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**REVISED 2024 TEN SECTION WORK PROGRAMME**

In 2024, the TEN section will continue to contribute to the development of European policies on the basis of its expertise and with a view to contributing to the new mandate of the European Parliament and the European Commission.

The TEN Section will draw up its recommendations and disseminate them at various events, also taking into account some of the objectives of the EESC President's priorities, with a particular focus on young people and disinformation. The promotion of opinions among the EU institutions and civil society stakeholders will remain a priority of the TEN section in view of optimising the overall outreach and impact of the EESC in the policies under the TEN remit.

# **ENERGY**

## ***Energy grids***

At the beginning of the year, the EESC will adopt an exploratory opinion, requested by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, on cross-border energy infrastructure planning. This opinion will feed into the work of the Belgian Presidency in the first semester of 2024, mirroring the work of the Commission with the publication of the Action Plan to facilitate the roll-out of electricity grids in November 2023.

## ***Wind power***

Moreover, following the renovated EU Green Deal ambitions in the renewable energy sector, the European Commission published in October 2023 a European Wind Power Action Plan, paired with a Communication on delivering on the EU's offshore energy ambition. This Wind Power Package was designed to support the EU wind industry competitiveness through an acceleration of the permitting process, improved auction design and better access to finance. Following up on this, the TEN Section members will be drafting an opinion that will be adopted in March 2024, and build on an experts exchange during the January 2024 Section meeting.

## ***The electricity market***

To build on the work done in 2023, the TEN section will pursue activities regarding the redesign of the electricity market, started in 2023. Fostering energy affordability, at a fair price, to consumers, both companies and households, protecting vulnerable households are a constant priority topic in the TEN section work programme.

## ***Energy affordability***

Rising inflation due to international crises and supply shortages has put even more households and people at risk of energy poverty. The TEN section will organise a **fourth edition of its conference on energy affordability** in June 2024 under the Belgian presidency. The conference will focus on how to promote a just and effective green transition that leaves no one behind.

## ***Labour skills for the green transition***

Particular attention will be given to the workforce and educational gaps identified during the #ReskillEU conference held at the end of 2023, which shed a light on the need for skills development to make the EU's green and digital transitions successful.

## ***Nuclear energy and nuclear-related matters***

The TEN section will scrutinise the application of a specific nuclear-energy matter in the medical field. The TEN section's own-initiative opinion on *Europe´s Beating Cancer Plan: Driving forces for the security of medical radioisotopes supply* will delve into this subject, sparking a discussion on the EU's industrial dominance, energy security, infrastructure, research, education, and employment opportunities. It also aims to explore strategies to reduce Europe's reliance on third countries in the medical domain and to reflect on the need for coordinated action at the EU level.

Exploratory talks are ongoing with DG RTD on the best way to involve civil society in consultations on the EURAD2 project, dealing with radioactive waste management.

On the basis of Art. 7 of the Euratom Treaty, this year the TEN section expects to be requested an opinion by the Council on the next Euratom Programme 2026-2027.

## ***Hydrogen***

Building on the activities of recent years, the TEN Section will continue to focus on the importance of the emergent green hydrogen sector. Among the selected own-initiative opinions for 2024, it was decided to develop a comprehensive dossier on hydrogen: infrastructure, development needs, financing, use and limits. In light of the crucial role EU policy-makers are giving to this technology, including the creation of a European Hydrogen Bank, the TEN Section will also organise, for the end of 2024, a conference in Latvia, in collaboration with the national Ministry of Energy, in order to exchange with experts and explore the potential of this sector in the EU.

**PERMANENT GROUP ON ENERGY**

As the energy landscape evolves, the TEN Energy Group is gearing up for a transformative year in 2024. First on the agenda is a final evaluation of the long-negotiated reform of the electricity market, which will conclude the EESC's work on the topic.

At the same time, the Energy Group faces the critical task of evaluating the repercussions of withdrawing subsidies that were initially introduced during the peaks in electricity and gas prices. The decision to remove these financial cushions requires a thorough examination of its impact on both domestic and industrial consumers. Furthermore, the lingering effects of the winter of 2024 on price developments and security of supply add another layer of complexity.

To address these challenges, the Energy Permanent Group proposes a comprehensive analysis during the 2nd Group meeting. Stakeholders from diverse sectors, including representatives of domestic and industrial consumers, the European Commission, and other interested parties, may be invited to contribute valuable insights.

The first half of 2024 is also earmarked for a dedicated session on technological advances. The Group aims to stay abreast of progress in the nuclear energy field, with particular emphasis on the ITER project for nuclear fusion, ongoing initiatives in the United States and Japan, and the launch of the European industrial alliance on small modular reactors.

In the framework of the European sustainable sector the Permanent Group will analyse the issue of the reshoring of the photovoltaic cells production with its economic, environmental and strategic consequences. The Group will also consider the viability of Carbon Capture technologies as a widespread solution to reduce CO2 emissions.

Finally, from a social standpoint, the Group will focus on the fundamental importance of the public acceptance of the deployment of renewable energy sources and possible strategies to address citizens' concerns.

Other topics to be kept in consideration include the Commission's evaluation of National Energy and Climate Plans, exploring their relationship with the National Recovery Plans, and the outcomes of COP28 with regard to energy-related commitments. The discussion will also be linked to the 90 % reduction target in greenhouse gas emissions for 2040.

# **TRANSPORT**

In light of the forthcoming European elections, the Commission's work programme for 2024 has been streamlined, with no new initiatives envisaged for the transport sector. Nonetheless, there are several pending initiatives originally intended for previous years, but not yet released by the Commission.

## ***Transport and the Green Deal***

In the context of the European Green Deal, these initiatives include the **revision of the combined Transport Directive,** published in November 2023. The TEN section also expects to work on the **Revision of the roadworthiness package** and an initiative about the **greening of corporate fleets**.

In continuation of the work done in 2023, the TEN/822 exploratory opinion on posting of drivers, adopted in December 2023, will be presented to the Council in February and be discussed at the April section meeting.

## ***Data sharing***

In the realm of emerging mobility solutions, yet-to-be-published initiatives encompass **multimodal digital mobility services; access to vehicle data**, functions and resources, and interoperable **data sharing in rail transport**. The TEN section expects these initiatives to be published in 2024. The 2024 Commission work programme is mostly focused on further reducing the regulatory burden for businesses and streamlining reporting requirements. Aligned with that, the TEN section plans to work on the simplification and digitalisation of the transmission of **specific transportation data in national and international traffic**. A particular case will be inland navigation data: the TEN section will work on the **Revision of the Directive on harmonised river information services (RIS) on inland waterways (2005/44/EC)**.

## ***Simplifying legislation***

Future actions for burden reduction will also be outlined in the REFIT evaluations and fitness checks accompanying the Commission's work programme. In road transport, the TEN section expects to work on the simplification of the **approval and market surveillance of two- or three-wheel vehicles and quadricycles**.In trying to support the transition to low-emission mobility, the TEN section anticipates contributing to the reduction of reporting under the **Directive on clean-vehicles** and to the Commission's plan to remove the optional reporting on the total volume of dangerous goods carried by road amending a **Directive on uniform procedures for checks on the transport of dangerous goods by road.**

## ***Aviation***

In the field of aviation, the TEN section expects to work on the planned amendment of the **Regulation on a Code of Conduct for computerised reservation systems** aiming to remove the obligation to submit audited reports of system vendors of computerised reservation systems. Under the **Directive on airport charges**, the TEN section will reflect on the planned removal of the obligation for Member States to publish the list of the airports subject to the rules on airport charges. Finally, the section will work on the reduction of the reporting frequency of airports falling under the **Directive on access to the ground handling market at Community airports.** Additionally, revisions of **the Air Services Regulation** (aiming at resilient and competitive air services while preserving consumer interests and high-quality employment) and **the Airport Slot Regulation** (competitive and efficient use of airport capacity) are still to be published.

Decarbonisation and digitalisation have opened up a series of topics in the transport sector that the TEN section might have to pursue further, such as the use of renewable energy in transport, charging infrastructure in the growing e-mobility sector, green public transport, and necessary re-skilling to address skills gaps in order to facilitate the green transition in the transport sector.

**PERMANENT GROUP ON TRANSPORT**

## ***Maritime transport***

In 2023, the TEN section embarked on extensive efforts concerning maritime legislation, with a notable milestone being the adoption of the **Maritime Safety Package** in September of that year. Building on the success of these initiatives, the PG-T plans a **study visit to the European Maritime Safety Agency** (EMSA) at the beginning of 2024, keeping in mind the strategic role of the existing EU fleet to provide services that ensure energy and food security for the European Union and its citizens. Moreover, an own-initiative opinion will be dedicated to "Strengthening the EU maritime space through coordinated investment policies, social partners and civil society".

## ***Cross-border transport***

In addition, in line with one of the priorities of the Belgian Presidency seeking to improve the connection of Ukraine and Moldova to the EU and seeking to strengthen the EU's leadership in developing a safe, clean, efficient and advanced transport policy, the PG-T might hold a discussion on the barriers hindering fluid transport in Europe.

## ***The ITF summit***

Moreover, the PG-T plans to contribute to the organisation of a side event at the International Transport Forum Summit on 22-24 May 2024 in Leipzig, Germany, with the title Greening Transport: Keeping Focus in Times of Crisis. The ITF's Annual Summit is the world's largest gathering of transport ministers and the biggest global platform for dialogue on transport policy aiming at a deeper understanding of the role of transport in economic growth, environmental sustainability and social inclusion.

# **PERMANENT GROUP ON SERVICES OF GENERAL INTEREST (PG-SGI)**

Services of general interest and essential services should be at the centre of the just and equitable green transition, which should combine social, digital and climate-neutral transformation while maximising employment and competitiveness opportunities for workers and businesses.

## ***Housing***

The availability, accessibility and sustainability of decent housing will remain priorities for the TEN section in 2024.

The rising cost of living and the costs of building, renovating and renting are creating increasing difficulties for all households, but particularly for the most socially vulnerable groups who live in non-renovated and energy-inefficient housing. Social housing policy and building renovation will therefore be treated as a priority.

Having addressed the need for affordable and energy efficient housing as a solution to alleviate fuel poverty and household stress at the EESC's Third Energy Poverty Conference in July 2023, in February 2024 the TEN section organised a high-level conference on the "Housing Crisis in Europe: the way forward?" to review progress since the launch of the Renovation Wave strategy as part of the European Green Deal and to address some of the key challenges in the current context of a general "cost of living crisis". The conclusions of this conference will feed into the final declaration of the EU interministerial conference to be hosted by the Belgian Presidency in Liège on 5 March. Both the conference conclusions and the own-initiative opinion on social housing can provide a good basis for future work on the housing crisis under the Polish Presidency.

## ***Rare Diseases***

Following the successful high-level EESC conference on "Rare diseases and European reference networks", the TEN section will organise follow-up events under the Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies of the EU Council to explore the possibilities of a comprehensive European approach that takes into account all the needs of people living with rare diseases. The first event will be held on 8 March at the EESC, organised jointly with DG SANTE and the Member State consortium JARDIN.

## ***Water***

The EESC believes that universal access to drinking water and sanitation of high quality at affordable prices for the population should be treated as a public good. Following its own-initiative opinion on "Sustainable and resilient water infrastructures and distribution networks", the TEN section will continue its work on the access to water and sanitation, water use and re-use (circular water economy) and producer responsibility in the wastewater sector. It will also continue to fight to avert a liberalisation obligation in the sensitive water and wastewater sector and for stronger public services of general interest in the water sector and beyond.

# **SPACE**

The importance of space industry for defence and security is currently increasing. In 2023 the European Commission proposed a space strategy for security and defence, underlining the growing need for resilience of the EU's space infrastructure and space capabilities, while also calling for a partnership for responsible behaviour in outer space. As a follow up to such strategy, the European Commission will therefore propose at the beginning of 2024 a **"European Union Space Law"** which will include rules on space traffic management and on the safety of critical space infrastructure.

# **INFORMATION SOCIETY**

## ***Digital networks***

The European Commission has recently stated that major investments in digital networks are needed to meet the Digital Decade targets for 2030. Following the recent exploratory consultation, policy and regulatory actions regarding digital networks and infrastructure could be proposed in 2024 to facilitate cross-border infrastructure operators in the single market, accelerate deployment of technologies and attract more capital into networks.

## ***The radio spectrum***

The "New Radio Spectrum Policy Programme (RSPP)" legislative initiative, initially scheduled for the third quarter of 2023, has been postponed until 2024. Such a proposal will concern very important and strategic aspects of radio spectrum management and the harmonisation of its use in the European Union.

## ***Universal access to telecommunications***

In the framework of the provision of electronic communications networks and services to end-users, the "Universal Service Directive" of 2002 provided by law the availability of good-quality publicly available services, dealing in particular with circumstances in which the needs of end-users were not satisfactorily met by the market (for example, with measures to facilitate access for disabled end-users or facilitating the accessibility of emergency services). Following a request of the European Commission, in 2024 the TEN Section will provide an exploratory opinion analysing the current situation of universal access and the effects of recent technological developments on the existing provisions contained in the European Electronic Communications Code, with the aim of considering the need to modify or update them.

# **CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES**

## **Gender**

The TEN section will pursue its policy of integrating gender-related issues in its work as a cross-cutting approach. It will make sure that panels are set up to monitor gender balance among speakers.

## **Youth**

The TEN section is contributing to the ongoing pilot project on youth involvement in the EESC's legislative work with a strategic own-initiative opinion on Safeguarding democracy against disinformation, to be delivered by spring 2024. This opinion engages with organisations representing young people. The TEN section will also pay particular attention to the growing problem of housing for young people and will listen to their views, involving them in its work on energy poverty, housing and green transport.

## **Disinformation**

Safeguarding UE fundamental rights and values, countering the propaganda war ongoing in Ukraine, campaigning to involve civil society actors and raise awareness especially among young people, and guaranteeing cybersecurity, are all issues of primary concern to EU citizens, particularly in the run-up to the 2024 EU elections. The EESC is contributing to these objectives with an own-initiative opinion on Safeguarding democracy against disinformation, a cross-cutting own‑initiative opinion led by the TEN section that also involves contributions from SOC and the EESC Fundamental Rights Group.

# **COMMINICATION PRIORITIES**

In line with the EESC Communication Strategy, two main issues have been selected as priority subjects to benefit from enhanced communication activities:

## **Energy affordability**

After several years of fruitful EESC activities tackling the phenomenon of energy poverty, a consistent network of stakeholders and partners has been established and is continuing to grow. The TEN section's work, be it opinions or conferences, has now had an impact on this year's recommendations from the European Commission to the Member States on fighting energy poverty. Pursuing this work in 2024 will allow the section to nurture those networks and institutional contacts so that further impact can be had on those areas where our requests are not sufficiently taken into account. It will also enable civil society to monitor how Member States actually implement these recommendations.

Milestones:

Among the numerous TEN activities, the following will be part of this communication priority, promoting renewable energies and other effective measure to achieve strategic autonomy in energy supply and affordable energy for all:

* a conference on housing in February;
* an opinion on the Wind Power Package in March;
* cross-border energy infrastructure planning (exploratory opinion requested by the Belgian Presidency);
* a side event at the International Transport Forum on green transport in May;
* energy affordability conference in June;
* an own-initiative opinion on Hydrogen - infrastructure, development needs, financing, use and limits;
* a conference on hydrogen in October.

## ***Disinformation***

The TEN section's strategic own-initiative opinion on this subject will enhance the image and the profile of the EESC in the fight against disinformation.

Milestones:

* deliver the strategic own initiative opinion on this subject by spring 2024. The opinion will gather input from SOC, INT, REX, as well as the Fundamental Rights Group, the Liaison Group and youth organisations;
* the opinion's conclusions and recommendations will be sent to the other EU institutions (in particular Members of the European Parliament) and to the wider public.

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