

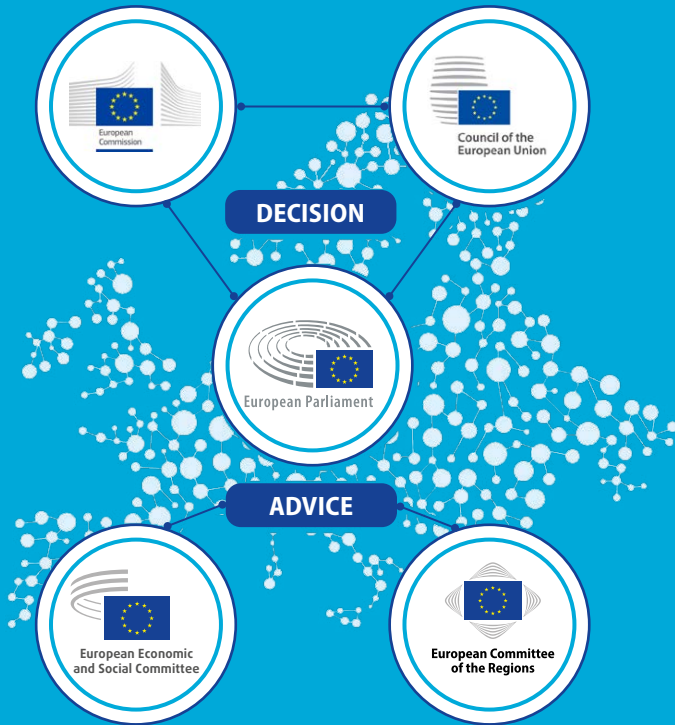


Discover what the **EESC** can do **for you**

2023 Edition



European Economic
and Social Committee



The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) represents the voice of civil society within the EU institutions and connects stakeholders with the EU.



Get to know the European Economic and Social Committee

The EESC is not like other EU bodies. It is a unique forum for consultation, dialogue and consensus between representatives from all the different sectors of "organised civil society".

These organisations often act as intermediaries between decision-makers and the public, offering an avenue for people to play an active role in bringing about change or to support specific causes for the common good.

The EESC is an integral part of the EU: it was set up in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome to advise EU decision-makers and ensure that civil society organisations and networks across the continent have a say in Europe's development.



The EESC's mission ...

The EESC's aim is to help ensure that **EU policy-making and legislation is more democratic** and more effective and genuinely **reflects the needs of EU citizens**.

It has three key tasks:

- to **advise the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission**;
- to make sure the **views of civil society organisations are heard** in Brussels and to increase their awareness of the **impact of EU legislation on the lives of EU citizens**;
- to support and strengthen organised civil society both inside and outside the EU.

... and vision

The EESC is dedicated to promoting participatory democracy, alongside parliamentary democracy, in Europe. The EESC's vision of society is one in which everyone is included and actively involved. This means citizens having a meaningful say in their own future and in the future of their children. It means young people believing they have the hope of a job and a decent life and it means people feeling empowered, engaged, equally respected and safe and secure in their daily lives.



The EESC's soul is its members

Based in Brussels, the EESC is made up of 329 members from all 27 EU Member States. The **members come from all social and professional backgrounds and have a vast range of knowledge and experience.** They represent **employers' associations, industry, chambers of commerce, associations of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), trade unions, consumers, farmers, disability campaigners, academia, women's rights groups, environmentalists, cooperatives, youth organisations, human rights organisations, etc.** In total, the EESC brings together around 250 organisations and networks at national level, representing millions of EU citizens.

EESC members are appointed by the Council for a term of five years on a proposal by Member States but they work independently for the EESC in the interests of all EU citizens.

Members are not based full-time in Brussels: most continue to do their own jobs in their home countries, ensuring that they maintain direct contact with their constituencies.

The EESC is made up of **three groups:** Employers' Group, Workers' Group and Civil Society Organisations' Group. The aim is to **build consensus** between these groups so that EESC opinions truly reflect the economic and social interests of EU citizens.

Employers' Group

Group I

Workers' Group

Group II

Civil Society Organisations'

Group

Group III

How the EESC works

The **European Parliament, Council and Commission** are **legally obliged to consult the EESC** when passing **new laws on a wide range of topics**. The EESC examines the proposals and draws up **opinions** based on agreement reached between its members.

In addition, the EESC adopts **own-initiative opinions** on topics members believe to be important in the interests of EU citizens. It also produces **exploratory opinions**, requested by EU law-makers when they want civil society's views on specific policies. The EESC also reflects the demands of civil society by publishing declarations, resolutions, information reports and impact assessments of EU legislation.

The EESC has **six sections** and one **consultative commission on industrial change**, plus several observatories and ad hoc groups. These bodies cover different EU policies, ranging from the economy to social affairs, from transport to the environment, from the internal market to external relations, from the rule of law to the European Semester. Members sit on one or more of these bodies, depending on their areas of expertise.

| ECO | INT | TEN | SOC | NAT | REX | CCMI |
|--|---|---|--|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion | Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption | Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society | Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship | Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment | Section for External Relations | Consultative Commission on Industrial Change |

The opinions are debated and adopted by simple majority at the EESC's **plenary sessions**, which take place **nine times a year** in Brussels. The opinions are then sent to the EU law-makers in the Parliament and in the Council and contribute to the law-making process by influencing their thinking.

Each year, the EESC organises over 1000 meetings, both in Brussels and "back home" in the EU Member States, and publishes some 150 opinions in 24 languages.

To find an opinion go to: www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions



Some success stories

The EESC ...

... empowers civil society on climate action

The EESC's recommendations were taken on board in the European Commission's Communication on the European Climate Pact, including the establishment of an EU Climate Finance Forum.

... has a say on the way EU money is spent

The EESC takes part in the expert group set up by the European Commission on sustainable finance.

... reduces waste

The European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, jointly set with the European Commission, links policy to practice on circular economy.

... claims for the right to vote for disabled people

800 000 EU citizens in 16 countries are denied the right to vote due to their disabilities. The EESC has launched a campaign to stop this discrimination.



... wants cleaner, greener batteries

Sustainable batteries depend on third country raw materials, alternative fuels, technological expertise and recycling capacity, including "urban mining". The EU Strategic Action Plan for Batteries has taken these recommendations on board.

... cares about migrants

The EESC and the European Commission organise jointly a European Migration Forum, in which policy makers and civil society monitor migration, asylum and integration issues.

... leaves no territory behind

The 2030 Territorial Agenda was delivered in 2020 with the contribution of the EESC: better links between urban and rural areas; decent living conditions for all; a healthy environment... No EU citizen should be left without access to public services simply because of the region they live in.

... provides a model for civil society supervision of international trade

The EESC participation model in policy making is now the standard in civil society advisory groups within international trade agreements.

... regrets Brexit, but keeps in touch with British civil society

Thanks to the EESC, the post-Brexit EU-UK agreement now includes a joint civil society advisory group, so that civil society monitoring of future relations is preserved.



Young Europeans

As part of this mission, the EESC wants to hear what young people have to say. Young people are not just Europe's future workforce, activists and politicians – they also have a lot of ideas that are valuable right now.

The EESC has made working with young people one of its top priorities.

Specific initiatives include:

- Issuing opinions that address the specific needs and aspirations of young people
- Organising events for young people, such as the annual *Your Europe, Your Say!* (YEYS) debate with school pupils from all EU Member States and from the candidate countries
- Facilitating regular visits by EESC members to schools and universities "back home" to explain how the EU works, and to listen to young people's concerns and expectations.

The challenges facing Europe and the EESC

The current EESC president, Oliver Röpke, was appointed on 26 April 2023 and his motto is

Stand up for democracy – Speak up for Europe



When we look around, we see that the fundamental values upon which the EU was built are under attack. Democracy, human rights, media freedom and the rule of law are more than fundamental values. They are our European way of life.

We must defend those values every day, and never take them for granted. Civil society has a crucial role to play here. Together, let us strive towards a more resilient, more inclusive and more democratic EU that will inspire our neighbours near and far.

Now is the time to stand up for democracy! Now is the time to speak up for Europeans!

Oliver Röpke, EESC President
Workers' Group, Austria



The challenges facing the European Union today, resulting from, among other things, the war waged on our borders, the climate crisis and the threats to democracy and fundamental civil rights observed in many countries cannot be effectively dealt with without listening to the voice of citizens. The EESC has repeatedly proven its ability to clearly communicate the views of European civil society to policy makers - both at EU and Member State level. And this is what the EESC will continue to do.

Krzysztof Pater, EESC Vice-President for Budget
Civil Society Organisations' Group, Poland



Our mission is to defend and promote the real interests of social partners and organised civil society at EU level and also at Member State level during this unprecedented sequence of geopolitical, economic, social and health crises. From this perspective, we are improving EU legislation and promoting new topics for the European institutions. In this context, proper and sound communication is part of today's and tomorrow's solutions.

Aurel Laurențiu Plosceanu, EESC Vice-President for Communication
Employers' Group, Romania



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1040 Bruxelles/Brussel
BELGIQUE/BELGIË

Published by: "Visits and Publications" Unit
EESC-2023-55-EN

www.eesc.europa.eu



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Publications Office
of the European Union



Print
QE-03-23-244-EN-C
ISBN 978-92-830-6174-8
doi:10.2864/91136

Online
QE-03-23-244-EN-N
ISBN 978-92-830-6191-5
doi:10.2864/97883

EN