Europe 60 years on ... a new beginning

But I believe that the Rome Declaration is a text that will endure, a noble compromise and a genuine new start. All parties have had to give up something for the sake of the common interest and an agenda of realisable commitments.

From six to twenty-seven members in sixty years. Europe is under par, going through a painful divorce, and struggling to reach a firm agreement on all the action that needs to be taken. Its members nevertheless remain united in the most advanced peace and development project of the 20th century.

And after all the mishaps, here we were all together, a little more cramped, in the same room where sixty years ago the founding Treaties were signed. After months of division there was a shared will and fervour which had not been in evidence for some time. Somebody has written that Rome cast a spell on the leaders, who realised the need to finally overcome their paralysis, that this was an opportunity to turn the page and move forward together in the integration process, to properly consolidate in areas where there is a pressing need, acting together – with speed and intensity varying where necessary – but always moving in the same direction.

Somebody made reference to the lowest common denominator, while others were disappointed by the absence of bolder decisions, which might have come from at least some quarters, and another comment was that this was no more than the usual display of good intentions and that everything would collapse at the first hurdle.
This was the climate which prevailed in the Piazza del Campidoglio on 25 March. The Declaration expresses pride for what the EU has achieved for its people over the past 60 years in terms of peace, progress and cohesion: as European Parliament president Antonio Tajani pointed out, Europe's per capita GDP growth since 1960 has been 33% higher than that of the United States. But the text also contains commitments entered into the “Rome Agenda”, which can be divided into four chapters: a safe and secure Europe, a prosperous and sustainable Europe, a social Europe, and a stronger Europe on the global scene. Reading the list of measures mentioned, a well-balanced plan emerges. There is no rhetoric here, but rather a sober realism about the many things that are currently possible and the many projects under way but which must be accelerated and made more binding, efficient, effective and reflective of citizens’ concerns.

An agenda for Europe that addresses the challenge set by public opinion: protecting and guaranteeing new opportunities for everybody in societies that remain open, based on European values and common rules, and on a strengthening of democracy. **We must now get ready to act, using all the instruments provided by the Treaties, without excluding anybody, but without again falling into the trap of unfulfilled promises.**

This is the right way to respond to the growth in populism that seeks to divide and bring us back to the worst aspects of 20th century nationalism. Division and confrontation in the international arena, where forms of imperial sovereignism of which we thought had been consigned to the history books are returning, now with the strengthening of “political regionalism” of which the EU is the most advanced form. The latter trend has over the past twenty years produced a tenfold increase in the number of regional organisations and agreements across the world, guaranteeing stability, and opportunities for growth and negotiated rules. A clear perception emerged in Rome that the EU is not a lost cause in the eyes of any of its members, but that all the European leaders want to make it work better. As Commission president Juncker said, there are signatures that endure and that count. The sight of European leaders in turn signing the Rome Declaration, placed on a case containing the Treaty of Rome with the original signatures, was in itself a strong symbol of what may become a binding commitment.

One of the most evocative speeches was given by European Council president Donald Tusk, who was born in Gdansk sixty years ago and lived half of his life behind the Iron Curtain. Mr Tusk pointed out that for more than 100 million Europeans, the two-speed Europe had meant a lifetime of not even being able to think words such as “freedom”, “progress”, “democracy” or “rule of law”. For this reason the concept of solidarity, of unity in diversity, is not just rhetoric but an inseparable part of our identity.

The Rome Declaration echoes the explicit call of Pope Francis upon the leaders the day before its signing to identify paths of hope, identifying specific ways forward to ensure a long and fruitful journey.

There is no time to be lost now that we are nearly two years into the legislative term. This is the only way in which we will leave the door open for subsequent new developments, perhaps even making the dream of a new “constituent phase”, evoked during the closing ceremony in the Quirinale Palace, come true.

There are no more excuses: either for those with responsibility in the European institutions and the national parliaments, or for the numerous and vital forces of European civil society, which with all their diverse points of view were a colourful presence in the squares of Rome and across Europe. They demonstrated that European integration continues, but also that the people of Europe are themselves more and more visible in this effort.

**Long live the European Union.**
Embarking on a “collective journey…to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty…(delivering a) new universal Agenda …(which will) realise the human rights of all” are very ambitious objectives. However, moving from declarations to concrete action is even more ambitious and hence, the effective governance of the 2030 Agenda is of paramount importance. Without doubt, it will only become a reality if citizens actively support the necessary transitions and if civil society is directly involved throughout the process.

Within this context, the conference on 22 and 23 May will take a four-pronged approach.

Firstly, to reaffirm that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is composed of three equal dimensions (economic, social and environmental), which are fused together, mutually reinforcing and indivisible. Progress in implementing the sustainable development goals will depend on the extent to which the political, policy and technical decisions reflect this interconnectivity. Hence, the necessity to measure growth ‘beyond GDP’ and to move from indicators to policy design.

Secondly, the event will demonstrate the opportunities of the 2030 Agenda for developing a much-needed positive narrative for democracy and sustainable European growth. Without doubt, the 2030 Agenda is the most appropriate framework to guide European and national strategies in dealing with current and future societal changes. The language of rights (universal and community) provides the overall guiding framework for such an approach.

The third objective of the conference will be to improve communication on the benefits of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for both individuals and communities. To this end, a number of case studies of local grassroots initiatives will be presented.

Finally, the fourth objective of the event, will be to explore the most effective role of civil society in the governance and implementation of the SDGs, at both the national and European levels, with a view to jointly delivering the 2030 Agenda.

CORRIGENDUM

On 16 February 2017 Claudia Fiaschi was elected as the new spokesperson of the National Third Sector Forum, and not Pietro Barbieri, as was wrongly stated in the last edition of the Europe III newsletter.

Claudia Fiaschi succeeds Pietro Barbieri, who managed the Forum for two terms from January 2013.
HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MARCH PLENARY SESSION

Group III members co-ordinating the work on new opinions

**Jorge PEGADO LIZ (PT)** is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: “Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2010/40/EU as regards the period for adopting delegated acts” – INT/820

**Carlos TRIAS PINTÓ (ES)** is the Co-Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: “Action Plan on retail financial services” – INT/822

**Indrė VAREIKYTĖ (LT)** is the Co-Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: “Provision and development of skills, in the context of new forms of work: new policies and changing roles and responsibilities” – SOC/562

**Krzysztof PATER (PL)** is the President of the study group for the opinion on: “The role and opportunities of employer and employee representative bodies in the context of new forms of work” – SOC/561

**Jean-Marc ROIRANT (FR)** is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: “Financing of CSOs by the EU” – SOC/563

**Roomet SÕRMUS (EE)** is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: “Land use for sustainable food production and ecosystem services” – NAT/713

**Bernardo HERNÁDEZ BATALLER (ES)** is the President of the study group for the opinion on: “European Interoperability Framework – Implementation Strategy” – TEN/635

**Giuseppe GUERINI (IT)** is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: “Taxation of the sharing economy - analyse possible tax policies to address development of the sharing economy” – ECO/434

**Francisco SILVA (PT)** is the President of the study group for the opinion on: “The new context for EU-CELAC strategic relations and the role of civil society” – REX/488

The full listing of membership of the above study groups for the new work may be consulted here: [http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.group-3-new-study-groups](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.group-3-new-study-groups)

Group III Members in the Spotlight playing a key role

**Jean-Marc ROIRANT (FR)**

*Education League*

*Member of the Various Interests’ Group*

**Civil Society Europe (CSE)** President Jean-Marc Roirant appointed to the chancellery of the European Citizen’s Prize

Since 2008 the Parliament awards the European Citizen’s Prize every year to reward citizens, groups, associations or organisations for their projects and initiatives that facilitate cross-border cooperation or promote mutual understanding within the EU. The prize, which has symbolic value, is also intended to acknowledge the work of those who through their day-to-day activities promote European values. It is awarded to persons or groups on the basis of nominations from MEPs reviewed by the European Citizen’s Prize Chancellery in Brussels.

The European Citizen’s Prize Chancellery is renewed at the beginning of the European Parliament’s mandate and at midterm.

The composition of the new Chancellery was adopted by the European Parliament’s bureau last 7 March and includes Vice President Sylvie Guillaume as Chancellor, Vice Presidents Mr Czarnecki, Mr Telicka, Mr Gall-Pelcz, Mr Papadimoulis, the former EP Presidents Mr Pöttering and Mr Baron Crespo, and two eminent personalities: Mr Jean-Marc Roirant, President of Civil Society Europe and Mr Luis Alvarado Martinez, President of the European Youth Forum.
Group III Members in the Spotlight playing a key role

Social economy enterprises get-together in Plovdiv (Bulgaria)

Cooperatives and other social economy enterprises met in 2017 for the sixth European Forum on Social Entrepreneurship in Plovdiv (Bulgaria).

This forum was organised by CECOP together with the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee.

Group III president Luca Jahier met with the President of Bulgaria, Rumen Radev, and opened the conference by stressing that the social economy had a key role to play in shaping the Europe of tomorrow.

Workshop by Giovani Consulenti del Lavoro – Brussels, 28-30 March 2017

This workshop was part of the prize won by the young labour consultants of Liguria and Sicily during the “Working Quiz” organised by the ‘Giovani Consulenti del Lavoro’, and which took place during the festival of labour in 2016. The two group winners of the competition were awarded a trip to Brussels on 28-30 March 2017, during which they took part in a series of events organised by the EU, including the EESC plenary meeting, which took place on March 29 in the European Parliament.

The tour in Brussels opened with a debate at the headquarters of the Committee, entitled “Adjusting work: paths between economics and law”, moderated by Giuseppe Acocella, vice-president of San Pio V in Rome, and attended by: Georges Dassis, president of the EESC; Luca Visentini, general secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation; Marina Calderone, president of the National Council of Labour Consultants; the economist Paolo Reboani; and Sergio Cofferati, MEP.

On 29 March the group of young labour consultants visited the EESC. Afterwards the workshop “Professionals in Europe: Mobility and EU funds” took place with the participation of Luca Jahier, President of Group III of the EESC.

The conference was attended: by Marina Calderone, who discussed the idea of creating a European platform for the liberal professions; the president of Consultants for Labour Foundation, Mauro Capitanio; the president of Foundation Studies, Rosario De Luca who gave a presentation on “Occupations in Italian and European institutions: a possible relationship” while Daniela Rondinelli of the EESC closed the event with a debate entitled “European Programs and initiatives for young people.”

Ceremony in Paris to mark the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome

On 24th March, the French Representation of the European Commission, Paris City Hall, the French European Parliament Information Office and European Movement France organised a public event to celebrate the Treaty of Rome. 350 people attended the event, which took place in Paris City Hall’s great hall. As the contact point for the French delegation, Group III member Thierry Libaert was appointed to represent the EESC, and to present two of the EU’s achievements and two of the challenges it is facing. Every speaker had 5 minutes to do so.

The event was a wonderful opportunity to showcase the EESC, reaching a high-level audience including almost all of the bodies, organisations and think tanks working closely with European issues.

In his speech, M. Libaert highlighted the role of the EESC and its key function as a bridge between Europe and organised civil society. The speech received good coverage on social networks, particularly regarding the aspect of “a Europe of proximity”.

Luca JAHIER (IT)
President of the Various Interests’ Group

Marina CALDERONE (IT)
National Council of Labour Consultants
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

Luca JAHIER (IT)
President of the Various Interests’ Group

Marina CALDERONE (IT)
National Council of Labour Consultants
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

Thierry LIBAERT
Fondation Nicolas Hulot pour la Nature et l’Homme
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

M JAHIER during opening ceremony

M JAHIER, M RADEV, Mrs SLAVOVA

Mrs RONDONELLI, M DE LUCA, M JAHIER, Mrs CALDERONE

M JAHIER, M RADEV, Mrs SLAVOVA
Today’s digital transformation is reshaping our lives and our economies, generating profound changes in the way we produce, consume and access to services. But equally importantly, Europe needs a fully operational Digital Single Market to ensure that all European citizens can benefit from the advantages of the digital era safely and on an equal footing.

All these ideas and more were explored in the 2017 edition of European Consumer Day. Organised by the EESC for the last 18 years, this annual event brought together consumers, policy-makers and IT experts not only to weigh in on the issues affecting digital consumers but also to shape the European dialogue about the Digital Single Market.
Antonio LONGO (IT)
Defence of the Citizen Movement (MDC)
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

Because the digital European Union is lagging far behind.

The European Consumer Day celebration in Malta allowed us to reflect and discuss about the delays of the digital revolution in Europe. So far the EU has not used the opportunities offered by new technologies for various reasons.

The European market is fragmented into 28 national markets; 50 TLC operators are faced with 28 different regulatory systems, while the 3 Chinese and the 6 USA operators have only one.

Some states prefer to develop a national digital strategy, instead of being open to a creative and running digital European Union.

The EU Commission is fluctuating its resource targets: in 2011, the Connecting Europe Facility Program had allocated 9.2 billion to infrastructure for broadband, which was reduced to 1 billion in 2013. Last April, EC President Juncker announced 50 billion for the 4.0 industry, and we hope that these remain essential funds.

Some states fear that over-regulation would “kill” innovation and private investments, mortifying the entrepreneurial capacity.

In public opinion there is a widespread fear, often fueled by a superficial and alarmist press, of greater job-loss than job-creation by new technologies.

The EESC has repeatedly called on the Commission to introduce, if there are, impact assessments and so to prove the results of the various measures. In particular, the EESC has asked President Juncker to publish at the end of the mandate of this Commission the results of the Digital Agenda, of which several measures have already been completed.

One thing is certain, it is of mayor importance that European and national authorities give greater economic resources to medium and long term strategies as well as involve all stakeholders, from consumers to all citizens. The EU should not lose any more ground in key areas such as Apps, cloud computing, big data, digital platforms.

It goes without saying that the digital society we are building must be inclusive, not divisive, enhancing and strengthening the social skills and opportunities for employment and development, improving the living conditions of all, starting from the most disadvantaged.
can generate from 10 to 100 euros in return and is therefore fully worthwhile”, points out Mr Maciulevičius.

In its opinion the EESC also stresses the need to secure an adequate budget if the UE is to be serious about space – a budget that can compete with those of the major players in the space arena. At present, this is not the case. Though Europe’s budget for space activities is the second largest in the world in absolute terms, it is only the sixth as a percentage of GDP. China and Russia also allocate huge budgets to space, but the figures are only partly revealed and it is very difficult to know how much money is spent unofficially. The EESC also warns that the EU’s space strategy will only be successful if both the public and private sectors invest in space. “We are asking the Commission to be more actively involved in organising and gathering together all the capital it can get from private banks and funds. These are somewhat risky investments, but the EIB could also help secure them”, said the opinion rapporteur.

The EESC also points to education as a key component of Europe’s spatial strategy. Space activities mean highly skilled jobs. Europe must train /retrain European workers and young people to meet the market demand for space-related skills, particularly as regards the use of data. At the same time, it needs to raise awareness of the potential of space in society at large. “All consumers – not just specialists - need to be aware of the benefits satellite data can bring and start using them”, concluded the rapporteur.

Webstory published by EESC Press Unit on April 6, 2017.

The complete texts of all EESC opinions are available in various language versions on the Committee’s website: http://dm.eesc.europa.eu/EESCDocumentSearch/Pages/opinionssearch.aspx
THIS ALSO HAPPENED DURING THE MARCH PLENARY SESSION OF THE EESC...

Dear Members of the EESC,

We, the majority of UK members of the EESC, felt it was appropriate that today, as the British PM enforces Article 50, we put our position to EESC Members. Today is a day that is deeply regretted by many people in the UK and the rest of Europe. While the mechanism for this trigger is based on the result of the June 23 referendum, we must remind everyone that, while 17 million voted to leave, 16 million people voted to remain in the EU, several million were not entitled to vote and many thousands have been extremely active since, as demonstrated in the pro-EU marches in London and elsewhere. With this in mind, we as members of the EESC recognise the importance of the UK’s EU membership to civil society. Article 50 has started the negotiations for the future relationship between the UK and the EU. At this stage, we do not know what this will be but we recognise the unique opportunity which the EESC offers as the voice of people, the voice of civil society, to find a way to ensure that there is no Brexit from solidarity and no walls separating Europe’s people. We would like to state our hope that no door is closed to looking for a way to ensure continued solidarity between the people of Europe using the EESC as a vehicle and that you, Members, will support us in this endeavour.

Mr Trias, who holds the intellectual property rights on the study, proposed the EESC to publish the study online as an EESC publication (EN, ES), in order to make the results available to a broader public. The study makes reference to the related EESC opinion and its conclusions and recommendations. It is a timely contribution to the ongoing debate to further take into account specific features and possibilities of small and non-complex banks (proportionality principle). A more structured and comprehensive approach is crucial here. No excessively heavy obligations or burdens should be imposed on this kind of institutions, a position adopted by the EESC in its opinion on the banking package on 30 March 2017.

UK Members’ Statement on Brexit to the EESC Plenary, on 29 March 2017

Dear Members of the EESC,

We, the majority of UK members of the EESC, felt it was appropriate that today, as the British PM enforces Article 50, we put our position to EESC Members. Today is a day that is deeply regretted by many people in the UK and the rest of Europe. While the mechanism for this trigger is based on the result of the June 23 referendum, we must remind everyone that, while 17 million voted to leave, 16 million people voted to remain in the EU, several million were not entitled to vote and many thousands have been extremely active since, as demonstrated in the pro-EU marches in London and elsewhere. With this in mind, we as members of the EESC recognise the importance of the UK’s EU membership to civil society. Article 50 has started the negotiations for the future relationship between the UK and the EU. At this stage, we do not know what this will be but we recognise the unique opportunity which the EESC offers as the voice of people, the voice of civil society, to find a way to ensure that there is no Brexit from solidarity and no walls separating Europe’s people. We would like to state our hope that no door is closed to looking for a way to ensure continued solidarity between the people of Europe using the EESC as a vehicle and that you, Members, will support us in this endeavour.

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In Rome on March 25th to defend our united and democratic Europe

Geneviève SAVIGNY (FR)
Via Campesina
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

Jean-Marc ROIRANT (FR)
Education League
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

It is behind the green and blue banner for “la Nostra Europa” that Jean-Marc Roirant and Geneviève Savigny, both members of Group III and of the French delegation to the EESC, marched in the streets of Rome on Saturday 25th March to defend our Europe.

Jean-Marc Roirant, President of the Civil Society Europe, participated in various meetings and events in the Italian capital organized by the Italian members of European associations on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome.

Geneviève Savigny was in Rome for the General Assembly of Via Campesina Europe (ECVC), asking for a CAP at the service of the people, in a solidar Europe.

Solidarity was without doubt the key word of this united front, expressing its fear of seeing our common heritage shrinking, making conquests on the ground of rights and democracy, undermined by unjust treaties, austerity policies, the domination of finance, which eventually would lead to poverty and growing inequality.

Calling for a Europe for all, this colorful, cheerful procession marched to the Colosseum car-less square, under a sun full of hope.

www.lanostraeuropa.org
Bringing the EU closer to citizens is a major challenge

Therefore, Group III met in St. Julian’s under the auspices of the Maltese Presidency of the EU on 23 March to discuss the role and capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) to voice citizens’ concerns and ensure that they are better supported by public authorities.

In the morning, the Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat and Parliamentary Secretary Ian Borg welcomed the EESC members and representatives of Maltese civil society organisations, who gathered together to take stock of Malta’s major achievements during its membership of the European Union and pave the way for the challenges ahead. Representatives from different sectors of civil society (environment, gender balance, disability, youth), the media, and government authorities debated the impact of EU membership on the economy and the recognition of the role of CSOs in public debate.

The afternoon session focused on the provision of services and goods to citizens, namely the attitude of SMEs and professionals to provide high-quality services to their clients, patients and customers. Representatives of liberal professions and SME organisations debated with consumer representatives and government authorities, amongst others, on ethical and safety requirements and the latest developments at European level in this field.

The second observation was that small companies in particular, which after all account for 91% of all European companies, see their customers on a daily basis. Quality and good service are thus good for business. On the other hand, customers are unforgiving when they have a bad experience, which is bad for business. The majority of dissatisfied customers do not complain, but just take their custom elsewhere – there are plenty of alternatives. In short, both business and consumer organisations have every interest in satisfying their customers.

This cannot be achieved without mutual rights and obligations and without an effective legal framework. This means appropriate legislation covering at least 91% of all companies, thus micro-businesses too, without prejudice to the legal rights of consumers. As has long been the case with social legislation, effective joint consultation is needed between business and consumer organisations in order to ensure effective consumer rights and produce generally binding consumer agreements that benefit everyone.

But even the best legislation cannot always prevent conflicts and abuses. Neither businesses nor consumers are always above reproach. This is why we are firm advocates of mediation and conciliation bodies to deal with cases of dispute and conflict. The ADR Directive, elucidated by Baiba Miltovica at the Malta meeting, provides a legal framework for this.

Existing ombudsman services and mediation organisations have been recognised by the authorities in Belgium and a number of other Member States on this basis. Many of these were already operational; Belgium now has 21 such bodies. The experiences and results of the Belgian conciliation organisations for the construction, furniture and travel sectors have been positive. But both consumers and the businesses concerned must be persuaded to make more use of these services. A database of good practices in different Member States is also strongly recommended, as well as a platform for comparing experiences.

Attention was also quite rightly drawn at the Malta meeting to the need for systematic and representative inclusion of all relevant parties in such conciliation bodies. This would ideally mean joint representation of consumer and business organisations. Only on this basis can the mistrust that is still too often present on both sides be superseded by a deserved and realistic mutual confidence. Both businesses and their customers need prompt and well-balanced solutions rather than long and expensive legal battles.

In the following article, Group III member Ronny Lanno gives an overview of the panel he participated in, representing small and medium-sized businesses, together with Group III member Baiba Miltovica, representing consumers.

Agreements to increase customer satisfaction based on structured dialogue

Our extraordinary Group III meeting in Malta focused among other things on cooperation between business and consumer organisations. I had the pleasure of discussing this on the panel with our colleague Baiba Miltovica (LV). She was speaking on behalf of consumers while I was representing small and medium-sized businesses. The questions were: how to promote cooperation between businesses and consumers in practice? what is the best way of resolving conflicts between the two? and what has been the experience with this on the ground?

Our colleague Mr Pegado Liz’s information report provides a detailed initial response to these questions. The report was based on the findings of colleagues’ fact-finding missions in a number of Member States, where they had face-to-face talks with business and consumer organisations. The pragmatic approach and mutual understanding were very evident from these meetings.

Ronny Lanno (BE)
UNIZO (Union of Self-Employed Entrepreneurs and SMEs)
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

Baiba Miltovica (LV)
Latvian National Association for Consumer Protection
Member of the Various Interests’ Group

NEWS from Group III
Group III Extraordinary Meeting in Malta – 23 March 2017

Ian Borg
Joseph Muscat

M. Jahier, M. Muscat and M. Rizzo
Isabell HOFFMANN at Group meeting

At the last group meeting on 29 March, the Group enjoyed a presentation of the study “Fear not Values” by Isabell HOFFMANN, co-author of this study, which was carried out by the Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Description of the study presented:

“The Eurozone crisis has pushed reform of the European Union (EU) to the forefront of political debate. How can a Union of 28 states with a population of over half a billion be reformed to weather future economic crises and political challenges?

“Finding an answer to this question is extremely difficult not only because current reform proposals are so varied, but even more so because we lack insights into the preferences for reform amongst national elites and publics. Although EU support has interested scholars for over three decades now, we virtually know nothing about public support for EU reform. Current research focuses almost exclusively on the causes of support for the current project and fails to provide a sufficient basis for effective reform decisions. Surely, the feasibility and sustainability of EU reform crucially hinges on the support amongst national publics.

SueOpinions examines public support for EU reform by developing a theoretical model and employing cutting-edge data collection techniques. The findings will aid policy makers to craft EU reform proposals that can secure widespread public support.”

New member

Imse Spragg Nilsson

The Swedish government nominated Imse Spragg Nilsson, of the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU), to be a member of the European Economic and Social Committee during its 2015-2020 term.

Ms Spragg Nilsson will replace Oskar Wallner (LSU) as a member of the Various Interests’ Group.

The Farmers’ Category met on 11 April 2017. On the agenda was a debate on Cork +20, CAP post 2020 and Rural Development in the presence of EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Phil Hogan. The members also heard from the rapporteurs of the EESC opinions on the topics and from Professor Thia Hennessy, Chair of Agri-Food Economics at Cork University Business School on The delivery of public goods in agriculture.

The last Social Economy Category took place on 4 April 2017 in the afternoon. Members had the opportunity to exchange views with CIRIEC, which is drafting the EESC commissioned study on ‘Recent Evolutions in the Social Economy in the European Union’. In addition to the EC, representatives of the Permanent Representations of Estonia and Bulgaria also participated in the meeting on 4 April, in order to inform on the situation regarding the social economy in these countries. Estonia and Bulgaria will hold the Presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2017 and the first half of 2018 respectively.

http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.categories