

March 2021

Highlighting the need to ensure a sustainable recovery for the future of Europe's citizens, the EESC Civil Society Days 2021 provide an ideal platform for EU citizens, organised civil society and EU institutions to discuss how best to deliver on this objective. Taking place from 1 to 5 March 2021, this virtual-only event will focus on issues such as multilevel sustainable democracy in Europe and the future of work in the well-being economy, through a series of eight interactive workshops organised by civil society members of the EESC's liaison group. This digest presents a selection of relevant publications from the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS).



Multilevel Sustainable Democracy in Europe

Collective intelligence at EU level: Social and democratic dimensions

Briefing by Gianluca Sgueo, EPRS, March 2020

Humans are among the many living species capable of collaborative and imaginative thinking. While it is widely agreed among scholars that this capacity has contributed to making humans the dominant species, other crucial questions remain open to debate. Is it possible to encourage large groups of people to engage in collective thinking? Is it possible to coordinate citizens to find solutions to address global challenges? Some scholars claim that large groups of independent, motivated, and well-informed people can, collectively, make better decisions than isolated individuals can – what is known as 'collective intelligence.'

Digital democracy: Is the future of civic engagement online?

Briefing by Gianluca Sgueo, EPRS, February 2020

Digital innovation is radically transforming democratic decision-making. Public administrations are experimenting with mobile applications (apps) to provide citizens with real-time information, using online platforms to crowdsource ideas, and testing algorithms to engage communities in day-to-day administration. The key question is what technology breakthrough means for governance systems created long before digital disruption.

Using technology to 'co-create' EU policies

Briefing by Gianluca Sgueo, EPRS, January 2020

What will European Union (EU) decision-making look like in the next decade and beyond? Is technological progress promoting more transparent, inclusive and participatory decision-making at EU level? Technology has dramatically changed both the number and quality of connections between citizens and public administrations. With technological progress, citizens have gained improved access to public authorities through new digital communication channels.

Democratic institutions and prosperity: The benefits of an open society

Briefing by Jérôme Saulnier, Gianluca Sgueo, Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, February 2021

The ongoing structural transformation and the rapid spread of the technologies of the fourth industrial revolution are challenging current democratic institutions and their established forms of governance and regulation. At the same time, these changes offer vast opportunities to enhance, strengthen and expand the existing democratic framework to reflect a more complex and interdependent world. This process has already begun in many democratic societies but further progress is needed.

Further reading:

What future for democracy?

'At a glance' note by Eamonn Noonan, EPRS, December 2020

The practice of democracy: A selection of civic engagement initiatives

Study by Gianluca Sgueo, EPRS, June 2020

Strengthening media freedom in the EU

'At a glance' note by Gianluca Sgueo, EPRS, November 2020

Protecting EU common values within the Member States: An overview of monitoring, prevention and enforcement mechanisms at EU level

Study by Maria Diaz Crego, Rafał Mańko and Wouter van Ballegooij, EPRS, September 2020

Polarisation and the use of technology in political campaigns and communication

In-depth Analysis by Scientific Foresight Unit, EPRS, March 2019

Linking the levels of governance in the EU

EPRS Ideas Paper by Yann-Sven Rittelmeyer and Klemen Žumer, EPRS, June 2020

New strategy to reinforce application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights: Local and regional perspective

Briefing by Anja Radjenovic, EPRS, February 2021

Social economy and youth entrepreneurship for a sustainable recovery

What future for the social economy?

Briefing by Nora Milotay, EPRS, November 2020

Traditionally the social economy is considered to be an ever-growing set of private, formally organised enterprises and networks that build on multiple types of resources and cooperation, with local anchorage and democratic and participatory decision-making processes. Its primary aim is not to make profit but to meet the needs of its members and that of the wider society. The social economy is active in an increasing number of sectors, and while some of its actors are small non-profit organisations, others are large organisations with international outreach.

Cooperatives: Characteristics, activities, status, challenges

Briefing by Cemal Karakas, EPRS, February 2019

Cooperatives are autonomous associations of people aspiring to achieve their objectives through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. International organisations, such as the United Nations and the European Union, value the role cooperatives play for society, the economy and (international) development. There are 3 million cooperatives worldwide; together, they provide employment for 280 million people, equating to 10 % of the world's employed population.

Further reading:

Recent trends in female employment

Briefing by Monika Kiss, EPRS, October 2020

Social governance in the European Union: Managing complex systems

In-depth Analysis by Nora Milotay, EPRS, May 2020

The role of education and culture in the sustainable recovery for Europe

Lifelong Learning in the EU

Animated infographic by Denise Chircop, EPRS, February 2021

Learning is not limited to a single, specific phase in life during one's school years but can also take place in a variety of different contexts over the course of a whole lifetime. With ET2020, the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, the European Union has supported the concept of lifelong learning by coordinating cooperation between Member States in the area of training as well as formal, non-formal, and informal education. This infographic presents a sample of data to draw attention to some of the recurrent issues in the field of lifelong learning.

The future of tertiary education in Europe

In-depth Analysis by Denise Chircop, EPRS, September 2020

The analysis focuses on six challenges facing tertiary education in the EU: the need to maintain relevance to current and future aspirations, the impact of digital and disruptive technologies, the way it collaborates with business, global and intra-EU collaboration, quality assurance, financing, and barriers to inclusion. It also looks at trends in two of the largest higher education systems outside the European Higher Education Area, those in the United States and China.

Digital culture – Access issues

Briefing by Magdalena Pasikowska-Schnass, EPRS, June 2020

The digital shift has touched all aspects of human activity, and culture is no exception. Cultural assets and works have been digitised, and digital technology has become a tool for novel creations. Digital-born works have enriched the resources available to those interested in culture. Technology has huge potential to facilitate and democratise access to cultural resources.

Further reading:

Education in isolation in the pandemic, following the path of Isaac Newton

Briefing by Denise Chircop, EPRS, June 2020

Early leavers from education and training

Infographic by Denise Chircop and Eulalia Claros Gimeno, EPRS, February 2021

Inclusion of migrants in formal education

Infographic by Denise Chircop and Eulalia Claros Gimeno, EPRS, November 2019

Rethinking education in the digital age

Study by Scientific Foresight Unit, EPRS, March 2020

Impact of the Erasmus+ programme

Briefing by European Added Value Unit, EPRS, April 2020

European education area

'At a glance' note by Denise Chircop, EPRS, March 2020

Non-formal learning: Access and validation

Infographic by Denise Chircop, EPRS, December 2018

Employment in the cultural and creative sectors

Briefing by Magdalena Pasikowska-Schnass, EPRS, October 2019

EU support for artists and the cultural and creative sector during the coronavirus crisis

Briefing by Magdalena Pasikowska-Schnass, EPRS, May 2020

The future of work in the well-being economy

The future of work: Trends, challenges and potential initiatives

EPRS Ideas Paper by Monika Kiss, EPRS, February 2021

The current coronavirus pandemic and its accompanying health and economic crises have highlighted and heightened certain trends and challenges which were already affecting the labour market in Europe. These include accelerated digitalisation and automation, increased use of artificial intelligence, constraints relating to a lack of digital skills, and problems concerning the status of platform workers and other workers in non-standard forms of employment. In parallel, there has been an unprecedented expansion in teleworking, and in the development of transport and delivery platforms, as a result of the need for social distancing during the pandemic.

Social and employment policies in Europe

EPRS Ideas Paper by Nora Milotay, EPRS, September 2020

Whilst the disruption caused by the coronavirus crisis has affected all segments of society, some groups and geographic areas have been impacted more seriously than others. The crisis has opened up the opportunity to rethink how and what could be done differently and more efficiently over the longer term in the social and employment field at European level, including the possibility of putting social and economic considerations and rights on a more equal footing within the Union's governance framework.

Further reading:

[Minimum wage in the EU](#)

Briefing by Marie Lecerf, EPRS, October 2020

[Economic and Budgetary Outlook for the European Union 2021](#)

Study by Alessandro D'Alfonso, Angelos Delivorias, Nora Milotay and Magdalena Sapala, EPRS, January 2021

[A more resilient, sustainable and fair Europe after coronavirus?](#)

'At a glance' note by Nora Milotay, EPRS, June 2020

[The right to disconnect](#)

Briefing by Klaus Muller, EPRS, July 2020

[Older people in the European Union's rural areas: Issues and challenges](#)

In-depth Analysis by Marie-Laure Augère-Granier and James McElDowney, EPRS, December 2020

[A new directive on work-life balance](#)

'EU Legislation in Progress' briefing by Nora Milotay, EPRS, July 2019

[Employment and disability in the European Union](#)

Briefing by Marie Lecerf, EPRS, May 2020

[Achieving gender equality in the face of the pandemic and existing challenges](#)

'At a glance' note by Rosamund Shreeves, EPRS, January 2021

[EU public health policy](#)

EPRS Ideas Paper by Gianluca Quaglio, EPRS, July 2020

Youth activism, systemic change and recovery in Europe

[Next generation or lost generation? Children, young people and the pandemic](#)

Briefing by Nora Milotay, EPRS, December 2020

The next generation, sometimes referred to as 'Generation Z' or 'Gen Z', includes children and young people born after 1995/1996. Also known as the 'iGeneration' they are the first digital natives: they have grown up with smartphones and tablets, and most have internet access at home. While, in the EU, they are the most diverse generation when it comes to their origins, and best educated, in terms of level of education, they are the most vulnerable, including on the labour market.

[Women in politics: A global perspective](#)

Briefing by Joanna Apap, Eulalia Claros and Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, March 2019

Fair representation of women in political life has a positive impact on gender mainstreaming in various policies. The United Nations has set a dedicated target within the sustainable development goals dealing specifically with women's access to leadership. The available data on the presence of women in parliaments and in governments show a positive trend, but much still remains to be done to ensure an equal presence of both genders in decision-making.

Further reading:

[Upholding human rights in Europe during the pandemic](#)

Briefing by Anja Radjenovic, EPRS, September 2020

[Peace, justice and strong institutions: EU support for implementing SDG 16 worldwide](#)

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, February 2020

[Amending the European Fund for Sustainable Development](#)

'EU Legislation in Progress' briefing by Eric Pichon, EPRS, October 2020

[Towards a more resilient Europe post-coronavirus: Capabilities and gaps in the EU's capacity to address structural risks](#)

Study by European Parliamentary Research Service with the Directorates-General for Internal Policies and External Policies, October 2020

A social Green Deal for a sustainable recovery

Sustainable Development Goals in EU regions

Briefing by Agnieszka Widuto, EPRS, December 2020

The Sustainable Development Goals were established in 2015 as part of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The signatories adopted a policy framework with 17 goals, addressing such issues as poverty, hunger, health and wellbeing, education, gender equality, environment and climate, strong institutions, peace and justice. Sustainable development aims at balancing social, economic and environmental aspects, seeing them as interconnected.

Just Transition Fund

'EU Legislation in Progress' briefing by Pernilla Jourde and Agnieszka Widuto, EPRS, October 2020

The EU aims to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 % by 2030, and achieve climate neutrality by 2050. This will require a socio-economic transformation in regions relying on fossil fuels and carbon-intensive industries. As part of the European Green Deal, on 14 January 2020, the European Commission adopted a proposal for a regulation to create the Just Transition Fund, aimed at supporting EU regions most affected by the transition to a low carbon economy. Funding will be available to all Member States, while focusing on regions with the biggest transition challenges.

Further reading:

Just Transition Fund 2021-2027

Animated infographic by Sorina Ionescu and Frederik Scholaert, EPRS, October 2020

Ten issues to watch in 2021

In-depth Analysis by Etienne Bassot, EPRS, January 2021

European economic recovery

EPRS Ideas Paper by Jerome Leon Saulnier, EPRS, June 2020

Climate change and climate action

Briefing by Gregor Erbach, EPRS, July 2020

EU climate target plan: Raising the level of ambition for 2030

Briefing by Liselotte Jensen, EPRS, December 2020

Decoupling economic growth from environmental harm

'At a glance' note by Eamonn Noonan, EPRS, July 2020

Living in the EU: Climate Change and Energy

Infographic by Giulio Sabbati, EPRS, and Caterina Francesca Guidi, GlobalStat, EUI, May 2019

The blue economy: Overview and EU policy framework

In-depth Analysis by Frederik Scholaert, Vasileios Margaras, Marketa Pape, Alex Benjamin Wilson, EPRS, January 2020

Sustainable and smart mobility strategy

Briefing by Marketa Pape, EPRS, January 2021

The role of key civil society groups in the renovation wave

What if technology and culture combined to boost a green recovery?

'At a glance' note by Vadim Kononenko, EPRS, December 2020

With its current European Green Deal plan, the EU is striving to achieve climate neutrality in its economy by 2050 and, simultaneously, set itself on the path to recovery from the adverse effects of the global pandemic. Technology will inevitably play a significant part in this process. However, history also suggests that culture and aesthetics have a significant role to play in recovery from a crisis, be it from war, economic recession, or an epidemic.

Cohesion policy contribution to New European Bauhaus

'At a glance' note by Agnieszka Widuto, EPRS, February 2021

The New European Bauhaus is a European Commission initiative, which links the sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion dimensions of building design. Announced in 2020 by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, the project has now entered the design phase, which involves exploring ideas, launching the New European Bauhaus prize and opening calls for proposals to bring the new ideas to life through the use of EU funds at national and regional level. EU cohesion policy, with its support for environmental, socio-economic and cultural projects can make a significant contribution to the New European Bauhaus.

Further reading:

[EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture / Mies van der Rohe Award: A tribute to the Bauhaus movement](#)

'At a glance' note by Magdalena Pasikowska-Schnass, EPRS, February 2021

[Metropolitan regions in EU cohesion policy](#)

Briefing by Vasileios Margaras, EPRS, October 2019

[Strengthening the Urban Agenda for the EU](#)

Briefing by Christiaan van Lierop, EPRS, January 2021

The role and economic value of volunteers in the road to recovery and beyond

[EU policies – Delivering for citizens: Youth empowerment](#)

Briefing by Denise Chircop, EPRS, June 2019

The proportion of young people (aged between 15 and 29) in the general EU population is declining. On the whole, young people have a higher level of education than older adults, and youth unemployment rates have begun to fall. Nevertheless, young people are still more exposed to poverty and social exclusion than other sections of the population.

[European Solidarity Corps 2021-2027](#)

'EU Legislation in Progress' briefing by Denise Chircop, EPRS, April 2019

The distinctive feature of the European Solidarity Corps today is that it brings together volunteering, traineeship and job opportunities for young people with a clear focus on solidarity projects and uses existing management structures to maximise focus on delivery and performance. Projected to offer opportunities for 350 000 18 to 30 years old from 2021 to 2027, the programme's proposed financial allocation is €1 260 million (current prices).

Further reading:

[Ten opportunities for Europe post-coronavirus: Exploring potential for progress in EU policy-making](#)

In-depth Analysis by Etienne Bassot, EPRS, July 2020

[EU Youth Strategy](#)

Study by Jan Mikolaj Tymowski, EPRS February 2018

[Impact of coronavirus on EU aid to the most deprived](#)

Briefing by Marie Lecerf, EPRS, June 2020

[Public sector innovation: Concepts, trends and best practices](#)

Briefing by Cemal Karakas, EPRS, June 2020

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