

National heat, **EU**ropean beat

6 March | 14:30 - 16:00



Organised by: UEF, ALDA & EESC Ad-hoc-Group on FRRL

Report (2 pages max!)

The joint workshop of UEF, ALDA and JEF took place on the 6th of March within the framework of the Civil Society Week organised by the European Economic and Social Committee. The workshop was divided in two parts: first an interactive exercise together with the audience and then a panel debate followed by a Q&A.

The first part of the workshop involved people highlighting through keywords what they find most relevant withing four thematic clusters.

The first topic was climate change, where the focus was on green mobility and institutional commitment to adequate reforms.

The second topic was education and health, where participants highlighted the importance of inclusion and access to educational opportunities as well as the key role played by non-formal education.

The third topic was migration, where they keywords were centred around inclusive policies and an increase in solidarity.

Finally, for the last topic (Democracy and EU Institutions), the participants underlined the importance of involving civil society and improving institutional procedures for the sake of effectiveness.

For the second part of the workshop, the introductory remarks were conducted by JEF Vice-President Xesc Mainzer, where he highlighted that European democracy is currently facing a cycle of distrust and that the European Elections represent an opportunity for renewal. Moreover, he

presented the EurHope campaign, a Europe-wide consultation which identified 15 priority areas relevant for young citizens, leading to the creation of the Agenda of Hope. One of the clear conclusions of the consultations is that citizens' concerns can only be addressed through treaty change.

The panel debate speakers included Christian Moos (Diversity Europe Group Divisional Director for European and International Affairs at the EESC), Frank Van Bockstal (Deputy Mayor of Etterbeek, in charge of European Affairs), Alejandro Peinado (UEF Board Member, Secretary General of UEF Spain) and Dafne Sgarra (Thematic hub coordinator for Youth Empowerment and Education, ALDA).

From a European perspective, Christian Moss highlighted that the EESC is a good forum for structured dialogue with CSOs. However, civil society should be involved through their expertise not only as consulting entities. Moreover, all levels should work towards the defence of democracy and more resilience is needed, not only from civic spaces but also from the political arena.

Fran Van Bockstal shone light on a local perspective, emphasising that the more responsibility you give people in terms of political matters, the more involved they are. One of the challenges of municipalities, in particular those with a mobile population that changes every few years, is maintaining a continued line of action long-term. Thus, effective communication is essential in connecting and empathising with citizens to motivate them to stay engaged.

In terms of the EU's ability to tackle current challenges, Alejandro Peinado stated that institutional reform is the key to equipping Europe with the tools it needs for this. The current Treaties are no longer entirely viable, given the current global context and issues Europe is called to manage.

Dafne Sgarra shifted the focus to youth, stating that they are the most resourceful community. Despite this, marginalisation and social barriers are current issues that they need to overcome. CSOs play a significant role in listening to people's needs and helping develop networks and policies which can bring their voices forward.

The panel debate was followed by an open discussion and Q&A with the participants, delving deeper into issues of reform and localising global problems through personal experiences.