of Big Data were seldom discussed by the respondents. Benefits are, nevertheless, intrinsic to Big Data, as well as risks, and they are discussed more broadly throughout the whole study.

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Coordination of social security schemes between European Union and Euromed Countries

The presence of mass immigration in the Southern Mediterranean region of Europe requires the development of new instruments in the field of social security coordination. Many of the existing problems associated with coordinating social security systems have been resolved, until now, through bilateral agreements between Member States and MED countries. However, it is practically impossible for all 28 Member States to individually initiate negotiations with all MED countries or vice versa. For this reason, there is a growing trend for demanding that the EU negotiate and sign international agreements that grant more comprehensive bi- or multilateral coverage than bilateral agreements. For many Member States this approach can be attractive, and a very interesting means of avoiding bilateral negotiations that require a great amount of effort and produce relatively meagre results. In actual fact, the bilateral negotiations route is incomplete, which is why other alternatives are cropping up. The best examples of this are Regulation 883/04 and the Multilateral Ibero-American Social Security Agreement. As such, European citizens working in MED States would be better guaranteed protection through European multilateral agreements or through a comprehensive agreement on social security in the EUROMED area.

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The Investment Plan and the Social Pillar: a step towards a new strategy for Europe

The focus of the study is to analyse the progress of the **Jobs, Growth and Investment Package** and its contribution towards promoting more sustainable and inclusive growth. The study is based on the concept of inclusive growth, derived from the development literature: it not only states that growth with equity is possible, but also that **equity is necessary for growth**.

According to various stakeholders, the Plan misses the opportunity to move in the direction of promoting a more inclusive EU. The Juncker Plan, and the EFSI in particular, pay little attention to long-term investment in social infrastructure and services and to the needs of disadvantaged population groups in the design and implementation of infrastructural investments. Social infrastructures represent in fact only 3% of all EFSI investments so far. A positive outcome of the Plan concerns **the relevant role it is playing in promoting social entrepreneurship**: the EFSI is supporting the European Investment Fund (EIF) to **help exceptional numbers of European SMEs to access finance**.

IPE only partially tackles a few of the social pillars currently being worked on, even though IPE could push relevant opportunities to intervene by supporting many of the Pillars.

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Review of Member States' reports on the implementation of the European Commission Decision on the provision of State aid to the provision of services of general economic interest

Based on the commissioned Study, the Almunia package seems to have led to substantial improvements in clarity and legal certainty with respect to provision of SGEIs and state aid. It has stricken the right balance between the need to foster and support SGEIs and the objective of preventing potential distortions of competition. Exemption from notification reduces the administrative costs and complexities that otherwise would face the authorities, in particular at regional and local level. The compatibility requirements are more flexible, although the benefits can be reaped by the central level only. If the entrustment is not misleadingly attached to implementing procurement/concession rules, if calculating the compensation does not exclusively involve the NAC approach, and if a specific approach to efficiency does not stand as mandatory, but the focus are efficiency incentives, then the implementation appears to run smoothly. The goal is to gradually concentrate resources at EU level for the scrutiny of those aids cases raising particular concerns for competition. Efforts to improve the current rules could thus increase the threshold, include the relevant social SGEIs and avoid undue burden for regional and local authorities. Transparency could be further encouraged and good practices need to be widely recognized.

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Assessment of the effectiveness of the EU SMEs policies 2007-2015

SMEs are the backbone of the EU economy and have been placed in the focus of European policy following the adoption of the Small Business Act in 2008. This study makes a comprehensive overview of EU support initiatives for SMEs in the period 2007-2015 with the aim to assess the effectiveness of EU SME policies – both in terms of their formulation and implementation. On the basis of a literature review and five case studies with SME representatives in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy and Hungary, this study tries to identify progress made along the key priority areas of EU SME policies: burden reduction; promotion of entrepreneurship; access to markets and internationalization; access to finance; competitiveness and innovation and key support networks in order to outline challenges that still impede SMEs' growth.

The results demonstrate that despite the numerous initiatives launched, EU SME policies could still benefit from a shift towards diversification of support measures, simplification of applicable rules and optimization of communication and collaboration with SMEs and SME organizations. This will enable the addressing of SMEs' heterogeneity and diverse needs in an effective manner.

This study draws conclusions about challenges on the level of the policy priority areas and recommendations about the ways the effectiveness of the policies can be improved.

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The EU social pillar: standing the test of better regulation (How does the REFIT agenda fit with the Pillar of Social Rights)

In recent years, REFIT and the institutional agreement on Better Regulation have focused on reducing regulatory burdens, increasing the number of impact analyses, and wide-ranging consultations. As a result, the legislative process has ground to a halt. Having mapped and quantified the EU acquis, the Commission is preparing to launch a targeted deregulation with the aim of reducing regulatory burdens.

This unprecedented wave of liberalisation has not spared the EU's social element. There has been a dearth of new initiatives for fear of adversely affecting competitiveness. The Commission has limited itself to revising old directives without adapting them to new scientific (carcinogens directive), social (working time directive) and societal (collaborative economy) developments. The modernisation of the acquis gives rise to concerns about loss of content and the weakening of the common framework (regulation on European statistics). The only sizeable task is yet to come: the European pillar of social rights, which – it is feared – may result in a declaration of principle.

On the eve of the EU's 60th anniversary, it is urgent that we restore legitimacy to its social element. Giving shape to the European pillar of social rights and setting up a related investment programme at EU level would reassure all Europeans.

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Improving the social media outreach of civil society organisations and the EESC: the EU consultation in a digital age

The study aims to provide an analysis of the current consultation practices at the European Commission as well as to examine the potential of an intermediary body, such as the EESC, and organised civil society, in improving this tool for participatory democracy in the EU. The objectives are to identify the main challenges of EU online public consultations analyse the current role of the EESC and CSOs in these processes and propose recommendations to the EESC on how it could play a more substantial part in overcoming the primary weaknesses of EU online public consultations.

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Recent Evolutions of the Social Economy in the European Union

The general objective of the Report is to study the recent evolution of the social economy (SE) in the European Union (UE) and its 28 member states. It focuses in three areas: firstly, the social economy and the emergent concepts/movements related to the space between states and market/for profit businesses, secondly, the public policies in their large sense built both at the EU and the Member countries in recent years to enhance the social economy sector and thirdly, measuring the weight of the social economy in each EU Member country. This research is not only an update of the studies entitled “The Social Economy in the European Union”, carried out by CIRIEC and published in 2008 and in 2012 by the European Economic and Social Committee, but also an analysis and assessment of recent evolution in this field in Europe. In order to provide answers to the research topics, the project was structured around three areas. In the first, the conceptual area, the research undertook an overview of the emergent concepts, comparing them with the established EU concept of the social economy and identifying their challenges. In the second area, public policies, the research focused on the policies towards the social economy deployed by governments, at the European level and at the national level, in the recent period (2010-16). The environment and ‘ecosystem’ of the social economy is a major factor that can facilitate the development of social economy entities or can constitute an external barrier to them. The project formulated a framework to categorise all these policies. It provides for a review of the main initiatives deployed at the EU and national levels, a comparative analysis of the new national legislation on the Social Economy and an assessment of their impact in Europe. The third area is statistical. Its central goal was to provide quantitative data on the social economy in the 28 Member States, following the same method used in the two former studies carried out by CIRIEC for the EESC. It also studied the recent developments in statistics and the available data around Europe.

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Investigation of informal trilogue negotiations since the Lisbon Treaty – Added Value, lack of transparency and possible democratic deficit

This study focuses on the use of trilogues and early agreements in the European Union (EU). Today, trilogues form the standard operating procedure for reaching agreements between the European Commission, European Parliament, and the Council of the EU. The use of trilogues has long raised concerns about public transparency and accountability. Much has already been done to improve the way in which each institution's negotiating team is held accountable to their respective institutions.

However, there is still scope for improving the transparency of trilogue meetings. The purpose of this study is three-fold. First, we provide an overview of the recent developments in the use of trilogue meetings to reach early agreements. We provide a detailed descriptive statistical overview of the use of early agreements to conclude legislation in the period of 1999 to 2016, negotiated under the ordinary legislative procedure. Second, we analyse EU policy initiatives taken in the areas of transparency and accountability. Third, we suggest several avenues for improving the transparency and accountability of trilogues. The study draws on an extensive review of both academic and non-academic literature on the use of trilogues and early agreements. We also present some new quantitative and qualitative data to shed light on the use of trilogues and early agreements.

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Mapping growing Economic and Social divergences in the European Union

It is essential to ensure that the pillar is not just a statement of principles or good intentions, but actually strengthens social rights by means of concrete and specific tools (legislation, policy-making mechanisms and financial instruments) so that it has a positive impact on people's lives in the short and medium term and supports European integration in the 21st century.

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