



PUTTING EUROPE'S CITIZENS IN THE DRIVING SEAT

Presidency of the EESC
2013 – 2015



European Economic and Social Committee

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Europe is, first and foremost, a story: a story of women and men who turned their back on decline and on wars between brethren. But does this story have a future? Many people today have their doubts given that the European Union has so singularly failed to keep its promises of solidarity and prosperity. Nonetheless, I am firmly convinced that the EU can do even more for its citizens and can become the bold and enterprising player that Europeans expect it to be, standing shoulder to shoulder with them to enthusiastically tackle the challenges of a changing world. Our future will no longer play out within the borders of our countries; it will play out on a global level. Our economic models, founded on our own values, are competing with Chinese and American models. Large international firms are making states compete against one another in order to profit from the least stringent. Some regions are emptying out while others are coming into their own to attract talent. New information and communication technology has made the movement of information, goods and people faster but has also made some professions obsolete, while creating new ones which require new forms of training.

In this constantly changing world, Europe has many assets: generous men and women, renowned creativity and dynamism, well-educated young people. I have seen this incredible wealth of assets on the ground in every part of Europe that I visited as President of the European Economic and Social Committee. Meeting Europeans enabled me to see the living Europe at work, a Europe that is far from being nothing more than that old continent, a Europe that is resolutely looking to the future. The real driving force of the European Union is here: innovative regions, entrepreneurs aware of their social responsibility, enterprising workers, altruistic women and men who devote a large part of their lives to community life and the common good. European leaders are no longer the driving force behind the European project. They now have to listen in order to do the right thing.

The time has come for Europeans to be the wind of change!

Henri Malosse

*President of the EESC
2013-2015*







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A civil society that wants

Mariano Rajoy
*Prime Minister of Spain
during the EESC mission to
Spain – March 2014*



A better understanding of impact on the ground

... is the form of expertise that the EESC's observatories have developed in recent years. In response to the growing discrepancy between European action and Europeans' expectations, these tools have been modernised and strengthened to enable them to conduct effective field studies. These studies are carried out in several Member States, with the involvement of all stakeholders: employers' and workers' associations, consumers, local authorities... On the basis of uncompromising observations, specific proposals are drafted and presented to the Commission and to the European Parliament, thereby ensuring that European civil society has a voice.

Christine Lagarde
*President of the IMF
at the EESC plenary session –
December 2013*



The truth about the "posted workers" directive

... in the context of the construction sector was uncovered by the EESC's Single Market Observatory. Between 2013 and 2014, the Committee gathered the experiences of Europeans in Belgium, France, Germany, Poland, Portugal and Romania. The findings were unequivocal: the deadweight effects of this EU legislation are so numerous that it has destroyed many jobs and led to instances of modern slavery. However, there are solutions to successfully address this situation, such as applying the country of destination principle across the board.

to be and must be heeded

European civil society has had to confront the difficulties brought about by successive crises, and it still has to do so. Civil society expects Europe to support it, stand by it and help it to tackle the challenges that arise in a changing world. It is at local level that Europeans experience the decisions taken by Brussels and form an opinion of EU measures. They are therefore best placed to assess how effective European decisions are, their impact – including deadweight effects and the distortions these decisions can create – and the need for adjustment. This is the case for the “posted workers” directive which, although it promotes the movement of workers within the EU and thereby creates a European labour market, is severely criticised by professions in some sectors for giving rise to unfair competition and large-scale job destruction.

We should remember that the European Union was established by and for Europeans. Without their support, this political structure is becoming an empty shell with no future. Common sense says that European leaders should nurture a rich and continuous dialogue with European civil society.



Dalia Grybauskaitė
*President of Lithuania
during the EESC mission to
Lithuania – April 2013*

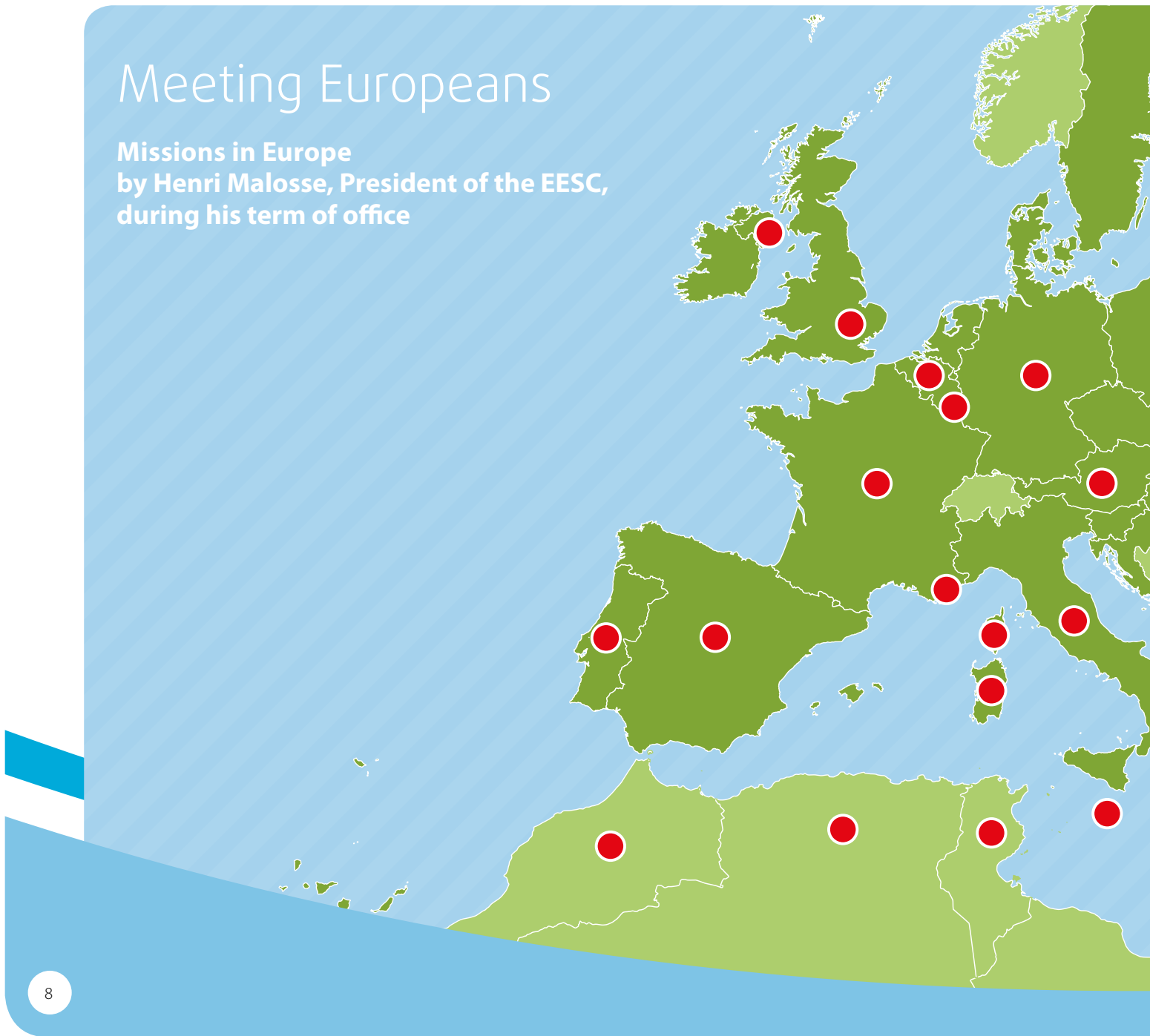
François Hollande
*President of the French Republic
at the Mali donors conference at
the EESC – May 2013*

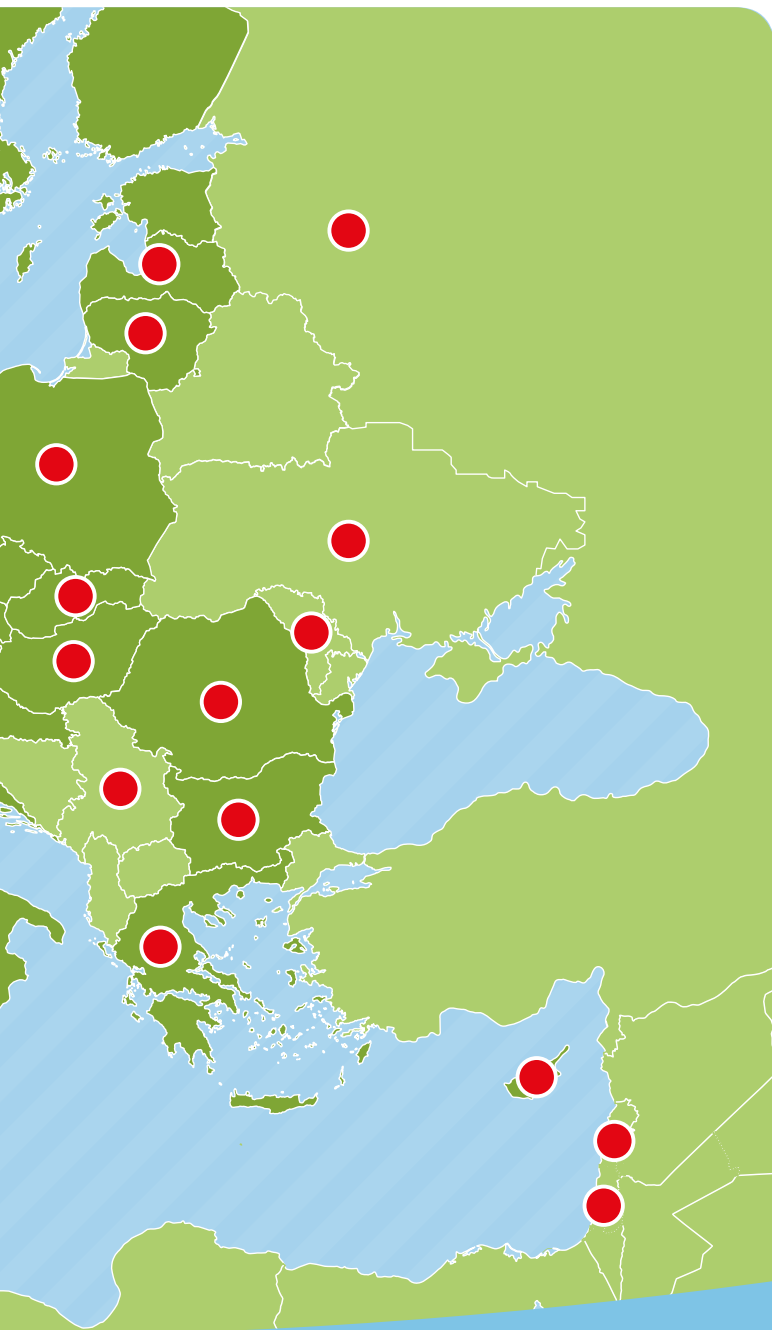
Citizen renewable energy

... is decentralised energy production by members of the public – local communities, local authorities, NGOs, farmers... – which creates a new value flow, value that can stay where it is generated. As the EESC’s Sustainable Development Observatory discovered, this energy is one of the keys to successful energy transition. Although it is currently underutilised, it has real potential if integrated into EU and national strategies which must, therefore, promote the role of civil society in developing renewable energies. Moreover, this is what the people who were surveyed said they want: to actively participate in tackling energy and environmental challenges within the EU.

Meeting Europeans

Missions in Europe
by Henri Malosse, President of the EESC,
during his term of office





One of the main missions that the EESC sets itself is to reach out to Europeans, not only to talk to them about Europe but also to listen to their views of it and what they expect from it.

In the Going Local programme, the EESC's 353 members – who are drawn from civil society in the 28 Member States – work with their fellow citizens on the ground to examine decisions taken in Brussels, and then provide feedback to the Commission and the European Parliament.

The voice of civil society thus gradually takes on an important role in the functioning of the European Union and helps make European action legitimate once again.

” We need to enter into dialogue with Europeans and I need the EESC, to show them how useful Europe is.



Jean-Claude Juncker
President of the European Commission
at the EESC plenary session – February 2015

Civil society, driving force

A crusade against planned obsolescence

... is being led by the EESC, which deplores this unethical and economically irresponsible form of waste. Specific measures on the ground are planned to help raise awareness, particularly by means of testing (unprecedented within the EU) the impact of displaying lifespan and the development of a dedicated logo.

Food waste: Europeans have become aware

... and have taken steps to change their habits. Ninety million tonnes of food are wasted each year in Europe. Only a small fraction of the surplus of edible food in the EU is given to charities to be distributed to the most deprived people because the EU has no common legislation on food aid and the strategic frameworks differ between the Member States. Given how widely the current solutions differ, the EESC started to cooperate with the European Commission and large retailers, with the aim of promoting and facilitating food donations.

for change

Confronted with the major challenges of recent years, which were caused by fundamental shifts in the global economy and international competition, Europeans demonstrate each day that they have a remarkable capacity for innovation and daring. Europe is a leader in cutting-edge fields such as renewable energy technologies, an area in which EU companies hold 40% of all patents.

Many young people leave school with digital skills that are in high demand throughout the world, and the European Union must be able to keep them within its borders.

The European Economic and Social Committee has made itself the representative of this creativity, particularly by launching a series of projects. The aim? To show all stakeholders – and in particular EU leaders – that change is possible and within the European Union's reach, and that there are many women and men on the ground who can think outside the box.

The driving force for change must start at grassroots level.

” Human rights and individuals' rights must be at the heart of the European Union's external relations.



Federica Mogherini

*EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
at the second EU-Southern Neighbourhood Civil Society Forum at the EESC – May 2015*



Markku Markkula

President of the European Committee of the Regions

” Europe has an abundance of initiatives linked to non-violence and they are the key to helping build a fairer and more solidarity-based world.

Jean-François Bernardini

President of the Association pour une Fondation de Corse-UMANI at the conference on non-violence co-organised by the EESC in Bastia, France – June 2013



Vicente del Bosque

Coach of the Spanish national football team, leader of a project to establish football leagues in prisons with the aim of teaching prisoners to accept the basic rules, play in a team and respect other people; at the EESC plenary session – November 2013



Non-violence is a European value

... as is demonstrated by the abundance and the originality of the examples found on the ground. Like Tonio Dell'Olio who uses his network of associations called Libera to promote anti-Mafia civic education in Italian schools; or Michael Boyd who uses the love of football to tackle violence in Northern Ireland; or the educational efforts of Jean-François Bernardini and the members of his Corse-UMANI foundation that attempt to eradicate this scourge. Europe also stands for the ability to transform diversity into an opportunity that unites us, a force for making Europeans' lives better.

” The EU must stand by people who, like us, are taking action and innovating in order to better include people with disabilities in our society.

Miguel Carballada Piñero

President of Once

NGO that helps people with disabilities to find a job and fully integrate into society, during the EESC mission to Spain – March 2014



Bringing about Euromed through civil society

... is the ambition of the memorandum of understanding signed between the EESC and the Union for the Mediterranean in 2015 with a view to closer cooperation in areas of common concern, including job creation, women's socio-economic empowerment, entrepreneurship, social economy, food security and climate change. This cooperation will also enable non-governmental stakeholders – trade unions, professional federations, the private sector and civil society organisations – to be involved in projects to tackle regional challenges in Mediterranean countries. This cooperation, which is based on economic and social interests that are shared on both sides of the Mediterranean, has already borne fruit: a Euromed platform on natural gas has been set up.

Bringing European space programmes to life

... and bringing them closer to the general public is a key objective of the EESC's Space and Society project. The Committee is organising local activities in Germany, France, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Romania to illustrate the full extent of the impact of European space programmes, such as networking for SMEs and start-ups in the space market, market development, innovation and education, job creation, policies, health and art.

Young people have their say

... is the slogan of the annual Your Europe, Your Say! event that the EESC organises for young people. It brings together students aged 16-17 from right across Europe. At the start of Henri Malosse's term as president, young people worked together to identify what they expected from the European Union. The priorities identified by the young participants were then integrated into those of the 2013-2015 EESC presidency.

What European young people want

The priorities adopted by the young people participating in Your Europe, Your Say!:

- equality in education,
- further development of language teaching,
- encouraging research and innovation to boost renewable energy and recycling,
- recognising work experience, whatever its form and duration,
- creating equal opportunities.

Young Europeans, our future

Europe has the assets to be the continent of the future. Foremost among these are its dynamic and well-educated young people. This is why Europe must adopt more ambitious projects and policies (such as the Youth Guarantee), which must provide today's young people with specific measures in terms of accessing jobs, training and innovative initiatives.

Entrepreneurship, especially among young people therefore has great potential, and must benefit from



Mindaugas Sinkevicius
*the youngest mayor of his country,
met during the EESC mission
to Lithuania – January 2012*

ure

investment. The aim is for their creativity and innovation to bear fruit in new areas, using business incubators to guide them during the first steps of their projects and offering specific forms of funding. At this time of crisis, civil society – through its young people – is able to inspire new forms of solidarity, to be a source of innovation and to bounce back. It is the engine for its own renewal. Europe must therefore invest in these new generations, as they are the future of Europe.



“ I have never imagined being anything other than an entrepreneur! Taking an idea and turning it into a real and profitable venture brings me huge joy and excitement. And I will continue to work closely with my peers across Europe to promote a high-quality business environment for future generations.

Nopi Romanidou
young Greek entrepreneur

The truth about youth employment

... and in particular the implementation of European policy in this area is the subject of the field study conducted by the EESC Labour Market Observatory in Austria, Croatia, Finland, Greece, Italy and Slovakia. The situation differs greatly from one country to another, with youth unemployment ranging from 58.3% in Greece to 9.2% in Austria. However, the study highlights common solutions that all EU Member States could apply successfully. It studied the Youth Guarantee and concluded that, if correctly applied – i.e. in partnership with social partners and youth organisations – this mechanism would certainly improve the labour market for young people, for instance by ensuring better coordination between training and business needs.



Your Europe, Your Say!
The EESC's annual event for and with young Europeans



” We’re interested in using schools and the internet to build bridges between Russia and EU countries!

Russian students
Russia
Seliger International Youth Forum



Meeting with high school students
Brest – France



” Is Europe really able to uphold citizens’ rights and European values?

Hungarian student
*Eötvös Loránd University
Budapest – Hungary*



” We have ideas and the will to succeed. We want to bring them to fruition in and for our country.

Greek students
Businessschool Athens – Greece



Bastia Coworking
*First coworking space
in Corsica – France*

Young entrepreneurs
Algeria – June 2014



” Laying down a single regulatory framework for apprenticeships is surely the first step in laying the foundations of a European labour law.

” Our cultures enrich us and others.

**Young woman from the Alès
travellers community**
France



Jean Arthuis
French MEP
at the Europe of Talents conference
at the EESC – June 2015

Investing in apprenticeships

...has been the EESC's strategy for several years, and it wants to improve the performance of national dual training systems by means of a comparative study to identify the connection between dual training and youth unemployment. The figures are unequivocal. Austria has the lowest youth unemployment rate in the EU, at 7.6% (source: Eurostat, 21/5/2013). One of the main reasons for this success is effective professional training: nearly 40% of young Austrians choose to follow a dual training programme. This has been made possible by the dynamism of social dialogue and close cooperation between the Austrian public employment service (PES), high schools and businesses. This is a good example of how to truly improve youth employment.



Young entrepreneurs
Bulgaria – December 2013

The adventure of entrepreneurship

... attracts many young Europeans, and more and more of them are taking the plunge. The EU must make this exciting journey easier. This was also the EESC's objective at the A New Generation 4 a New Europe seminars held in February 2015. The idea was to bring together young people from all over Europe so that they could share their experiences of entrepreneurship and find out about the solutions that other people had found to the obstacles they encounter. At the 2015 seminar, many participants suggested novel financing options such as crowdfunding or the idea of a form of income support for entrepreneurs who are just starting out in order to ensure that they have a minimum income during their first months in business. Ideas to encourage the creativity of the younger generations to flourish.



“Europe is a wonderful playground for young people who want to be enterprising, and they have real potential. [...] It was about time that European decision-makers paid them the attention they deserve.

Patrik Kovács

*Founding President of the Young Entrepreneurs Association Hungary – FIVOSZ
at the EESC's A New Generation 4 a New Europe seminar – February 2015*

A civil society that stands by European values

Europeans, with their rich shared history, are proud of the values that unite them: respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality and respect for human rights, including those of minorities.

The last few years have certainly shown how fragile these values are, but also how attractive they are beyond the borders of the European Union. European values rang out on the Maidan in Kiev from the beginning of the conflict with Russia. The global rise of fundamentalism and the

advances made by populism are threats to living together in harmony. They provide occasionally violent reminders of how important it is never to retreat, give ground or show weakness when European values are attacked. This conviction guides the EESC's activities, and it has never shrunk from the need to express European civil society's disagreement when these important values are not respected somewhere in the world. Our Committee has managed to build bridges between civil societies in order to encourage peaceful ways to defuse conflict, and it has always done so by promoting dialogue.

” Europe means unity in diversity. We have to preserve our culture, what we are, what we think, what we love.



Costa Gravas
director, scriptwriter and defender of
cultural diversity in Europe
at the EESC plenary session – April 2014

We must remain focused on gender equality

... could be the motto of the EESC, which wants Europe to persevere in this area and to be an example. Thus the Committee was one of the first to act to preserve a proposal for a directive on maternity leave by the European Parliament, which the Commission wanted to withdraw. Protecting maternity rights is a prerequisite for women's participation in the labour market; it also makes equality between women and men a reality.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama
*during the EESC delegation's trip to
India – March 2014*

Roma: the 2014 Civil Society Prize

... brought the best European measures to help this minority to the fore. ETP Slovakia won the first prize for its Building Hope project: the organisation teaches Slovak Roma communities how to build their own houses. This shines a spotlight on the work of civil society to improve the living conditions and image of this community, which is all too often stigmatised. It also acts as a reminder that if Europe is a place of liberty and respect for others, this is partially thanks to the women and men who work every day to ensure it.



Man's goal is to be himself, and being himself means moving towards other people.



Martin Gray
*author and Holocaust survivor
during International Holocaust
Remembrance Day – January 2015*



EESC members
*with Ukrainians, Independence Square
 (the Maidan), Kiev, Ukraine – December 2013*

Ruslana Lyzhychko

*face of the civil protests in Independence Square (the Maidan)
launched the "Democracy for Ukraine"
platform – February 2014*



A platform for dialogue

... between civil societies is a project on which the EESC has been working in connection with the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, with a view to discussions on how to put certain European values into practice. Moreover, the Committee travelled to Kiev at a very early stage of the events in Ukraine in late 2013 in order to meet Ukrainian civil society, better understand its expectations and pledge that European civil society was standing shoulder to shoulder with its Ukrainian counterpart. European values build solid bridges – economic, social, educational... – between people, despite their differences.



**"Pussy Riot" – Russian activists,
Maria Alyokhina and Nadezhda
Tolokonnikova**

meeting EESC members – April 2014

A civil society that must be more closely

A stronger “citizen” pillar

... thanks to the historic agreement signed in 2014 between the EESC, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions by their three presidents: Henri Malosse, Martin Schulz and Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso. Given the need to listen more closely to Europeans’ views, as stipulated in the Treaty of Lisbon, the three institutions wished to cooperate more effectively and optimise their resources so as to allow the voice of Europeans and regions to be better heard. The main purpose of coming together like this is to make legislation more effective by linking it more closely to real-life situations on the ground.



Henri Malosse

President of the EESC

Martin Schulz

President of the European Parliament

Ramon Luis Valcárcel Siso

*President of the Committee of the Regions
2012-2014*



involved in European governance

European civil society wants to participate actively in the functioning of the European Union. European leaders heard this call and incorporated it into the Treaty of Lisbon, which is a step towards a more participatory form of democracy.

Europeans have thoroughly embraced this new opportunity to be heard and to act to change their world. The success of the European citizens' initiatives (ECI) has been confirmed, and the EESC ensured this success by consistently supporting the European citizens who get involved. It is now up to the European institutions to take up these ECIs in a way that befits a demand for change backed up by more than one million signatures from more than seven Member States. The European Economic and Social Committee, which was one of the first EU bodies, is ready to play an increasing role, alongside the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions, to ensure that European citizens are more broadly represented. This course will enable the European institutions to draw closer to the general public and will give the European Union all the legitimacy it needs to tackle the challenges of a changing world.

” Good cooperation between the European Parliament and the EESC benefits all Europeans, since we, the representatives of European citizens, are the European Union's eyes and ears...

Martin Schulz

*President of the European Parliament
at the EESC plenary session – December 2014*





” It is not true that Europeans dislike Europe. [Solving the EU crisis] means putting forward a project that is worth believing in, even for a sceptical public.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing
*former President
of the French Republic
at the EESC plenary
session – October 2014*

Convictions held, measures taken

... this is how the EESC became the biggest supporter of European citizens' initiatives, a new European tool for participatory democracy: the creation of an annual ECI day, the launch of an ECI guide, the development of strategies to support and network all these initiatives under its aegis. An integral role in the success of this tool, as was recognised by the European Parliament in its study "ECI - first lessons of implementation" conducted among ECI stakeholders.

Ending roaming charges, a victory for Europeans

... which started with a European citizens' initiative – One Single Tariff – led by two young French people. The EESC president was the first signatory, a strong gesture flagging up the grassroots expectation of more participatory democracy, even though many administrative barriers had been thrown up to make this tool ineffective. Civil society was able to make its voice heard!





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