

Studies carried out in **2019**

COMPENDIUM



European Economic
and Social Committee



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On the road to gender equality: Gender balance in the European Economic and Social Committee

This study looks at the state of gender balance in the European Economic and Social Committee, both at the political (members) and administrative (staff) level, and considers the main factors influencing the gender composition of the Committee. Through the systematisation of data on the gender of EESC members and personnel, and information gathered in interviews and a survey, the study provides new and updated quantitative and qualitative information. It finds that there is a persistent and systemic gender imbalance among the EESC members, with some variations across the national delegations and the EESC Groups, among others. It reveals that, as regards the nominations procedures for the EESC members, very few Member States and national organisations establish gender parity/balance requirements and appear to be committed to gender equality in practice. Overall, information and clarity about the national nomination and appointment processes for becoming an EESC member could be improved in some Member States. The study makes a number of key recommendations to the Member States, the nominating organisations and to the EESC itself which, if implemented, would set the Committee on the path to gender balance among its members and personnel.


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Requesting service: Group II – Workers' group
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The macroeconomic effects of common minimum standards in the field of unemployment schemes in EU Member States

This study examines the impact on the automatic stabilisation properties of national unemployment benefit systems of a European policy initiative that would introduce minimum standards to those systems. These minimum standards are a net replacement rate of at least 75%, a minimum duration period of 12 months and a coverage ratio of 50%. We conduct a number of simulations using the macroeconomic multi-country model NiGEM. We conclude that establishing these minimum standards, which would broadly mean national systems converging to the best performers on the three criteria, would strengthen the automatic stabilisers in Europe. Economic downturns and hikes in unemployment are cushioned somewhat. The effects we find are perceptible but not large. In part this is due to the fact that we cannot focus on the marginal propensity to consume out of additional income by unemployed households alone. Apart from its social-policy impacts, a strategy of raising minimum standards in national unemployment benefit schemes could make a contribution, along with other measures, to improving economic governance within Europe and especially the euro area.

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Pages: 48
Author: Watt, A.; Watzka, S.
Availability: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/publications-other-work/publications/macroeconomic-effects-common-minimum-standards-unemployment-benefit-schemes-eu-member-states>
Requesting service: Group II – Workers' group
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How the Digital Transformation can put humans in the centre of robotics and automation


Digital Transformation (DT) is changing the economy, remodelling the business activities, transforming the world of work and, more in general, affecting common daily activities such as communicating, shopping, researching. Despite the remarkable effort of the EU in encouraging the use of advanced technologies, EU businesses are not currently taking full advantage of them or of the innovative business models offered by the collaborative economy. To avoid missing out the growth of the DT potential, policy makers and business leaders must be prepared for it and devote more effort to build future societies permeated by a sustainable and inclusive DT.

The present study demonstrates that to achieve this goal organizations must embrace DT putting people at its centre, which also implies that the application of these technologies should not only be consistent with legal and regulatory prescriptions, but also be coherent to ethical principles and ensure that their implementations avoid unintended harm.

Champions of a positive DT implementation, able not only to replace humans in certain tasks but to empower them, have been searched and investigated. Despite the diversity of needs and objectives, all the successful cases shared clarity of objectives, codesign practices, wide and tailored communication to the workers, as well as extensive involvement of the management.

Finally, from the results of the field investigations, the study identifies a set of operational recommendations for both DT adopters and policy makers.


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Requesting service: Group I - The Employers' Group
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Climate Finance Forum - modalities and first tasks

The study provides a review of the issues facing non-state actors in accessing climate finance in the EU. Non-state actors, including local and regional authorities, businesses (including SMEs), trade unions, civil society and NGOs, face specific challenges when accessing climate finance. These can include the absence of enabling regulatory and policy frameworks, information barriers, internal capacity constraints and a group of challenges related to restricted availability of climate finance. While finance is available from EU and international institutions, as well as through private sources, such as institutional investors, gaps remain. A Climate Finance Forum would provide a platform for non-state actors and investors to work together to develop solutions for meeting these gaps and overcoming barriers.

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Towards an EU Charter of the Fundamental Rights of Nature

This study aims to set a framework for the legal recognition of the Rights of Nature in the EU legal order, as a prerequisite for a different and improved relationship between human beings and Nature. This aim should be possibly accomplished through the development of a EU Charter on Fundamental Rights of Nature.

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Author: Carducci, M.; Bagni, S.; Lorubbio, V.; Musarò, E.; Montini, M.; Barreca, A.; Di Francesco Maesa, C.; Ito, M.; Spinks, L.; Powlesland, P.
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Requesting service: Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment
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Recycling food packaging & food waste in plastics revolution

The use of single-use plastics in packaging has grown significantly in the last decades, and with it, the pollution of our environment. There is an urgent need to improve the sustainability of our food systems, which includes also the development of more sustainable food packaging. The objective of this study is to identify and examine successful examples and approaches to food packaging in the EU and beyond, considering consumer safety, environmental, economic, social, legal and food waste reduction considerations.

The analysis is based on the principles of a circular economy (reduce-reuse-recycle) and its scope is limited to business-to-consumer operations. Through a careful examination of legislative and sectoral trends at the European and national levels, an extensive literature review and interviews conducted with experts, 19 successful examples of sustainable food packaging have been identified and divided into 5 categories: Prevention/reduction of (over)packaging, Reuse, Recycled Content, Alternative Materials and Active/Intelligent Packaging. Furthermore, the analysis has resulted in the identification of several recommendations for the various actors to foster more sustainable food packaging.


Overall, the priority should be given to measures and actions reducing (over)packaging and packaging waste, further supporting reusable packaging by setting binding reuse targets at EU level and other economic instruments and promoting the uptake of recycled, renewable and innovative materials that achieve genuine environmental benefits and avoid burden shifts.

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An EU legal framework on safeguarding and strengthening workers' information, consultation and participation

This study provides an overview of the current state of workers' information, consultation and (board-level) participation in the European Union which are a key element of the Social Model as enshrined in the EU Treaties and a comprehensive body of secondary law. Besides analysing the current state of play regarding legislation and practice of workers information, consultation and participation, the report includes case studies on those countries that hold the Council Presidencies between 2020 and 2022 (Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Portugal, Slovenia). Both from the top-down as well as bottom-up perspective, the current state of workers' voice and involvement in corporate decision-making is far from fit-for-purpose as regards core functions and tasks and recent EU company law reforms are likely to worsen the situation even further. Therefore, the legal framework is insufficient in relation to mastering the challenges that are related to the digital and green transition processes and the change towards more sustainable and resilient economies, labour markets and societies. Based on research evidence as well as concrete cases that illustrate the added value of democracy at work for workers and the business, the study presents concrete proposals and recommendations for a strengthened EU legal framework.


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Finding a new consensus on European civil society values and their evaluation

Do civil society organisations in France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Hungary, and Poland share a common understanding of the values of democracy, the rule of law, and solidarity? This research shows that CSOs tend to converge in their definitions of these values, even if they display more diverse interpretations of solidarity than of democracy and the rule of law. It also reveals that CSOs recognise the crucial role that the civil sector plays in promoting these values. Yet CSOs face diverse challenges in doing so, relating especially to restricted access to funding, technological and generational change, and above all unfavourable political environments. Government and civil society itself are becoming more confrontational, more political and less open to compromise in all countries studied, with CSOs in the South and East describing their situation, perception of values and future outlook less positively than CSOs in the West. The future will require cooperation and innovation from both civil society and governments at all levels if CSOs are to be able to continue defending our Union of values. This paper presents proposals and recommendations from CSOs themselves and from the research team.

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