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# EESC priorities during the **Italian Presidency**

July – December 2014



*European Economic and Social Committee*

# Italian presidency

## Towards a new policy agenda for Europe



The results of the elections on 25 May this year have demonstrated the need for a change of direction supported by all the heads of state or government so to put Europe back on the right path. Having spent several years dealing with overcoming the economic and financial crisis, new policy ideas are now needed. It is therefore essential to rebalance austerity policies, but also to invest in sustainable growth whilst supporting the fight against climate change.

Faced with this complex situation, which calls both for an ability to adapt and for medium and long term courage, the presidency held by Italy, one of the founder members of this Union, must play a leading role in reorienting European policies.



Our Committee supports Italy's position in favour of a tangible Europe at the service of the public including:

- Genuine **economic and monetary union** equipped with new, more flexible financial instruments that facilitate economic and budgetary integration whilst encouraging investment and combating unemployment;
- A **social union for an equitable Europe**, which is all the more urgent in the light of the crisis Europe has been through, with both qualitative and quantitative goals;
- A **union of the people for a democratic Europe** to connect the EU's politicians with its citizens, including the organisation of a European Citizens' Convention in 2015;
- An **industrial policy**, which must be the priority for the next five years if we want to create sustainable jobs in our countries, including through reshoring, and which must relaunch growth;
- The **energy issue**, a major plank of previous presidencies, has become more relevant in the light of recent events. It is high time to respond to the wishes of the affected peoples.

The EESC would also like to stress the importance of putting in place a proper Africa policy. In recent years, Africa has been the subject of increasing attention from China, which has caused EU-Africa cooperation to be eroded. Yet the continent is geographically close to, and shares interests with, Europe. It is therefore essential that the EU should relaunch these partnerships.

Similarly, immigration via the Mediterranean and the daily tragedies that take place there call for an urgent, collective, comprehensive response from the European Union. Europe is paying the price of the lack of a common immigration policy and a genuine common asylum system. Minimum reception standards and a policy for management of shared borders and migratory flows are therefore needed.

On this subject, we put forward proposals and avenues for thought that contribute to debates and open up fresh perspectives. We give a voice to the grass roots, to ideas that have been proven in some European regions – to make, together with the Italian presidency, the progress that Europeans now expect.

*Henri Malosse  
EESC President*

# Italian Members of the EESC



**CAMPLI Mario**  
Group III – Various Interests  
Member of Legacoop's office for international relations and European policy (Italy's national league of cooperatives and mutual societies)  
[Mario.Campli@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:Mario.Campli@eesc.europa.eu)



**CAPRIOGLIO Luigi**  
Group II – Workers  
National member of CIDA (Italian confederation of managers and high-level professionals) – member of the steering committee of CEC European Managers  
[info@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:info@eesc.europa.eu)



**CAVALLARO Francesco**  
No group affiliation  
General-secretary of the Italian Confederation of Autonomous Workers' Unions (CISAL)  
[Francesco.Cavallaro@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:Francesco.Cavallaro@eesc.europa.eu)



**CEDRONE Carmelo**  
Group II – Workers  
Professor of European economic policy at La Sapienza University, Rome – member of Team Europe – formerly head of the European and international department of the UIL (Italian Labour Union) – member of UIL's central committee  
[Carmelo.Cedrone@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:Carmelo.Cedrone@eesc.europa.eu)



**CHIRIACO Franco**  
Group II – Workers  
President of the Metes Foundation  
[Franco.Chiriaco@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:Franco.Chiriaco@eesc.europa.eu)



**CONFALONIERI Roberto**  
Group III – Various Interests  
General-secretary of Confedir (Confederation of Italian executives and professional and managerial staff) – member of the Italian National Economic and Labour Council (CNEL)  
[Roberto.Confalonieri@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:Roberto.Confalonieri@eesc.europa.eu)



**DELL'ALBA Gianfranco**  
Group I – Employers  
Director of Confindustria's Brussels office (Confederation of Italian Industry)  
[info@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:info@eesc.europa.eu)



**DE LOTTO Pietro Francesco**  
Group I – Employers  
General-director of Confartigianato Vicenza (General Italian Confederation of Artisans) – researcher and associate professor of international economics, University of Trieste  
[info@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:info@eesc.europa.eu)



**DURANTE Giancarlo**  
Group I – Employers  
Central Director of the Italian Banking Association – chairman of the EBF Banking Committee for European Social Affairs (European Banking Federation) – vice-chairman of PROSOLIDAR (Italian banking sector's foundation for solidarity projects)  
[info@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:info@eesc.europa.eu)



**FATOVIC Emilio**  
Group II – Workers  
Deputy general-secretary of Confisal (general confederation of autonomous workers' trade unions), with responsibility for welfare/the private sector  
[info@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:info@eesc.europa.eu)



**GUERINI Giuseppe**  
Group III – Various Interests  
Board member of Confcooperative (Confederation of Italian Cooperatives) and national president of Federsolidarietà-Confcooperative (political and trade union organisation representing Confcooperative members)  
[info@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:info@eesc.europa.eu)



**IOZIA Edgardo Maria**  
Group II – Workers  
National secretary of UILCA (Italian union for the credit and insurance sectors) – vice-president of UNI Europa Finance  
[Edgardo.iozia@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:Edgardo.iozia@eesc.europa.eu)



**IULIANO Giuseppe Antonio Maria**  
Group II – Workers  
International policy department of CISL (Italian trade union confederation) – area coordinator – responsibility for central and eastern Europe and Latin America  
[Giuseppe.Iuliano@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:Giuseppe.Iuliano@eesc.europa.eu)



**JAHIER Luca**  
President of Group III – Various Interests  
International relations officer for ACLI (Christian association of Italian workers)  
[Luca.Jahier@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:Luca.Jahier@eesc.europa.eu)



**LONGO Antonio**  
Group III – Various Interests  
President of the Movimento Difesa del Cittadino (Citizens' Rights Movement) – member of CNCU (National Council for Consumers and Users)  
[Antonio.Longo@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:Antonio.Longo@eesc.europa.eu)



**MASCIA Sandro**  
Group I – Employers  
Head of the Brussels office of the General Confederation of Italian Agriculture (Confagricoltura)  
[Sandro.Mascia@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:Sandro.Mascia@eesc.europa.eu)



**PALMIERI Stefano**  
Group II – Workers  
Head of the Brussels office of the CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labour)  
[Stefano.Palmieri@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:Stefano.Palmieri@eesc.europa.eu)



**PEZZINI Antonello**  
Group I – Employers  
Entrepreneur – representative of the Italian Confederation of Industry (Confindustria)  
[Antonello.Pezzini@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:Antonello.Pezzini@eesc.europa.eu)



**POLICA Antonio**  
Group II – Workers  
Confederal secretary of the UGL (Italy's General Labour Union)  
[info@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:info@eesc.europa.eu)



**RANOCCHIARI Virgilio**  
Group I – Employers  
European affairs consultant – Italian Confederation of Industry (Confindustria)  
[Virgilio.Ranocchiarri@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:Virgilio.Ranocchiarri@eesc.europa.eu)



**REALE Maurizio**  
Group I – Employers  
International relations officer for Coldiretti (Italian national confederation of farmers)  
[info@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:info@eesc.europa.eu)



**RONDINELLI Daniela**  
Group II – Workers  
Head of international affairs at FISASCAT CISL (Italian federation of service, commerce and tourism operators' unions) affiliated to the CISL  
[Daniela.Rondinelli@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:Daniela.Rondinelli@eesc.europa.eu)



**ROTTI Claudio**  
Group I – Employers  
President of AICE (Italian Foreign Trade Association) – chairman of the international commission of Concommercio (general confederation for trade, tourism, services, professions and SMEs)  
[info@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:info@eesc.europa.eu)



# Making European civil society's voice heard by the Italian presidency



The European Economic and Social Committee is staking its claim to be a committed partner for the Italian presidency of the European Union, thus giving a voice to civil society organisations throughout the next six-month period. It has been asked by the presidency to carry out a mid-term evaluation of the **Europe 2020 strategy**, which it will present at a high-level conference in Rome in December 2014.

This partnership will form a strategic platform for promoting **the role of citizens as a driving force for change** in Europe, in the wake of the results of May's European elections which call for a more democratic European Union.

More specifically, with a view to the Italian presidency's agenda:

- The EESC is continuing its priority work on the European economy by promoting the adoption and implementation of a genuine **growth, employment and stability plan** and a road map for the next legislative period which should make it possible to respond to the challenges associated with the **completion of economic and monetary union**.
- The Committee also wants to explore alternative mechanisms for **capitalising businesses**, particularly SMEs, via, for example, a new role for the European Central Bank. During the Italian presidency, the Committee also wants to promote the creation of an environment favourable to **social entrepreneurship**. The EESC also stresses the key role of **social investment** in European employment and growth policy; by putting the human dimension at the heart of European policies, for example through **social innovation**, more sustainable development paths can be identified.
- In relation to energy, the EESC's activities focus, inter alia, on promoting the role of civil society in the **European energy dialogue**, whilst its work on **industry** focuses mainly on the wood and packaging sectors. With regard to transport, the **Single European Sky project** remains a crucial dossier.
- **Consumer protection** remains a priority for the EESC, with a particular focus on combating over-indebtedness and unfair commercial practices.
- In order to strengthen the effectiveness of European policies at the best level of action, the Committee is participating actively in the promotion of existing **macro-regional strategies** and those still to be established (e.g. Adriatic-Ionian), and in the development of a future **urban agenda**.
- The Committee will continue to play a key part in the main environmental events to be held over the next six months, including the **post-2015 sustainable development goals agenda** and the preparation of **COP21 in Paris in 2015**. The Committee will also be playing an active part in the **Milan World Expo 2015 on the theme Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life**, which will be an essential contribution to the global debate on food and sustainability.
- The EESC also wants to consolidate the role of European civil society in Europe's relations with its neighbours. In the context of the Italian presidency, it above all wants to spotlight the issues of **youth and immigration** as key themes of the **Euromed** partnership, without, however, neglecting its commitment to monitor the **association agreements with the EU's eastern neighbours**. The monitoring of trade negotiations, and in particular the **Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership**, will remain a priority.

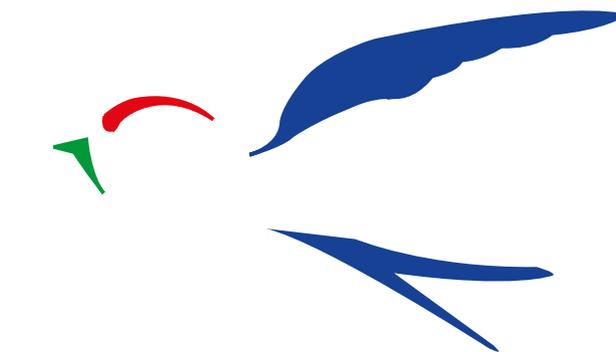


## Message from Sandro Gozi, Italian under-secretary for European policies

The six-month Italian presidency is a great opportunity to send out a message about the Europe we want. The European elections on 25 May clearly showed that the exit strategy intended to bring Europe out of the economic crisis which has seized it is not working, and that most Europeans want alternatives to austerity measures. During this presidency, which comes at a very critical juncture for Europe, with the bedding-in of the European Parliament and the Commission, our strength may lie in developing a set of priorities. Europe for jobs, Europe in the world and Europe for rights. The basic idea is for Brussels to reconnect with citizens by

listening to their needs, gauging their potential and visualising the way forward. The European Union that focused exclusively on budgets and financial algorithms must be a thing of the past. The institutions must be brought closer to the people if we truly want Europe to win their hearts and minds.

This is where the work of the European Economic and Social Committee becomes crucial. If the purpose is to increase citizen participation in European affairs, this cannot be achieved without the ongoing involvement of all those branches of society which can help make our community increasingly dynamic. The EESC's work is extremely valuable, as its priorities are the same as those we intend to bring to Europe's attention during the presidency: youth employment, immigration issues and social cohesion. These are the challenges where swifter progress is needed in order to create a fairer and more just society. I am looking forward to working with you.



### Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

[italia2014.eu](http://italia2014.eu)



# Some basic facts about Italy



<b>Official name</b>	Italian Republic
<b>Capital</b>	Rome
<b>Surface area*</b>	302 071 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Other major cities</b>	Firenze, Milano, Napoli, Palermo, Torino, Venezia
<b>Official languages</b>	Italian
<b>Currency</b>	Euro
<b>Population, total in 2013*</b>	59 685 227
<b>GDP per capita in Purchasing Power Standards (EU-27 = 100) in 2012*</b>	98
<b>GDP at market prices in millions of euro, 2012*</b>	1 567 010
<b>Unemployment rate in February 2014*</b>	Total: 13
<b>Unemployment rate aged 15-24*</b>	35.3
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Life expectancy estimated in 2015*</b>	Men: 80.3 Women: 85.3
<b>Main exports in 2012*</b>	1) Machinery and equipment n.e.c. 2) Basic metals and fabricated metal products 3) Textiles, clothing, leather and accessories
<b>Main imports in 2012*</b>	1) Mining and quarrying products 2) Basic metals and fabricated metal products 3) Chemicals and chemical products

\* Italy in figures 2013, ISTAT publication.





## ***European Economic and Social Committee***

Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 99  
1040 Bruxelles/Brussel  
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