



THE EESC FROM THE INSIDE OUT

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

2015



European Economic and Social Committee

FOREWORD

Dear readers,

It is my pleasure to present to you this brochure based on the Annual Activity Report 2015 of the European Economic and Social Committee, providing an overview of all activities carried out during the course of 2015 – a year of great change for the EESC.

We are thrilled to welcome Georges Dassis as the newly elected President of the Committee, along with a number of new section presidents and some 141 newly appointed Members. A great deal of work went into the preparation of this historically high renewal and we ensured a smooth transition between the end of the past mandate and the start of the new one.

The new organisational structure was put in place as of January 2015, ushering in a proactive approach to managing our resources and talent. A new helpdesk was created, providing a one-stop shop for all Members’ practical and administrative questions, and has proven to be a great success. Other developments include a new Policy Assessment unit, which was set up to integrate policy evaluation within the Committee and to give a stronger voice to civil society in the legislative process. More legislative planning was carried out and considerable efforts focused on strengthening the Committee's ability to draw up opinions on cross-cutting themes.

Above all, the EESC was a valuable player in helping the European Union to address some of the difficult challenges of 2015, including the refugee influx, climate change and terrorism. Such challenges required the mobilisation of all actors in the democratic debate, with greater coordination and solidarity at all levels; between institutions, organised civil society and citizens.

The EESC contributed to this by continuing to cooperate with a wide range of partners and stakeholders – from its own Members to various civil society organisations – in order to organise topical activities linked to the EU agenda. During the crucial period in the run-up to the COP21 Paris Climate Conference in December, for example, the EESC was active in presenting civil society’s views, and hosted a large number of events and hearings to foster dialogue. Additionally, the first *European Migration Forum*, jointly organised by the European Commission and the EESC, was held in January 2015 at the EESC.

The Committee was also instrumental in suggesting and implementing the European Year for Development (EYD2015), helping to strengthen contact with civil society in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. Specific activities throughout the year focused on financial instruments and the development framework following the Millennium Development Goals.

The EESC proved to be an active and committed partner of the other EU institutions in rebuilding bridges between citizens and the European project, as well as in translating EU policy objectives into specific measures that serve the general interest.

This brochure reflects our work and resolve to bring about change. It is a summary of the measures and initiatives we have undertaken and the principles underpinning them, in line with the EESC’s mission.

Luis Planas

Secretary-General of the EESC

This brochure is based on the *Annual Activity Report 2015* issued in June 2016, which – according to the Financial Regulation (art. 142) – is the main annual tool used by the European Economic and Social Committee to report to the budgetary authority.

The full report can be viewed here: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.about-the-committee>

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INTRODUCING THE EESC





The EESC [...] contributes to strengthening the European Union's democratic legitimacy and effectiveness by enabling civil society organisations from the Member States to express their views at the European level.

WHAT IS THE EESC?

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is an advisory body of the European Union with its headquarters in Brussels. Since its establishment in 1957, the EESC has been a unique forum for consultation, dialogue and consensus among representatives of the various economic, social and civil components of organised civil society. The EESC has a distinctive place in the EU's decision-making process, as a **consultative body** delivering opinions both to the 'legislative' (the European Parliament and the Council), and 'executive' (the Commission) arms. The EESC ensures that civil society organisations have a say in Europe's development.

WHAT ARE THE EESC'S OBJECTIVES?

The EESC is committed to European integration. It contributes to strengthening the European Union's democratic legitimacy and effectiveness by enabling civil society organisations from the Member States to express their views at the European level.

The Committee fulfils **three key missions**:

- Helping to ensure that European policies and legislation tie in better with economic, social and civic realities, by assisting the European Parliament, Council and the European Commission, thanks to the experience and representativeness of its Members, and seeking consensus that serves the general interest of the EU;
- Promoting the development of a more participatory European Union which is closer to its citizens, by acting as organised civil society's institutional forum for representation, information, expression and dialogue;
- Promoting the values on which European integration is founded and advancing, both within the European Union and in the whole world, the role of civil society organisations and participatory democracy.

WHAT IS ORGANISED CIVIL SOCIETY?

Organised civil society describes a wide range of organisations, networks, associations, groups and movements which are independent from government and sometimes come together to take forward their common interests through **collective action**. These groups often act as intermediaries between decision-makers and citizens, and enable people to become actively engaged in efforts to meet citizens' wishes and concerns.

HOW IS CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTED?

The EESC is made up of **350¹ Members** from all **28 Member States**. These Members are not politicians but employers, trade unionists and representatives of groups, such as professional and community associations, farmers, youth organisations, women's groups, consumers, environmental campaigners and many more. They come from all social and professional backgrounds and have a vast range of knowledge and experience. They are not based full-time in Brussels but rather have their own jobs in their home countries, ensuring that they maintain direct contact with their grassroots. Nominated by their governments, they are appointed by the Council for a period of five years. They work independently in the general interest of the European Union and its citizens. Debating issues involving and affecting civil society and adopting opinions, the Committee Members play an integral part in the process of policy formation and the preparation of decisions at EU level.

NATIONAL ALLOCATION OF SEATS

Members are nominated by national governments and appointed by the Council of the European Union for a renewable five-year term-of-office. The current term-of-office runs until 2020. The national allocation of seats is as follows:

MEMBERS PER COUNTRY

24

Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom

21

Spain and Poland

15

Romania

12

Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal and Sweden

9

Croatia, Denmark, Ireland, Finland, Lithuania and Slovakia

7

Latvia and Slovenia

6

Estonia

5

Cyprus, Luxembourg and Malta

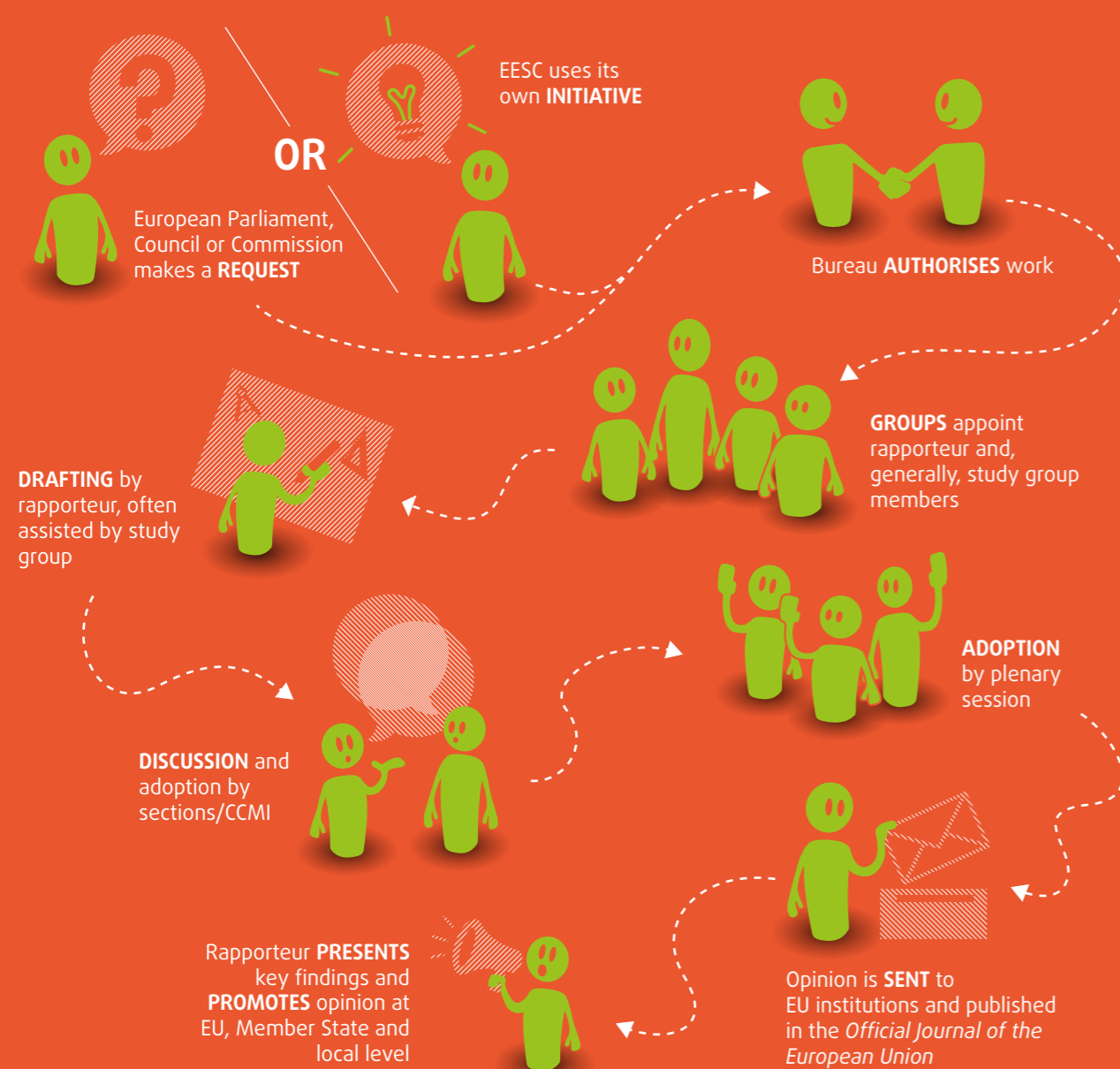
¹ With the renewal of the EESC mandate as of October 2015, the number of Members has been reduced from 353 to 350, as required by the Treaty on the European Union.

WHAT ARE OPINIONS?

The European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission are obliged, by virtue of the European treaties, to consult the EESC on a wide range of policy issues when passing new laws. Also, the three institutions may consult the Committee in all cases where they consider it appropriate. The EESC examines proposals, draws up and adopts **opinions** based on a consensus reached between its Members. After they are adopted in plenary session, the opinions are sent to the European institutions and published in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

In addition, the EESC can also adopt **own-initiative opinions** on any question pertaining to the European Union, its policies and how these might evolve. It also produces **exploratory opinions**, as requested by EU institutions, in spheres where they think it has the appropriate skills and expertise and which are of concern to citizens. The EESC may also publish **information reports** examining any aspect relevant to EU policies.

THE LIFE CYCLE OF AN OPINION



In 2015, the EESC adopted a total of **117** opinions, including 12 exploratory ones.
All were published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* in the **24** official languages of the Union.

HOW IS THE EESC ORGANISED?

EESC Members work in three groups: **Employers Group** (Group I), **Workers Group** (Group II) and **Various Interests Group** (Group III). The aim is to build consensus between all three so that EESC opinions reflect the economic and social interests of citizens. Jacek Krawczyk from Poland is President of the Employers' Group; Gabriele Bischoff from Germany is President of the Workers' Group; while Luca Jahier from Italy is the President of the Various Interests Group.

The EESC has **6 sections**, covering different aspects of the EU's work, ranging from the economy to social affairs. Members participate in one or more of these sections depending on their areas of expertise, and it is here that much of the preparatory work on opinions is carried out. The EESC also has a **Consultative Commission on Industrial Change** (CCMI), which helps EU industry anticipate and adapt to the impact of globalisation. The EESC has also set up three specialist **observatories** – on the single market, the labour market and sustainable development – plus a **steering committee** for the EU's 2020 Strategy for Growth and Jobs. A Policy Assessment unit was established in 2015 to introduce the systematic practice of policy analysis and evaluation in the EESC's legislative works.

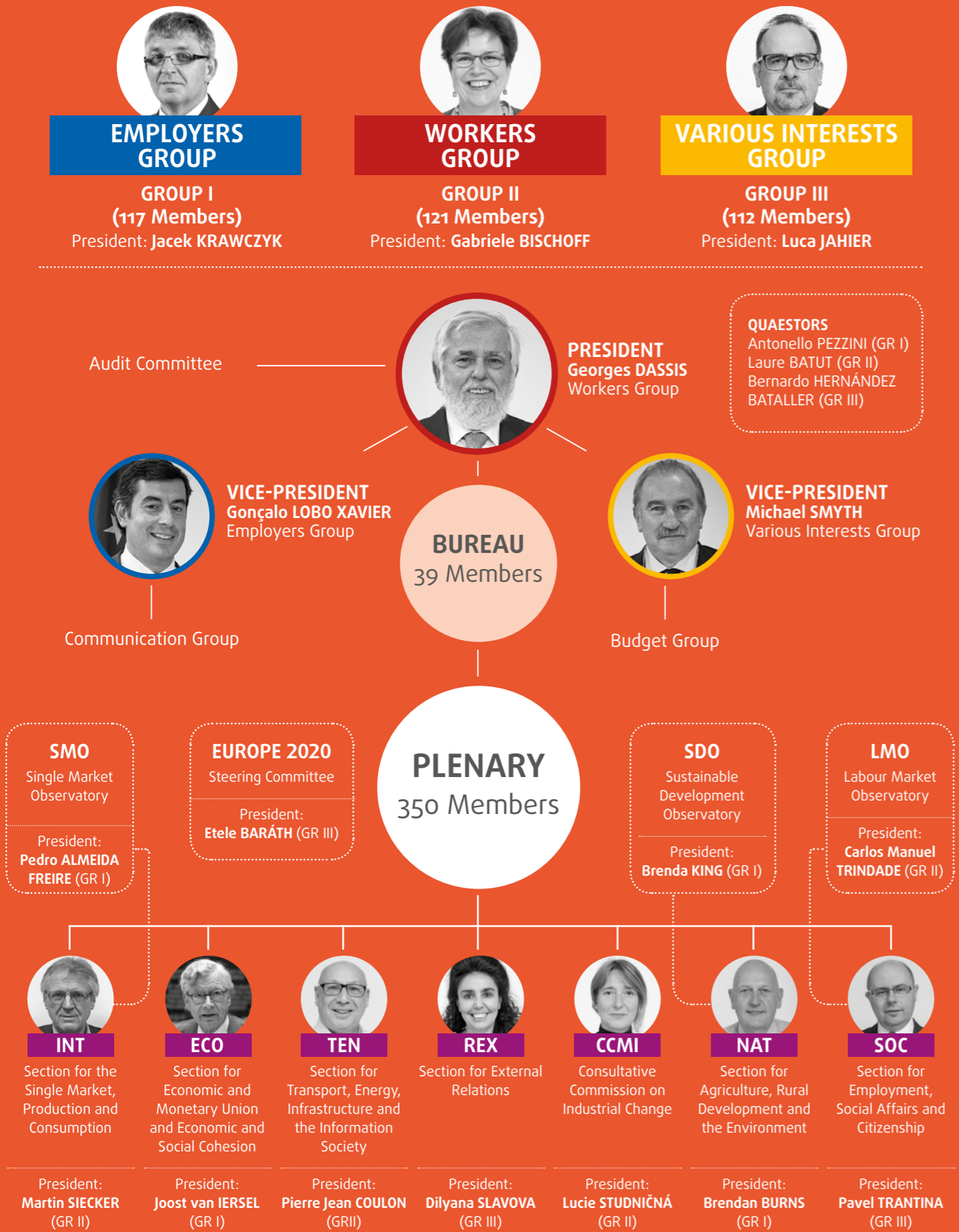
EESC section and other bodies' Presidents

- Joost van Iersel, Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion (ECO)
- Martin Siecker, Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption (INT)
- Brendan Burns, Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment (NAT)
- Dilyana Slavova, Section for External Relations (REX)
- Pavel Trantina, Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC)
- Pierre Jean Coulon, Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society (TEN)
- Lucie Studničná, Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI)
- Etele Baráth, Europe 2020 Steering Committee
- Pedro Almeida Freire, Single Market Observatory (SMO)
- Brenda King, Sustainable Development Observatory (SDO)
- Carlos Manuel Trindade, Labour Market Observatory (LMO)

Every two-and-a-half years, the EESC elects a Bureau made up of 39 Members, including a president and two vice-presidents, from each of the three groups, in rotation. The last renewal took place in October 2015. The President is **Georges Dassis** (Workers Group) from Greece. He is responsible for the orderly conduct of the Committee's business and represents the EESC in relations with other institutions and bodies. The two Vice-Presidents – currently **Gonçalo Lobo Xavier** (Employers Group) from Portugal and **Michael Smyth** (Various Interests Group) from the UK – are responsible for communication and the budget, respectively. The Bureau's main task is to organise and coordinate the work of the EESC's various bodies and to lay down policy guidelines for this work.

The Committee has a secretariat, headed by a Secretary-General who reports to the President, representing the Bureau. Some **700 staff** members work at the EESC, assisting Members in carrying out their duties.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE
POLITICAL BODIES 2015-2018



The EESC ensures that European policies and legislation tie in better with economic, social and civic realities by assisting the European Parliament, the Council and European Commission, making use of EESC Members' experience and representativeness, promoting dialogue and efforts to secure consensus which serves the EU's general interest.

**AN IMPORTANT
ROLE IN
EU DECISION-
MAKING**

19

opinions adopted on referral from
the European Parliament (EP)

159

meetings held with
EP representatives

COOPERATION WITH THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

A total of **19 opinions** were adopted on referral from the European Parliament. Members and staff actively participated in 112 EP Committee, Group, Inter-Group and individual meetings, with 35 meetings taking place between EESC/EP rapporteurs and Section-CCMI/EP Committee chairs.

In total, some **159 meetings** were held with representatives of the European Parliament.

OPINIONS AND REPORTS

2015 >	86	19	12	=	117
2014 >	88	61	10	=	159
2013 >	103	84	13	=	200
2012 >	105	122	12	=	239

- Opinions and Reports
- EP referrals
- Exploratory opinions
- TOTAL

COOPERATION WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The **Latvian and Luxembourg EU Presidencies** formally requested **7 exploratory opinions**, which were all adopted. These were on the following topics:

- Building a financial ecosystem for social enterprises
- Implications of climate and energy policy for the agricultural and forestry sectors
- Long-term social care and deinstitutionalisation
- Internal market of international road freight: social dumping and cabotage
- Civil society contribution to the review of the EU-Central Asia Strategy
- The effects of digitalisation on the services sector and employment in relation to industrial change
- Progress made on implementing the Europe 2020 Strategy and how to achieve its targets by 2020

An extraordinary Bureau meeting was held in Luxembourg in November 2015. The EESC's President, Section Presidents, the President of the Europe 2020 Steering Committee and various rapporteurs attended a total of **8 EU ministerial meetings** covering:

- Nordic-Baltic EU coordination
- Social dialogue
- Cohesion policy (both Latvian and Luxembourg presidencies)
- Eastern Partnership
- Union for the Mediterranean
- WTO Ministerial Conference

The EESC President, the ECO Section President and rapporteurs also held a series of bilateral meetings on deepening EMU with Eurogroup President Jeroen Dijsselbloem and high-level Member State representatives.

EESC section and group Presidents and rapporteurs actively participated in a variety of **EU presidency conferences** covering topics such as:

- Boosting social enterprises in Europe
- International environment issues
- Social dialogue
- Deinstitutionalisation practices and further development of social care policy in Europe
- The URBACT City Festival
- Cross-Border polycentric regions
- European Year for Development
- Eastern Partnership media
- Eastern Partnership civil society
- Digital economy and new jobs

CONFERENCES, HEARINGS AND OTHER MEETINGS

2015 >	67	82	8	=	474
2014 >	99	61	14	=	648
2013 >	73	105	12	=	604
2012 >	65	123	9	=	525

- Hearings (co)organised by the Directions of Legislative Work (DCW)
- Conferences (co)organised by the Directions of Legislative Work (DCW)
- Participation in formal/informal EU ministerial meetings
- Participation in high-level national, EU and international meetings, summits and conferences

Ministers, ambassadors and representatives of the EU presidencies, Council and Member State governments attended a variety of **EESC-organised conferences, debates and events** on topics such as:

- Europe 2020 Strategy
- Social entrepreneurship
- Civil Society Day
- European Consumer Day
- The European Citizens' Initiative Day
- Planned obsolescence
- Basic European rights to free movement under threat
- The future of the European social dialogue
- Green infrastructure
- Sustainable Development Goals
- Strategic implementation plan of the European Innovation Partnership on raw materials
- Road transport
- EU cohesion policy
- The Future of the EU Urban Agenda
- TTIP
- EU-Africa Network of Economic and Social Actors
- Services of general interest

COOPERATION WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The EESC adopted **4 exploratory opinions** in 2015 that were specifically requested by the European Commission. These were on the following topics:

- Simplification of the CAP
- Integrated EU aviation policy
- Women and transport
- Role of civil society in EU-Albania relations

The EESC President presented the Committee's contribution to the 2016 Commission work programme during a bilateral meeting with the Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans on 20 October 2015, underscoring in particular the importance of reinforcing the European social model and establishing a new migration policy.

In July 2015, a high-level event was organised by the Committee on Integrated EU Aviation Policy, bringing together key institutions and organisations that can help EU aviation increase competitiveness and create economic growth. Violeta Bulc, EU commissioner for transport, presented the preliminary conclusions from the public consultation on the Aviation Package.

A major high-level conference called "TTIP – What's in it for the social partners?" was co-organised by the EESC, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Luxembourgish presidency.

IMPACT STUDIES

Taking into account the new European institutional landscape and the Commission's new way of law-making with a decreasing number of initiatives, a more strategic approach to programming was further developed in 2015. A new **Policy Assessment** unit was set up in order to develop policy evaluation within the Committee and to give a stronger voice to civil society in the legislative process.

72 high-level meetings held with Commissioners, Directors-General and Directors

82 EESC delegations attended high-level conferences organised by the Commission

PROJECTS

Launched in 2013, the Committee's project-based approach aims to transform certain recommendations – expressed through opinions – into **concrete action**, and involves the use of external partners and the combination of several instruments to achieve practical results.

In its More Europe Locally (MEL) project, initially launched in 2014 as a follow-up to its own-initiative opinion "Towards a more balanced territorial development", the EESC calls for more balanced development so that all parts of the EU can contribute to the objective of territorial cohesion enshrined in the EU treaties. The EESC organised a conference to discuss the final conclusions of the project on 9 September 2015. It was concluded that the focus of political action to make rural areas more attractive and reduce territorial imbalances must be on jobs, infrastructure and services, supported by rural development policies at all levels.

On 3 February 2015, the EESC held the concluding event of its project on "Better inclusion of the Roma community through civil society initiatives". The conference presented the project's final report and sought to promote good practices identified in the Member States visited: Finland, Romania, Spain and Bulgaria.

In 2015, three new projects were launched:

- Smart Cities
- Smart Islands
- The implementation of the European industry and monetary policy: the role of the European Investment Bank

A VOICE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

The EESC promotes the development of a more participatory European Union, which is more in touch with citizens' concerns and expectations, by acting as an institutional forum representing, informing, and expressing the views of and securing dialogue with organised civil society.

CIVIL SOCIETY DAY 2015

The Civil Society Day is an annual initiative organised by the EESC and its special Liaison Group with European civil society organisations and networks. The purpose of the Day is to enhance political dialogue between the Committee and European civil society organisations, and to establish genuine **structured civil dialogue** with the European institutions. The theme of the Civil Society Day held on 16 June 2015 was “Civil dialogue: a tool for better legislation in the general interest”.

MY EUROPE ... TOMORROW!

The pilot project “My Europe ... Tomorrow!” (MET) was wrapped up during a summary event held on 30 April 2015 at the EESC with the participation of EESC Members, MET partner organisations and the EESC administration. Launched in 2014, this online tool successfully encouraged structured dialogue on European issues with members of the public through civil society organisations and demonstrated the potential of an **interactive online platform** as a tool for enhancing public engagement.



[...] the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is the most important instrument for direct democracy at the European level.

EUROPEAN CITIZENS INITIATIVE DAY 2015: REVIEW, RENEW, RESET!

Introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is the most important instrument for **direct democracy** at the European level. As an advocate of inclusivity, the right to participate and the voice of civil society, the EESC has supported the idea of citizens' initiatives from the outset. The EESC organised an ECI Day on 13 April 2015, which enabled initiative organisers to share their experiences, assess strengths and weaknesses and express their needs and concerns. The 2015 ECI Day focused on the conclusions of the European Commission's assessment report on the first three years of the ECI and the European Ombudsman's feedback on how effective the ECI procedure is. The information gathered will help prepare the groundwork for ECIs in the future.

CONFERENCES AND DEBATES

The EESC has been instrumental in organising numerous high-level conferences designed to promote a more participatory EU that is in touch with public opinion.

Climate change

Throughout 2015, and especially during the crucial period in the run-up to the COP21 conference in Paris, the EESC was very active in highlighting European civil society's views on climate. The EESC hosted and (co-)organised a large number of events and hearings. The conference entitled “Will the Climate Conference keep its promises?” and directly linked to the COP21 conference took place in Paris on 23 October. Speakers included Minister Laurent Fabius, EESC President Georges Dassis, French CESE President Jean-Paul Delevoye, as well as a large number of stakeholders from both shores of the Mediterranean. The conference entitled “Civil society, cities and regions preparing for the COP21 and beyond”, co-organised with the Committee of Regions, was held in Brussels on 19 November 2015. It demonstrated that a large consensus between local authorities and civil society for climate action exists and a new alliance between these actors is needed to deliver **concrete climate action** and ensure civil society's involvement in implementing the Paris Agreement.

Migration

The first European Migration Forum, jointly organised with the European Commission, was held on 26-27 January 2015 at the EESC in Brussels. The main theme of the meeting was “Safe routes, safe futures: How to manage the mixed flows of migrants across the Mediterranean?” Underlining the **need for greater protection** of asylum seekers and refugees coming to the EU, the event, which brought together more than 200 participants, also discussed possible approaches to address people smuggling and human trafficking.

The EESC organised hearings on “The EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling (2015-2020)” on 12 October 2015, and on “Refugees' labour market integration: challenges and initiatives to maximise potential”, on 15 October 2015. Country visits were organised to assess how organisations and institutions assisting migrants and refugees can best be helped. A conference on “Integrating migrants into the labour market: a win-win situation for all” and a workshop entitled “Towards a revised Blue Card Directive: Results of the public consultation”, co-organised with the European Commission, helped to highlight labour market-related aspects of migration and inform the work of the EESC and the European Commission in this area.



Throughout 2015, and especially during the crucial period in the run-up to the COP21 conference in Paris, the EESC was very active in highlighting European civil society's views on climate.

Social entrepreneurship

In the framework of its activities on social entrepreneurship, the EESC organised, on 10 July 2015, an event called “Social entrepreneurship: a renewed commitment”, intended to summarise the activities led by the EESC working group and present the results. The event, in which Minister Nicolas Schmidt, representing the Luxembourg EU presidency, participated, was also an opportunity to renew the commitment made in the wake of the Strasbourg Declaration and to promote, at all applicable levels, the development of an **ecosystem more favourable** to social enterprises to fully exploit the potential of this sector.

European Consumer Day

Answering the question “Can responsible consumption become a reality or is it only a mirage?” the 17th European Consumer Day was held on 16 March 2015 at the EESC and focused on **new consumption trends**. Věra Jourová, European commissioner for justice, consumers and gender equality, Pascal Durand, member of the European Parliament’s IMCO committee and Zaiga Liepina, deputy state secretary at the Latvian Ministry for the Economy, took part in this event, which also involved a large number of participants from civil society.

Completing EMU

With a view to contributing to the interinstitutional debate on deepening EMU, the EESC drew up own-initiative opinions on “Completing EMU: the political pillar” and “The Community Method for a Democratic and Social EMU”. The ECO Section President and rapporteurs organised a number of important bilateral debates with political figures from the Member States and European institutions. Thematic debates with MEPs and representatives of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and academia were also organised. On 4 May 2015, a public hearing was held to explore the current proposals and alternatives to foster a **more democratic and social** EMU, bringing together relevant decision-makers, think tanks, European-level social partners and other civil society representatives.

Partnership for urban development – Future of the EU Urban Agenda

On 14 December 2015 the EESC organised a successful public hearing entitled “Partnership for urban development – Future of the EU Urban Agenda”, the conclusions of which fed into the opinion on the future of the EU Urban Agenda seen from the perspective of civil society. On the basis of this, the EESC is now working towards ensuring the **strong participation of civil society** organisations in EU decision-making on urban matters.

Europe 2020 – Paths for reinventing Europe’s future

On 6 July 2015 the EESC held a high-level conference, “Europe 2020 – paths for reinventing Europe’s future”. Based on a novel, interactive system intended to boost participants’ real-time involvement, the conference offered fresh views, backed up by **concrete proposals** regarding interdependent economic, environmental and social challenges, while addressing governance as a cross-cutting issue. New perspectives on social progress were put forward, aimed at boosting the performance and effectiveness of the EU’s strategic goals. Proposals for linking the Europe 2020 Strategy more closely with the European Semester, national policies and the Investment Plan were highlighted as well, and the conclusions of the conference were forwarded to relevant decision-makers in the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission.

Participative Dialogue on the Trans-European Transport Network

The EESC – in particular its Permanent Study Group on Transport – joined forces with the European Commission in order to start a participative dialogue on the Trans-European Transport Network. The first meeting took place in Malmö, Sweden in May 2015 and concerned the Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor. At the same time, the online platform “**Talking Transport**” was launched to support the engagement of civil society and ensure continuous dialogue.

Digital single market strategy

The EESC held a “Digital single market strategy: a new start” conference in Riga on 16 June 2015 in cooperation with the Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Two key political conclusions to emerge from the conference were that a balance must be found between the potential for **economic use** of data and guaranteeing **safety and privacy** for individuals, and that the better educated IT users are, the easier it will be for them to understand the opportunities and risks related to modern technology. Policy makers should therefore expand opportunities for people to increase their digital skills and develop lifelong learning, and better connect the education system with the economy.



Digital technology has the potential to increase wealth to unprecedented levels and can boost the quality of work and employment in Europe.

The impact of digitalisation on employment, industry, business and society

Digital technology has the potential to increase wealth to unprecedented levels and can **boost the quality of work and employment** in Europe. While EU measures enabling industry to take full advantage of the strategic opportunities of digitalisation should be prioritised, the role of the European institutions has yet to be clearly defined. In this framework – and in addition to drafting two opinions – the CCMI organised, on 25 March, a major conference entitled “The impact of digitalisation on businesses and society, a challenge for policy makers”, centred on the challenge faced by public authorities confronted by the impact of digitalisation on society.

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

Throughout 2015, the EESC organised several TTIP-related events with the aim of collecting information to draft related opinions and to stimulate informed debate on the main topics concerning the TTIP negotiations.

The major TTIP-related event was a conference co-organised with the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Luxembourg presidency of the Council entitled “TTIP – What’s in it for the social partners?” The event gathered more than 200 social partner representatives from the majority of the EU Member States to discuss the **challenges and opportunities** of the TTIP negotiations together with the Prime Minister of Luxembourg Xavier Bettel; President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz, EU commissioner for Trade, Cecilia Malmström, President of the EESC Georges Dassis; Luxembourg’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean Asselborn and the chair of the International Trade Committee of the European Parliament Bernd Lange. A number of other MEPs, EESC Members and civil society representatives also attended the event.

On 3 February 2015, the EESC organised a hearing on the EESC opinion on investor protection and investor to state dispute settlement (ISDS), a contentious proposal in the TTIP negotiations. On 29 May 2015, the Committee’s REX Section and the SMEs, Crafts and the Professions Category held a hearing entitled “Can the TTIP be a tool for fostering the internationalisation of European SMEs?” The main objective of this hearing was to make recommendations for the SME chapters in future EU trade agreements, including the TTIP.

In July 2015, together with the European Commission, the EESC organised an event on “Regulatory Cooperation in TTIP – Civil society stakeholders’ discussion with the EU Chief Negotiator”.

FOSTERING ORGANISED CIVIL SOCIETY BEYOND OUR BORDERS

In 2015, EESC Members were also influential players at numerous high-level national, EU and international meetings, helping to promote European values and share civil society concerns. The Committee actively expanded its contacts and consultation with civil society organisations in countries outside the European Union, through its well-established practice of involving civil society in the monitoring of different strands of the EU's external policies. **New platforms** were put in place for structured dialogue with African economic and social stakeholders, Russian NGOs, Ukrainian civil society, and Central American and Caribbean countries.

Key events included:

- Meeting of the EU-Africa network of economic and social stakeholders
- Regional seminar of EU-ACP economic and social actors in Central Africa
- First meeting on the EU-Ukraine civil society platform
- Euromed summit of economic and social councils and similar institutions
- EU-Turkey Civil Society Joint Consultative Committee
- EU-Montenegro Civil Society Joint Consultative Committee
- EU-Serbia Civil Society Joint Consultative Committee
- Western Balkans Civil Society Forum
- EEA Civil Society Joint Consultative Committee
- Civil Society Forum South
- Meeting of the Civil Society Domestic Advisory Group under the EU-Korea Free Trade Agreement
- Meetings of the Civil Society Domestic Advisory Group under the EU-Central America Association Agreement
- Meetings of the Civil Society Domestic Advisory Group under the EU-Colombia/Peru Free Trade Agreement
- Preparatory meeting of the Civil Society Platform under the EU-Moldova Association Agreement
- EU-Russia Civil Society Forum
- EU-Latin America and Caribbean Civil Society Meeting
- Meetings with Japanese Civil Society on the EU-Japan Free Trade Agreement

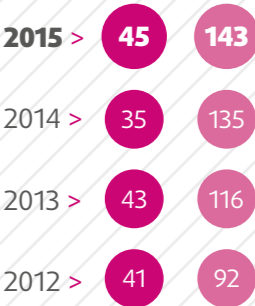
2015 European Year for Development

The **EESC** also played a **key role** in proposing and implementing the European Year for Development, maintaining regular contact with civil society in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. In addition to coming up with the concept, the Committee organised specific activities as part of the European Year for Development throughout 2015 and issued opinions on finance for development, on the development framework after the Millennium Development Goals and on the role of the private sector in development.

COOPERATION WITH NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCILS

Despite significant budgetary restrictions at national and EU level in 2015, the EESC managed to sustain a high level of activities involving National Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (ESCs). Cooperation with national ESCs covered uses related to **Europe 2020** and the **European Semester** – the EU's annual cycle of economic policy guidance and surveillance. In addition, the Committee was involved in a high number of conferences and joint activities in collaboration with several ESCs, on a bilateral basis or within the network of national ESCs of the EU, including support for the network's meeting of Presidents and Secretaries-general in Romania, which focused on the role and involvement of European ESCs in combating poverty and social exclusion in times of economic and political crisis.

EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS



- Events organised by the EESC
- Partnerships

THE EESC – A FACILITATOR AND ORGANISER OF
IMPORTANT HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS COVERING SUBJECTS
OF VITAL INTEREST AND VALUE TO A BETTER EUROPE



EESC Members, representing diverse policy areas within the EU, are offered a unique opportunity to air their views and shape the debate on future policy affecting all Europeans.

EESC: PROMOTER OF EUROPEAN VALUES

The EESC promotes the values on which European integration is founded, advancing in Europe and across the world the cause of democracy and participatory democracy, as well as the role of civil society organisations.

'GOING LOCAL' COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

'Going Local' communication is an outreach activity performed by EESC Members and designed to give civil society a greater understanding of the work of the EESC and its role in the EU decision-making process.



'Going Local' events are organised with civil society as part of the EESC's consultative works.

'GOING LOCAL, BEING LOCAL'

The EESC's 'Going Local, Being Local' initiative is about fostering closer ties between the Committee and grassroots organised civil society. The aim is to strengthen the Committee's responsiveness to the concerns of local economic and social interest groups. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, from Members speaking at local conferences and organising relevant meetings in Member States.

In 2015, there was a substantial increase in local activities – some **200 actions** involving around 100 Members, and around 40 more activities linked to *Your Europe, Your Say!* (see later). Local actions included, for the first time, a high number of activities linked to legislative works, such as the promotion of EESC opinions.

In December 2015 and January 2016, EESC delegations visited **11 EU Member States and Turkey** to meet civil society organisations working with migrants in order to identify the problems, needs, failures, success stories and best practices of the various actors in the current refugee crisis, with the ultimate aim of providing input into EU policy-making. In December 2015, EESC delegations visited Austria, Sweden, Greece and Hungary.

CIVIL SOCIETY PRIZE

The objective of the Civil Society Prize is to reward excellence in civil society initiatives. The 2015 edition of the prize aimed to reward initiatives that strive to improve **economic and social inclusion** among people living in poverty, or that tackle the increasing risk of poverty in Europe. A total of 106 applications were received, and winners were chosen from Germany, Finland, France, Ireland and Poland. The total value of the prize was increased from EUR 30 000 to EUR 50 000 in 2015, thus putting the EESC civil society prize at the same level as the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize.

“

In 2015, there was a substantial increase in local activities – some 200 actions involving around 100 Members, and around 40 more activities...

MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS

Some **78 press releases** were published and **3289 press cuttings** collected in 2015, an increase of around 246% compared to 2014. As of March 2015, the press office started to gather coverage via a specific **online monitoring tool** covering around 10 000 international, national and local sources from all EU Member States and selected third countries. 2015 was marked internally by the EESC renewal (40% new Members, new Presidency) and externally by many crises at EU and international level (migration, terrorist attacks, euro crisis). EESC press work has accompanied those trends, making the voice of civil society heard in such challenging times. Promoting the work of EESC Members, the press office also generated significant EESC media coverage on human trafficking, disability, poverty (Civil Society Prize) and victims' rights.

CIVIL SOCIETY MEDIA SEMINAR

In November 2015, the EESC organised a civil society media seminar in Luxembourg entitled "Communicating European Development Policy". The seminar not only looked at how the EU communicates on **development issues**, but also how people in partner organisations working on development use communication to achieve their goals. A survey revealed that 98.11% of participants were satisfied with the seminar, with particularly positive feedback on the speakers, the content and the organisation in general.



CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

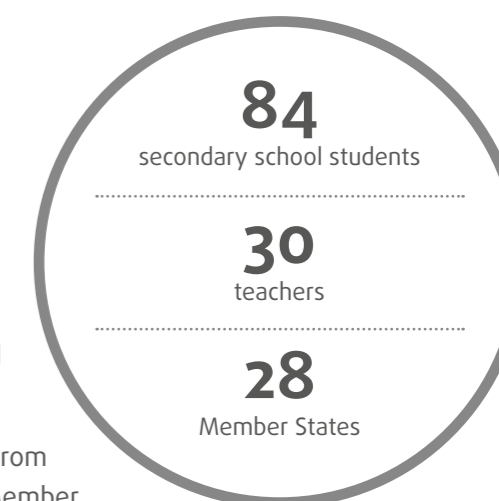
The use of social media was strengthened in 2015 with regular action relating to all important EESC events, the setting up of a consistent training policy and on-demand tailored coaching sessions for specific teams. Regular training sessions for Members also continued throughout the year. Social media was also used to promote no less than **142 events** throughout the year. All Twitter accounts taken together, both corporate and specific, had a total of **32 424 followers** at the end of 2015. The number of followers on the central Facebook account increased from 7770 to 10 836 in 2015.

Social media was also used to promote no less than 142 events throughout the year.

YOUR EUROPE, YOUR SAY!

"Your Europe, Your Say!" (YEYS), which has taken place in Brussels every year since 2010, mirrors the work done by EESC Members. Students, representatives of **Europe's youth**, come to the EESC's headquarters to debate, negotiate and reach consensus on topics of high priority to young people.

The 2015 edition of YEYS was held at the EESC's headquarters from 23 to 25 April. A total of 84 pupils and 30 teachers from 28 Member States (one school per Member State selected at random) took part in the event, the aim of which was to increase young people's awareness of the EU, enable them to discover the role and the work of the EESC and listen to new ideas for a more democratic Europe. The themes for 2015 were the European citizens' initiative and active citizenship.



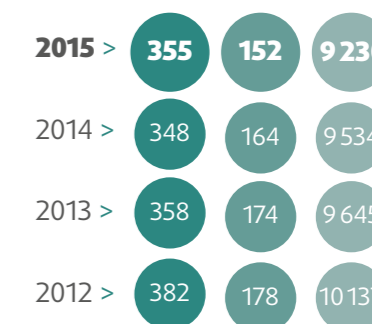
VISITING SCHOOLS

Some 36 EESC Members and 5 members of EESC staff visited a school in their country of origin for one day to engage in discussions with pupils on European integration and talk about their work for a European institution, either in the framework of YEYS or under the **"Back to school"** initiative.

HOSTING VISITORS IN BRUSSELS

The EESC received 355 visitor groups – more than **9200 visitors** – from all over the world in 2015. They were mostly made up of members of civil society organisations and students specialising in European affairs. In addition to this, the traditional **Open Day** took place on 9 May 2015, as part of the interinstitutional Open Day, attracting some 2400 visitors.

VISITORS AND MEMBERS' PRESENTATIONS



- Visitor groups
- Members' presentations
- Visitors

CULTURAL EVENTS AND COMPETITIONS

Several cultural events were linked to the Latvian EU presidency (photo exhibition “Birds’ Eye View of Latvia” and painting exhibition “True Colours”) and to the Luxembourg EU presidency (“Discover the unexpected Luxembourg”, a photo exhibition “Crossing points – Check points and related buildings at Luxembourg’s borders” and a concert by the group Dream Catcher). In addition to the events linked to the **EU presidency** countries and the **European Year for Development**, the EESC organised 12 cultural events in cooperation with various EESC services and/or relevant stakeholders.

EUROPE IN HARMONY

The video challenge evolved into a combined music and video competition in 2015 with contestants creatively interpreting Ode to Joy – either with original or adapted lyrics – together with a musical performance video conveying a European theme. The “Europe in Harmony” contest proved as popular as ever, with over **60 contributions** received and **10 500 people** participating in the public vote. The three winning teams came from Bulgaria, Germany and Spain.

MANAGING THE EESC

The EESC seeks to attract, train and retrain skilled staff, optimise its organisational structure and promote an environment which encourages work/life balance and is conducive to personal and professional development.

€129.1

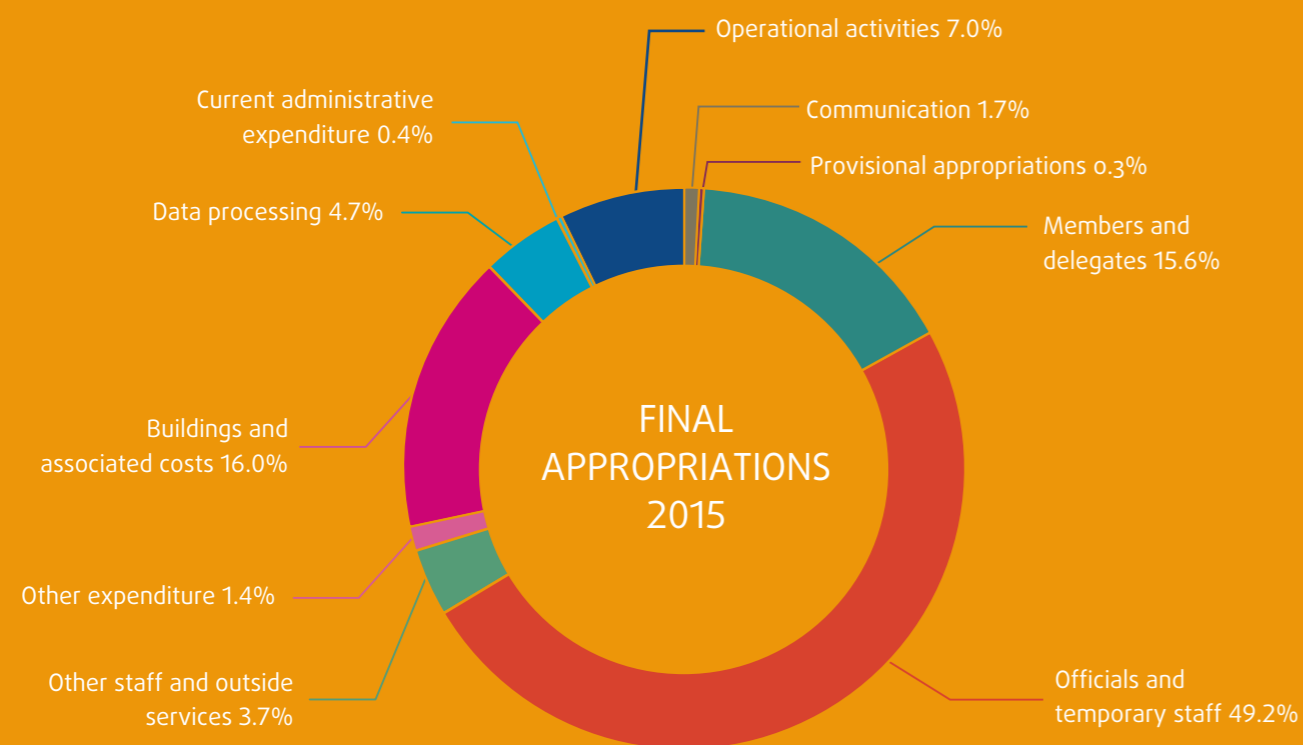
million total budget

0.39%

more than 2014

THE 2015 BUDGET

The EESC is fully aware that accurate, efficient and accountable use of EU resources is an important way to gain and/or reinforce the trust of European citizens. The EESC's 2015 budget totalled **EUR 129.1 million**. The EESC drafts its budget within the framework set by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission and strictly follows the Commission guidelines and indicators. The EESC has thus reduced and will continue to reduce its staff numbers by 1% per year over a period of five years and carry out other cost-saving measures contained in the reformed Staff Regulations.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR AT THE EESC

Renewal

2015 saw a **40% change** in EESC membership with 141 new Members appointed – historically a high renewal rate. A new helpdesk introduced during the year to act as a one-stop shop for all Members' practical and administrative questions proved to be a great success.

Interinstitutional perspective

The **cooperation agreement** with the **European Parliament** was further developed during the year with the transfer of staff and posts to the Parliament's newly created Directorate General for Parliamentary Research Services (DG EPRS).

The EESC and the **Committee of the Regions** signed a new cooperation agreement in July 2015 which established a firm legal framework for long-term, efficient and effective cooperation. Key benefits of the agreement include simplified governance structures, stronger commitment to the environment, better coordination of IT, maintenance and technical services, handling of security, budgets and shared services like translations. It also demonstrates that the two Committees are acting in partnership, respecting the powers and prerogatives of each entity.

Contacts were further developed with other EU institutions, mainly regarding implementation of the 2014 Staff Regulations, both at a formal (interinstitutional joint committees) and informal level (bilateral contacts and ad hoc working groups). The EESC also continued its close **cooperation** with **EPSO** (participation in selection boards, production of videos for EPSO) and held the presidency of the interinstitutional joint committee (COPARCO).

Other measures, including the conclusion of **service level agreements** (SLA) with the **European Commission** on certain administrative services and the Committee's participation in several tender procedures, demonstrate its strong working relationships with other EU institutions.

The EESC perspective

Providing the administration with the tools to face future challenges

A **new organisational structure** and implementing measures, such as flexibility and learning and development, were established to help the EESC’s general secretariat and administration provide better service to the institution and support for its Members. A **Members' Helpdesk** was set up to provide assistance to the Members on matters other than those related to the reimbursements, and a new electronic reimbursement request tool was introduced together with the launch of a **new Members Portal**. Several info sessions were also organised, during the Welcome Days held on 22 and 23 September 2015, to keep Members up to date on all of these new developments. Several activities were carried out using an approach based on continuous improvement and the need to adapt to budgetary constraints and staffing cuts.

Fostering a culture of mobility in the EESC

In April 2015, 11 heads of unit moved to new roles either within or outside their directorates. This first “big wave” of job changes between middle managers was followed by the entry into force of the new Mobility Decision, which introduces a framework for greater structural mobility.

Stronger human resources (HR) forward planning and career guidance

The HR Directorate has continued to develop a forward-looking approach to its activities, namely in the area of workforce planning and its contribution to organisational design.

Improved internal communication, social dialogue and relations with in-house partners

Communication was strengthened with different stakeholders by consolidating internal communication tools, developing new activities and through ongoing dialogue with staff representatives.

Public procurement assistance

A new service providing assistance for public procurement to financial actors in all of the EESC’s services was created in 2015 and has been operational since mid-2015.

Modernisation of IT Infrastructure

Many new developments rolled out in 2015, including a new version of the EESC Members Portal with responsive design was launched in time for the new mandate in October and the Document Search project was completed.

Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)

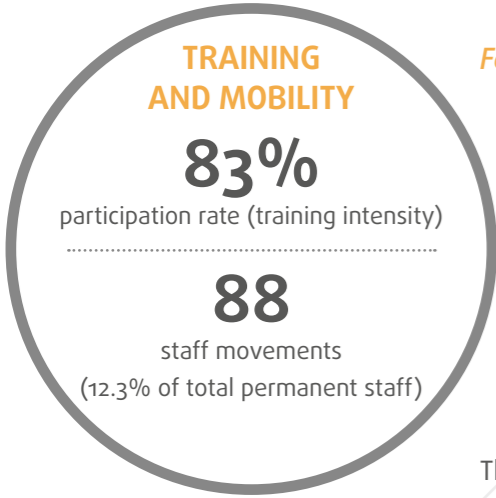
Like many private and public organisations, the EESC is working on reducing the carbon footprint and energy cost of its activities by continuously improving its environmental performance. These efforts over the last few years were acknowledged with the awarding of EMAS and ISO 14001 certifications.

Translation output

Translation demand depends on the level of legislative activity in the institutions as well as on the EESC’s own activities. There was a decrease in output in 2014, which was partly structural and partly cyclical. Output remained at this lower level during 2015, but with a notable increase in outsourcing (from less than 2% to almost 10%) following a reduction of translation staff and the cooperation agreement with the European Parliament. This was in line with the policy of resource efficient multilingualism.

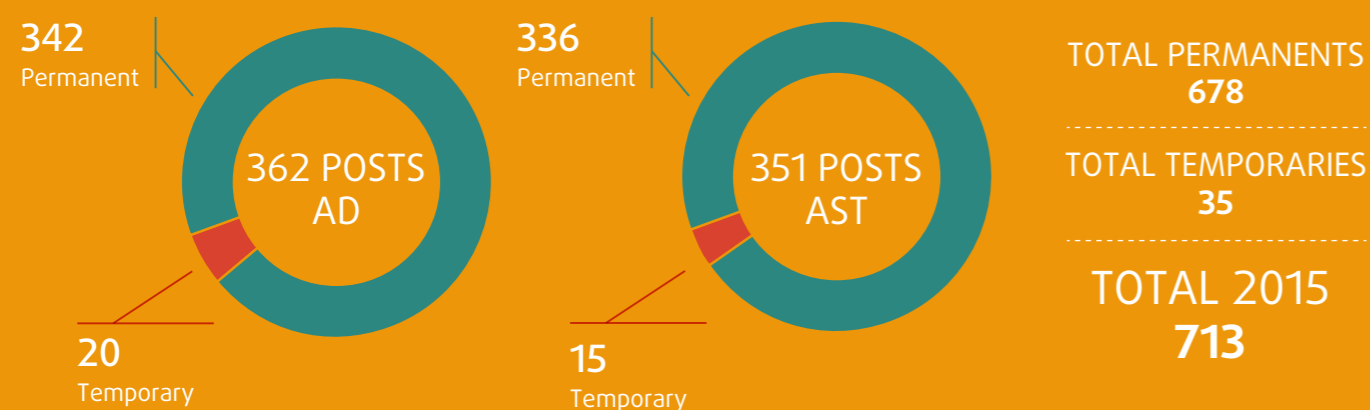
Legal service

In 2015, the Legal Service drafted 190 legal opinions.

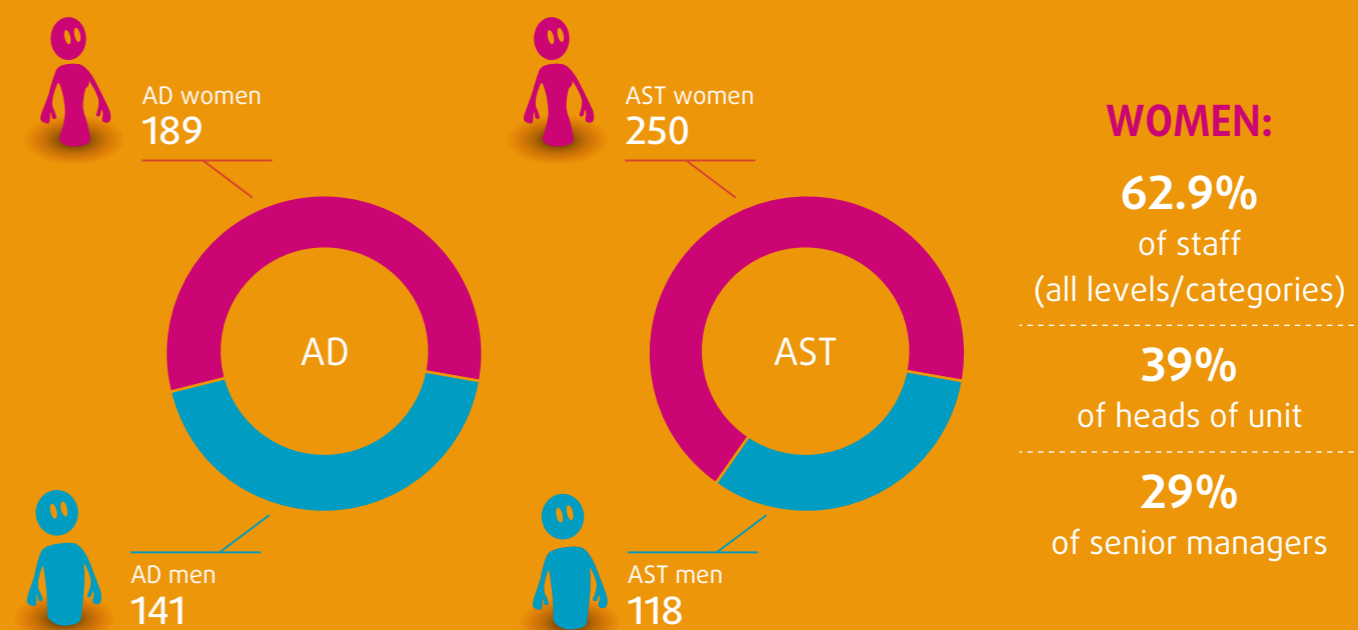


HUMAN RESOURCES KEY FACTS AND FIGURES FOR 2015

TABLE OF STAFF: POSTS MADE AVAILABLE BY THE BUDGETARY AUTHORITY
POSTS BY CATEGORY

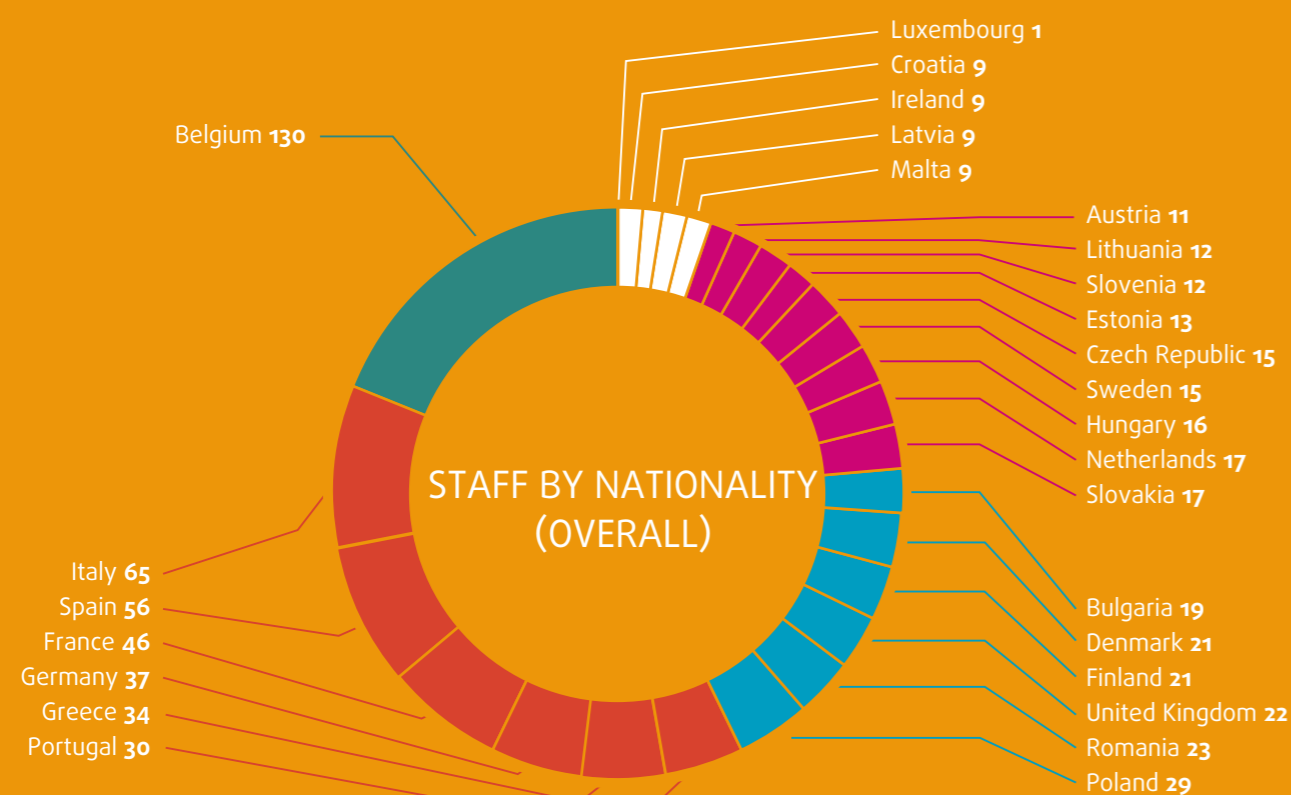


M/F DISTRIBUTION BY FUNCTION GROUP AD/AST

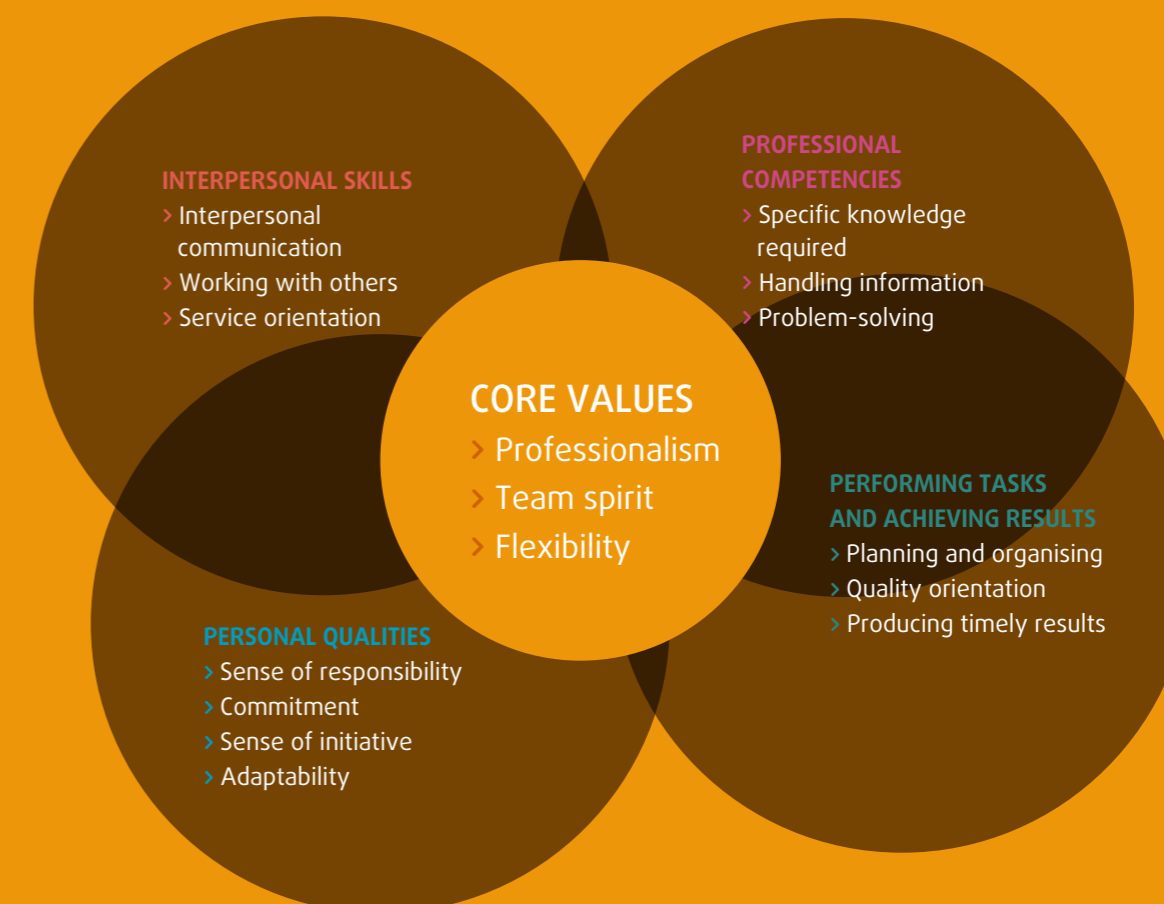


The EESC has an exemplary **gender balance** across a wide range of functions and middle-management posts and will continue its efforts to foster this balance also at senior management level.

STAFF BY NATIONALITY (OVERALL)



OUR COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK



The competency framework helps to map and promote best practices, quality and better talent management within the EESC. Training and mobility are also well supported in the EESC.

USEFUL LINKS

EESC Annual Activity Report 2015:

www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.about-the-committee

EESC website:

www.eesc.europa.eu

Facebook:

www.eesc.europa.eu/facebook

Twitter:

www.eesc.europa.eu/twitter

YouTube:

www.eesc.europa.eu/youtube

LinkedIn:

www.linkedin.com/company/european-economic-and-social-committee

EESC President's website:

www.eesc.europa.eu/president

EESC President on Twitter:

https://twitter.com/EESC_President

Working with young people:

www.eesc.europa.eu/youth

Your Europe, Your Say!:

www.eesc.europa.eu/YourEuropeYourSay

R EU Ready – the EESC game:

www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.r-eu-ready

Europe in Harmony:

www.eesc.europa.eu/video-challenge/2015/



www.eesc.europa.eu



www.eesc.europa.eu/facebook



www.eesc.europa.eu/twitter



www.eesc.europa.eu/youtube



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European Economic and Social Committee

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