

Workers' Group EESC OPINIONS REVIEW

SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 2022



**Workers' Group
EESC**

ADOPTED OPINIONS
with Rapporteurs/Co-rapporteurs
from the Workers' Group



**Workers' Group
EESC**

EESC Workers' Group

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The summaries of the adopted opinions presented here were prepared by the Secretariat with the only intention of communicating their content, highlighting the key issues for the Trade Union environment, European Workers, and other relevant partners.

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Body	Number	Name	Rapp/Co-Rapp	Country	Plenary
SOC	685	Key components of sustainable quality work during and after recovery	ZORKO	SI	September
SOC	686	Emergency measures to support employment and income during the pandemic crisis	DEL RIO	IT	September
SOC	693	EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025	TRINDADE	PT	September
SOC	694	Sustainable voluntary return and reintegration strategy	MORENO DÍAZ	ES	September
SOC	695	EU Strategy to tackle organised crime (2021-2025)	JANKOWSKI	PL	September
SOC	698	Health and safety at work	TRINDADE	PT	October
SOC	701	Blended learning	BABRAUSKIENĖ	LT	October
SOC	689	How to guarantee decent work for young people and ensure the inclusion of NEETs through the proper elaboration of National Recovery Plans	MERLO	IT	December
INT	940	AI/Regulation	MULLER	NL	September
INT	953	Updating the New Industrial Strategy	BERGRATH	DE	October
INT	966	Radio equipment	LEFÈVRE	FR	December
INT	970	In vitro medical devices/Transitional provisions	LEFÈVRE	FR	December
NAT	823	Towards a Fair Food Supply Chain	SCHMIDT	DE	September
NAT	820	Towards a holistic strategy on sustainable rural/urban development	KÁLLAY	HU	October
NAT	830	Zero Pollution Action Plan for air, water and soil	NIKOLOPOULOU	ES	October
NAT	821	Aligning food business strategies and operations with the SDGs for a sustainable post-COVID-19 recovery	SCHMIDT	DE	December
NAT	824	Environmental protection as a prerequisite for respect for fundamental rights	YILDIRIM	FR	December
NAT	835	Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR)	MITOV	BG	December
ECO	550	Cohesion policy in combatting inequalities - complementarities/overlaps with the RRF	VORBACH	AT	September

ECO	553	Reshaping the EU fiscal framework for a sustainable recovery and a just transition	BIEGON	DE	October
ECO	551	Beyond GDP measures for a successful recovery and a sustainable and resilient EU economy	DANDEA	RO	December
ECO	555	Anti-Money Laundering Legislative Package	DOZ ORRIT	ES	December
ECO	559	Renewed sustainable finance strategy	VORBACH	AT	December
ECO	560	EU green bond standard	VON BROCKDORFF	MT	December
TEN	746	The societal and ecological impact of the 5G ecosystem	FORNEA	RO	October
TEN	748	Review of the Renewable Energy Directive	QUAREZ	FR	December
TEN	756	Revision of the EU Emission Trading System for Aviation	FORNEA	RO	December
TEN	759	Social Climate Fund	KATTNIG	AT	December
REX	535	Next Generation Trade and Sustainable Development – Reviewing the 15-point action plan	BUZEK	DE	October
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CCMI	181	The EU mobility strategy and EU industrial value chains: automotive eco-systems approach	SITÁROVÁ	SK	October
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CCMI	184	Anticipation of structural and sectoral change and reshaping industrial cultures – up to new borders of recovery and resilience in the different parts of Europe	KLUGE	DE	December

Summaries of adopted opinions

September

SOC/685 – Key components of sustainable quality work during and after recovery

Andrej Zorko

Quality of work is one of the fundamental components of quality of life. The principle of quality of work for quality of life must be followed, as this is a prerequisite for sustainable social development. Therefore, we need policies that prevent the risks of inequality, poverty, social exclusion and unfair competition. **The EU should take a more ambitious approach to supporting and coordinating labour market policies and protecting workers' fundamental rights. The European Pillar of Social Rights should guide the implementation of the principles of social Europe, social justice and sustainable recovery.** The Workers' Group firmly believes that we need to develop appropriate policies to ensure decent and sustainable quality work, curbing the growing precariousness of many jobs. This could include protecting workers and proper work organisation leading to higher productivity and innovation, while promoting the positive elements of digitalisation. Finally, the role of social partners and collective bargaining should be highlighted, while the capacity of civil society must be strengthened.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!PkKkJ9>

SOC/686 – Emergency measures to support employment and income during the pandemic crisis

Cinzia del Rio

The Workers' Group supports the establishment of SURE as an innovative financial instrument which delivers on European solidarity to preserve jobs, provide income support to workers and support businesses, as well as a tool for integration and socio-economic resilience in the EU. On top **our Group proposes that a SURE observatory be set up for as long as SURE is in operation, involving the social partners and other civil society organisations.** The observatory would be tasked with monitoring and assessing the impact in individual countries of the measures which receive financing. Furthermore, we propose to combine the use of SURE with active labour market policies and vocational training and re-skilling programmes aimed at creating stable and quality employment, combating in-work poverty and fragmented and precarious forms of work, which also affect public welfare systems. In conclusion, it is essential to involve the social partners in the measures co-financed by SURE: they must be given a genuine and legitimate role in both planning and implementation.

More info at <http://europa.eu/!DFTYQ3>

SOC/693 – EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025

Carlos Manuel Trindade

Trafficking in human beings (human trafficking) is first and foremost a serious violation of human rights. It violates fundamental rights such as freedom, dignity and equality. The root causes of human trafficking lie in the vulnerability of its victims, caused by poverty, gender inequalities and violence against women and children, conflict and post-conflict situations, lack of social integration, lack of opportunities and employment, lack of access to education, and child labour. **The Workers' Group broadly supports the EU Strategy on Combatting trafficking in human beings. In order to fight human trafficking more effectively, thorough, up-to-date knowledge of the phenomenon is required, in particular, of all the groups involved (victims, traffickers, users) and of the way trafficking networks operate. The Group also underlines and supports the intention to establish minimum standards at EU level that criminalise the networks involved in trafficking and exploiting human beings, and the use of services arising from the exploitation of trafficking victims.** Finally, the fight against human trafficking needs to be based on a more comprehensive analysis which takes into account the social aspect of the context that is enabling such trafficking to increase – something that is only occasionally considered in the design of the Strategy.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!kkWfug>

SOC/694 – Sustainable voluntary return and reintegration strategy

José Antonio Moreno Díaz

The strategy on voluntary return and reintegration aims to establish a shared approach to the design, development and implementation of the assisted voluntary return and reintegration programmes. So far, having a wide array of instruments and approaches has translated into a melting-pot of initiatives, programmes and projects, which in many cases lack common reference frameworks. The Workers' Group welcomes the strategy as a management tool that seeks to improve coordination and Member States' shared objectives in the field of migration governance. The Group also agrees with the Commission's approach of further reviewing and harmonising the instruments, and improving data collection and counselling mechanisms for those affected. **However, we regret that measures to improve legal entry routes, i.e. those which affect the majority of foreign nationals resident in the European Union, are being developed later than the proposals aimed at resolving irregular migration issues and in a more limited manner. A comprehensive approach to mobility is essential in order to offer alternatives that go beyond border control and return.** The majority of returns do not work properly due to the lack of involvement of the countries of origin, and because of the reluctance of people in irregular situations to participate. Therefore, we doubt the effectiveness of some of the proposals put forward, such as the issue of sponsored return.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!rkYFut>

SOC/695 – EU Strategy to tackle organised crime (2021-2025)

Rafał Bogusław Jankowski

The strategy is based mainly on reinforcing existing instruments to support cross-border cooperation, including international cooperation, fighting high-priority crimes, tackling the financing of criminal activities and methods to infiltrate the economy – not least through corruption – and to support actions combatting criminals' use of new technologies. **The Workers' Group believes that the EU and the Member States should be capable of anticipating the activities of criminal organisations to be one step ahead of them, focusing on monitoring, infiltration of endangered environments, collecting and analysing data as well as on preventive steps.** In this context, particular emphasis must be placed on developing modern, comprehensive forms of international cooperation, enhancing the functional capacity of the systems and databases used cooperation with civil society organisations, as well as investing in new technology instruments. Finally, the Group underlines its support for the allocation of additional resources to assist Member States with advanced cyber-solutions, in order to acquire e-information, safeguard e-evidence and make available specific technical equipment and software for active use in cross-border operations and investigations.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!ufXxtu>

INT/940 – AI/Regulation

Catelijne Muller

The Workers' Group is pleased to see that the Artificial Intelligence Act (the AIA) addresses the risks of AI, but also raises the bar regarding the quality, performance and trustworthiness of AI that the EU is willing to allow. The Workers' Group is also delighted that **the AIA puts health, safety and fundamental rights at its centre and is global in scope.** Of course improvement can be made regarding the scope, definition and clarity of the prohibited AI practices. AI has never operated in a lawless world. Because of its wide scope as well as its primacy as an EU Regulation, the AIA could create tension with existing national and EU laws and related regulatory proposals. Finally, **the Workers' Group calls for a ban on any use of AI for automated biometric features,** identities, emotions, behaviour, traits or characteristics in publicly and privately accessible spaces, such as recognition of faces, gait, fingerprints, DNA, voice, keystrokes, heart rate, temperature and other biometric or behavioural signals.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!gYbBJH>

ECO/550 – Cohesion policy in combatting inequalities – complementarities/overlaps with the RRF

Judith Vorbach

While the Workers' Group highly appreciates that the EU has managed to draw up and adopt such a wide-ranging mechanism in such a short time period, the Group also demands that every effort is made for its further improvement and to tackle possible shortcomings. In this opinion the focus is on the ways in which cohesion policy and Next Generation EU, primarily through its flagship Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), propose to remedy inequalities. NGEU will in fact contribute to upward convergence between Member States and may also enhance the fiscal space for social policy measures. But ultimately, the extent and the way that inequalities within countries and imbalances between regions are to be combatted through NGEU is the big challenge for the coming years. **The EU should take advantage of the unique opportunity represented by NGEU, to resolve deficiencies in social, economic and environmental policies and to implement a prosperity-focused approach. The Workers' Group welcomes the fact that social goals, and particularly the goal of economic, social and territorial cohesion, are embedded in the six pillars of the RRF and that the assessment criteria for the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs) include their social impact.** Last but not least, the Group the EESC calls for the systematic integration of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the social scoreboard into NGEU and the evaluation of the NRRPs.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!knuf4W>

NAT/823 – Towards a Fair Food Supply Chain

Peter Schmidt

The Workers' Group welcomes the EU Directive on unfair trading practices (UTPs) in the agricultural and food supply chain as a step forward in addressing imbalances of power along the chain. The European food supply chain proved to be remarkably resilient during the COVID-19 outbreak. Consumers had access at all times to almost all food items. However, early observations show that there are also notable behavioural changes in production, distribution and consumption. **The Workers' Group advocates supporting the transformation of Europe's food systems so that they are more environmentally, economically and socially sustainable, resilient, fair and inclusive and, above all, provide European consumers with healthy, sustainably produced and safe food. Suppliers, especially farmers, must be paid a fair and just price that allows suppliers to receive an income that is adequate for investment, innovation and sustainable production.**

More info at <https://europa.eu/!bRxkXc>

October

SOC/698 – Health and safety at work

Carlos Manuel Trindade

The Workers' Group believes that protecting workers against health and safety hazards on the job is fundamental to ensuring sustained decent working conditions. We fully endorse the Commission's statement that "healthy and safe working conditions are a prerequisite for a healthy and productive workforce. No one should suffer from work-related illness or accidents. Our Group broadly agrees with the strategic vision and measures set out in the strategic framework. More specifically we support the (i) the "Vision Zero" approach to work-related deaths; (ii) the cancer measures provided for; (iii) ratification of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention 2019 (No. 190); (iv) proposing a legislative initiative on preventing and combating gender-based violence against women and domestic violence before the end of 2021 and (v) the Commission's objective to integrate psychosocial and ergonomic risks into the Healthy Workplaces Campaign.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!DbpB7J>

SOC/701 – Blended learning

Tatjana Babrauskienė

The opinion looks at the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on blended learning for high quality and inclusive primary and secondary education. This opinion also places an emphasis on secondary-level initial vocational education. **The Workers' Group is pleased that the proposal points out that "Education is a fundamental human right and a right of the child", while it also welcomes the fact that the intention of the proposal is to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights. We call on the European Commission and Member States to implement the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which is to make quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning a right for all in Europe.** Finally, the Group urges Member States to build on experience derived from education during the COVID-19 crisis, and to ensure that blended learning (BL) is carefully designed and practised in the balanced curricula with the support of suitable pedagogical tools, in order to ensure that an appropriate and innovative learning environment and tools are provided for all children.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!mQmwUr>

INT/935 – Updating the New Industrial Strategy

Dirk Bergrath

A coherent industrial strategy should be focused on two dimensions: recovery from the pandemic and reconstruction and resilience. The Workers' Group welcomes the commitment by the European Commission to retain and grow Europe's industrial and manufacturing base and underlines that **social partners and civil society organisations have a key role and need to be included in designing the future of European industry. Our Group also calls for an alignment of the measures envisaged to achieve climate neutrality and the digital transition with the objective of social wellbeing and sustainable growth.** The pandemic has in some areas contributed to widening the gap between prosperous and less prosperous EU Member States. This further endangers social and economic cohesion. Next Generation EU is an unprecedented instrument for the EU to mitigate this impact, and must be used to achieve better convergence between European Member states and regions, also with regard to the twin transition towards a sustainable and digital Europe. In our view, the successful implementation of such projects requires close dialogue with worker representatives and trade unions in order to include their know-how and to reduce uncertainties in the conversion as well as possible.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!nb63BJ>

NAT/820 – Towards a holistic strategy on sustainable rural/urban development

Piroska Kállay

The future of Europe will depend on how we deal with rural areas and that more cooperation with urban areas is needed to ensure that no area or citizen is "left behind". The EU should reduce disparities between regions by promoting policies that ensure a just and sustainable transition in all spheres and guarantee a good quality of life in rural areas. **The Workers' Group calls on policymakers to develop and implement a comprehensive and holistic EU strategy for balanced, cohesive, equitable and sustainable rural and urban development, by leveraging the role of local communities, boosting traditional industries and creating new economic activities and job opportunities in rural areas, while fostering synergies with urban areas.** The EESC will incorporate a holistic vision into its future opinions on territorial, urban and rural policies.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!64YfJR>

NAT/830 – Zero Pollution Action Plan for air, water and soil

Maria Nikolopoulou

The Workers' Group supports the Commission's plan to address the various types of pollution in a holistic way and to comply with the commitments of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We also welcome **the Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform to speed up decontamination and would like to collaborate through the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform and other means. However, our Group regrets that, in the zero pollution hierarchy, remedying and offsetting pollution related damage is given less consideration. Measures need to be defined for when polluters cannot be identified or cannot offset the damage.** Moreover, to fight marine pollution, all ports should possess an advanced system for the collection and management of waste. In addition, the EU should continuously encourage measures for removing litter from the sea, both to boost decontamination and to secure a secondary fishing activity. Finally, part of plastic pollution in the sea comes from internal waters. Cleaning up our European rivers requires coordination between the countries concerned.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!bhHRj8>

ECO/553 – Reshaping the EU fiscal framework for a sustainable recovery and a just transition

Dominika Biegon

The European fiscal rules need a revision: deficiencies were already obvious after the 2008/09 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic poses even more serious challenges to the current fiscal framework. **Any future fiscal framework needs to a) strengthen public investments, b) allow for more cyclical leeway and c) permit greater flexibility and country-specific differentiation as far as debt adjustment paths are concerned, while at the same time guaranteeing fiscal sustainability.** A revision of the EU fiscal framework is not only necessary for the purpose of short- to medium- term stabilisation of the economy. It is also of vital importance in order to finance the socio-ecological transformation of our economy, guaranteeing full employment, high-quality jobs and just transitions. **The Workers' Group main proposal for the revision of the fiscal framework is to introduce a golden rule for public investments, which the EESC has already put forward in past opinions, in combination with an expenditure rule.**

More info at <https://europa.eu/!UJbbpp>

TEN/746 – The societal and ecological impact of the 5G ecosystem

Dumitru Fornea

The Workers' Group observes that the rapid digitisation and development of electronic communications has a strong impact on the economy and society at large. Through the responsible use of these technologies, humanity has a historic chance to build a better society. Electronic communications infrastructure can greatly improve the quality of life of citizens and has a direct influence on fighting poverty. 5G technology presents an enormous opportunity to improve human health services through the development of telemedicine and by improving access to medical care. The important role that telemedicine has played during the pandemic is recognised in society. The debate on the deployment of 5G networks has turned into a controversial and political discussion, but nevertheless, social, health and environmental issues need to be clarified, involving citizens and all relevant actors.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!jk64Bw>

REX/535 – Next Generation Trade and Sustainable Development – Reviewing the 15-point action plan

Tanja Buzek

Trade needs the right policy framework to drive growth, decent job creation, sustainable development and support a sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, allowing companies to rebuild and re-organise their disrupted supply and value chains. 2021 is a turning point to re-think EU trade governance and the Workers' Group supports its open, sustainable and assertive new path. **Trade and sustainable development (TSD) chapters express the EU's commitment to a "values-based trade agenda" fostering economic, social and environmental development simultaneously. Our Group also welcomes the early review of the 15-point action plan, and expects it to overcome its limited and "siloed" framework set up in 2018.** We propose an ambitious review, featuring a revamped sanctionable enforcement approach with stronger civil society monitoring, using innovative instruments and enhancing the leverage for TSD. This "next generation TSD" must be an integral part of the EU trade strategy, applying to current and future negotiating mandates alike.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!NxcbCF>

CCMI/180 – Glass in Europe

Gerald Kreuzer

The European glass industry is an innovative and highly strategic sector from which the EU benefits greatly. Glass products are indispensable to the transition towards a climate-neutral circular economy. **The Workers' Group asks EU policymakers to put the glass sector and all its subsectors at the heart of current policy priorities such as the "Fit for 55" package, the Circular Economy Package etc. We also strongly recommend that EU policies support the glass industry in order to enable this transition,** with financial support for both capital and operational expenditure, with renewable energy capacity building, with an affordable energy supply and by ensuring that the industry is not exposed to unfair competition from outside the EU market. Finally, the EU classify glass as a permanent material, due to its inert, reusable and infinitely recyclable characteristics.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!KrWQvq>

CCMI/181 – The EU mobility strategy and EU industrial value chains: automotive eco-systems approach

Monika Sitárová

The European automotive ecosystem can become a frontrunner in developing and deploying sustainable mobility solutions. Therefore, the automotive ecosystem must actively develop strategies to shape the ongoing disruption and megatrends in Europe's automotive landscape. In order to reduce transport emissions by 90% by 2050, the EU must strive to make all transport modes sustainable, while making sustainable alternatives widely available and accessible to EU citizens. **The Workers' Group underlines that individual mobility must remain accessible and affordable for all, especially for commuters without access to quality public transport or other mobility solutions. A societal polarisation between those that can afford to buy a green car and those that cannot must be avoided at all costs.** The European automotive industry has always been a global leader and a driver for growth and jobs. In the transition to the paradigm of a digitalised and decarbonised road transport system, it should retain this position and develop the transformation pathways that allow it to deal with the disruptive trends the industry is currently facing. It should do so by building on its strengths in technology, its skilled workforce, world-class engineering, demanding consumers, sophisticated supply chains, strong SME culture, and constructive labour relations.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!KT83BBy>

December

SOC/689 – How to guarantee decent work for young people and ensure the inclusion of NEETs through the proper elaboration of National Recovery Plans

Nicoletta Merlo

We note with regret the lack of meaningful and targeted consultation with the social partners and stakeholders in some of the Member States during the designing of the NRRPs. **The Workers' Group urges the Commission to put in place measures that guarantee structured and meaningful involvement of the social partners, organised civil society and youth organisations in the implementation and monitoring of the NRRPs. Protecting and strengthening social dialogue at the national level is crucial in order to guarantee that public money is well spent on an inclusive recovery. Furthermore, we suggest evaluating and systematising the collection of best practices from the national level, where the consultation with the social partners and youth organisations via dedicated committees and social dialogue yielded excellent results in terms of youth-specific policies and measures to create quality jobs and career prospects for young people.** Finally, we call on the Member States to ensure quality and inclusive guidance and counselling for all young people, especially those with disabilities, starting in early school education, in order to provide them with more information on their further education and, subsequently, on career possibilities in the context of the green and digital transition of the labour market.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!BXFkG9>

INT/966 – Radio equipment

Christophe Lefèvre

Our Group takes note of the Commission's proposal to act swiftly to impose the USB-C standard: a consistent and uniform standard for chargers for mobile phones and similar devices. Since 2009 and, more recently, since 2014, the voluntary initiatives have not fully met the EU's policy objectives of reducing electronic waste (e-waste), increasing consumer convenience and avoiding fragmentation of the charging devices market. **The Workers' Group would like to go further than the Commission's proposal by recommending that this obligation be extended to laptop chargers, to all radio, electronic, connected and rechargeable devices:** the aim is also to enable users to recharge a mobile device a type computer charger. **We emphasise the responsibility of manufacturers of electronic devices when it comes to sustainable development** by calling on them to ensure that the cost of replacing the battery remains low, and that technical feasibility discourages users from replacing the whole electronic device when only the battery needs to be replaced.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!8W4kMp>

INT/970 – In vitro medical devices/Transitional provisions

Christophe Lefèvre

Health is a high priority for Europe's citizens and we reaffirm that in vitro diagnostic medical devices play a crucial role in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases. They are central to our health and to the quality of life of people suffering from diseases and disabilities, even more so during a global pandemic. It is essential that citizens are able to trust the reliability of these tests. The aim is to considerably reduce the proportion of both "false positive", and "false negative" results.

The Workers' Group is therefore fully in favour of rapidly increasing the certification capacity of in vitro diagnostic devices, while it also recommends that the results of these tests receive specific medical support in the event of a positive result, particularly where devices can be used by individuals to carry out tests themselves.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!W3HDQf>

NAT/821 – Aligning food business strategies and operations with the SDGs for a sustainable post-COVID-19 recovery

Peter Schmidt

Food businesses across the supply chain are already working to make progress on sustainability and to offer consumers healthy and sustainable products in line with the European Green Deal. Nevertheless, to get on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) more needs to be done. **There is a need for an enabling framework for innovation to support business operators with adequate tools and solutions in their transition towards more sustainable business practices. Barriers for innovation must be eliminated.** We note that business operators nowadays often experience sustainability requirements as complex and burdensome rather than as an opportunity, and therefore recommends developing a more easily understandable language (a "Grammar for Sustainability") to change this. **The Workers' Group identifies the reduction of food losses and food waste, sustainable sourcing, improved packaging and logistic systems, circular and resource-efficient food chains, as well as bioeconomy solutions, as effective entry points towards greater sustainability.**

More info at <https://europa.eu/!Xc3Vb4>

NAT/824 – Environmental protection as a prerequisite for respect for fundamental rights (Information report)

Ozlem Yildirim

The effects of climate change and environmental degradation are having a direct and indirect impact on a range of fundamental rights guaranteed at international and European level, such as the right to life, the right to health, the right to education and the right to respect for private and family life. The interconnectivity between fundamental rights, environmental degradation and climate change is clearly set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to which the European Union (EU) has committed itself in the context of Agenda 2030. We are also observing the emergence of a new human right – the right to a healthy, safe and sustainable environment. This right has been recognised by all 27 Member States. Fourteen recognise the right to a healthy environment in their constitutions, while four do so through case law interpreting constitutional provisions that protect rights to health, or on general environmental protection, or via ratification of the Aarhus Convention. **A safe climate is a substantial element of the right to a healthy environment. We are observing, with the growing fusion between the legal obligations in the Paris Agreement and the human rights framework, the emergence of a new right to a safe climate.**

More info at <https://europa.eu/TjJnFk>

NAT/835 – Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR)

Veselin Mitov

We welcome the proposal from the Commission to amend the Effort Sharing Regulation on binding annual greenhouse gas emission reductions in order to align the ESR's contribution towards delivering the increased ambition for 2030 aimed at by the European Green Deal and translated by the rest of the Fit for 55 package into concrete action. The high level of climate ambition for the entire Fit for 55 package is thus unquestionable. At the same time, the distributional effects of this necessary climate action can be significant (both between and within Member States) and thus need to be addressed properly. **The Workers' Group therefore agrees with the view that differences between Member States have to be taken into account to ensure maximum fairness and cost-effectiveness. To achieve genuine cost-effectiveness in a fair way, effort-sharing calculations should ideally address both aspects at the same time and set the targets in a way that the relative emission reduction costs to GDP are the same for each country. In order to compensate for the shortcomings of effort-sharing, our Group considers the role of flexibility mechanisms crucial, and these deserve special attention.**

More info at <https://europa.eu/PXh3vq>

ECO/551 – Beyond GDP measures for a successful recovery and a sustainable and resilient EU economy

Petru Sorin Dandea

An economic transition from a model driven by growth to one predicated on sustainability is inevitable. Given the sheer complexity of and the huge challenges posed by this transition, the proposals for new indicators set out in this opinion are only one example of approaches that could be taken when it comes to tools for measuring the social, economic and environmental situation. **The Workers' Group proposes that a series of indicators be developed, ensuring that policy-makers can make informed decisions and foster policies to grow the circular economy.** We also consider that a concise "Beyond GDP" scoreboard should be designed. This could then be incorporated into the European Green Deal scoreboard. Finally, the Member States should give priority to using some of the indicators proposed by the United Nations, depending on their country's circumstances, and urges them to act on the proposals set out in the OECD's reports on improving the measurement of well-being and prosperity.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!T4XH6Q>

ECO/555 – Anti-Money Laundering Legislative Package

Javier Doz Orrit

Reports by the European Commission (2019) and the European Court of Auditors (2021), academic studies and now the Pandora Papers and other similar publications highlight the severity of the money laundering phenomenon in the EU. Current European legislation is largely inadequate. **The Workers' Group strongly supports the Anti Money Laundering legislative package, in particular the creation and design of the new European Anti-Money Laundering Authority (AMLA) with direct supervisory powers.** It should be given sufficient resources to become the core of an integrated European oversight and intelligence system. Effectiveness in the fight against money laundering and related predicate offences requires a cultural change, and the effective involvement of organised civil society. **The European Commission should pay attention on how to apply the legislative package to money laundering channels outside the financial system: the market in works of art and high-value assets; free ports, customs warehouses and special economic zones; certain commercial or trade transactions, real estate investments, gambling, etc.** It considers that new European legislation will be needed in these areas.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!74tDdw>

ECO/559 – Renewed sustainable finance strategy

Judith Vorbach

The EU's economic policy should align itself with both the objectives set out in Article 3 of the EU Treaty and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **Sustainable finance should therefore also follow a multidimensional approach that encompasses environmental and social goals. Unfortunately, many of the measures mentioned in the Communication disregard social sustainability.** Combining sustainability policies with digital and COVID-19 policies can give EU policy more weight. Environmental policy must go hand in hand with a stronger EU economy and the creation of good jobs. Synergies between the Capital Markets Union and the sustainable finance strategy should be exploited. For example, transparency increases market efficiency while at the same time providing a basis for access to sustainable finance. **The Workers' Group strongly supports the goal of redirecting investments in such a way that they contribute to the EU's transition to a sustainable economy. Most of the measures set out in the Communication are logical, but often appear hesitant given the pressing need for action. In climate policy in particular, time is of the essence.** A consistent set of rules is needed to avoid excessive complexity so that the strategy works in practice. Now is the time for measures, not striving for perfection. Deceptive "sustainability-washing" deserves extra attention. All in all, the sustainable finance strategy will only deliver the desired steering effects if it is part of an overall economic policy geared towards sustainability. Regulation and public investment have a crucial role to play.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!KvcTug>

ECO/560 – EU green bond standard

Philip Von Brockdorff

The "voluntary" EU green bond standard creates a regime underpinned by transparency and supervision. Under such a regime, projects that are in line with the EU taxonomy of sustainable activities would be eligible for funding, and issuers would need to provide additional information at the time of issuance, and subsequently through regular reporting on the use of proceeds and project impact. **The Workers' Group believes that the EU green bond standard also has the potential to yield significant economic benefits for both issuers and investors alike. This is possible because the proposal aims to create a universal, credible and streamlined mechanism for the issuance of green bonds, minimising informational asymmetries while conveying significant reputational benefits to issuers under this standard.**

The proposed standard would also assist in significantly reducing existing levels of uncertainty regarding the types of assets or expenditures that can be reasonably classified as being a green use of capital. However, because of the aforementioned alignment with the EU Taxonomy, we are of the view that clear guidance on the part of the Commission is needed to direct investors towards EU green bonds and projects that positively impact the environment.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!8KNNW7>

TEN/748 – Review of the Renewable Energy Directive

Christophe Quarez

The Workers' Group welcomes the increase in the targeted share of renewable energy, which is expected to deliver in three areas: **climate change mitigation, energy security and economic development (job creation)** but also requires legal certainty, which is being undermined by the fact that the revision is taking place only two weeks after the transposition deadline. However, **our Group underlines that even the increased target is probably not in line with the Paris climate goals, let alone with the provision of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.** Synergy is needed, between the existing regulations reviewed in the "Fit for 55" package, as well as the new tools proposed, such as the Social Climate Fund or the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. It is essential to ensure a level playing field between energy production sources, which requires ending fossil fuel subsidies, which are still increasing.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!37DuX8>

TEN/756 – Revision of the EU Emission Trading System for Aviation

Dumitru Fornea

The Commission's initiative is a welcome step in reducing the climate impact of the aviation sector. **We support the proposed amendments, but emphasise the need to maintain a level playing-field and protect social and working rights.** Aviation and all its stakeholders must play their part in helping us achieve a sustainable aviation industry. This can only be done through social dialogue and engagement with trade unions in the sector, who are a critical part of the climate transition. In general, we are opposed to the allocation of free allowances within the emissions trading system (ETS), unless for the purposes of ensuring fair competition. In the case of intra-EEA flights, there is less risk to a level playing-field; however, we must remain vigilant to carbon leakage, particularly in leisure and long-haul traffic. Therefore, we would support maintaining the proposed date of 2027 for full removal of free allowances and, in the meantime, adjust the free allowance allocations to focus on fair competition.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!RRxP3g>

TEN/759 – Social Climate Fund

Thomas Kattnig

A Social Climate Fund will mitigate the negative social and economic impacts of the new carbon pricing and provide funds to Member States to support their measures addressing the social impact of this emissions trading on financially weaker households, micro-enterprises and transport users. However, **the Workers' Group is convinced that the Social Climate Fund will not provide sufficient financial support to responsibly face the socio-economic effects of the carbon pricing.** The enormous challenge of designing an effective and fair compensation mechanism in a heterogeneous economic area comprising 27 Member States requires more far-reaching accompanying measures and resources at EU and national level. **The measures and transformation steps envisaged by the Fit for 55 package will lead to massive changes and must not lose sight of the social and economic situation of the individual Member States.** Otherwise, societal acceptance of these measures would be jeopardised. **The purpose of higher carbon pricing is in any case not to increase revenue, but to steer market behaviour towards low-emission technologies.** There is therefore a strong argument for the Commission to provide additional financial resources.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!ttrW6T>

CCMI/182 – Non-standard employment and platform cooperatives in the digital transformation of industry

Erwin De Deyn

The digital platform economy is a rapidly expanding phenomenon which goes beyond the borders of the European Union itself. As this phenomenon has grown, the forms of employment relationships for people working through these platforms have also multiplied. **The Workers' Group considers that the European Union and the Member States could and indeed should coordinate the implementation of appropriate rules in order to strike a balance between the needs of innovation and safeguarding the rights of digital platform workers, consumers and users.** Out of all these various types of business, cooperatives are particularly suited to supporting inclusive participation in the governance of digital platforms. The cooperative model can combine the features of digital platforms with the organisational model of cooperatives; where conditions allow, it also enables cooperative workers to retain the status of employee, with all the safeguards provided for workers by collective labour contracts.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!RVKTKw>

CCMI/183 – How REIIs (Resources and Energy Intensive Industries) can take advantage of the EU Recovery Plan in their socially acceptable transition towards de-carbonisation and digitalisation

Enrico Gibellieri

The EU recovery facility and the related National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRP) must contribute to a just transition for the EU resource and energy intensive industries. **They must lead to the creation and maintenance of quality jobs in these industries, involve social partners in the implementation of the NRRPs and support labour transitions through reskilling and upskilling.** the industrial transition will not be achieved if the energy transition is not implemented. For that, the availability of sufficient, affordable low-carbon energy sources that make low-carbon industrial production possible will be key.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!hprXug>

CCMI/184 – Anticipation of structural and sectoral change and reshaping industrial cultures – up to new borders of recovery and resilience in the different parts of Europe

Norbert Kluge

At least 55 % reduction of CO₂-emissions by 2030: this is the challenging binding figure of the “Just Transition” to be enacted by the politics of the EU and the governments of its Member States, by companies in the regions where European citizens live and work. **The Workers' Group recommends taking into account the experiences from different policy fields, nations and regions, which have to be considered in their differences and specificities. This needs to take into account the social dialogue between social partners and civil dialogue for co-creation. This should favour the creation of a set of EU champions that can in turn enhance the EU's economic sovereignty.**

There will be no green deal without an integrated "social deal". Consequently, the Workers' Group advocates strengthening the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. It is viewed as the compass of the EU and its Member States in cushioning the social effects of industrial change.

More info at <https://europa.eu/!jJMcBb>

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