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Brussels, 11 April 2025

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| **595th PLENARY SESSION**  **26 and 27 March 2025**  **SUMMARY OF ADOPTED OPINIONS, RESOLUTIONS  AND INFORMATION / EVALUATION REPORTS** |
| This document is available in all the official languages of the European Union on the EESC website at:  <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/plenary-session-summaries>  The opinions listed can be consulted online using the EESC search engine:  <https://dmsearch.eesc.europa.eu/search/opinion> |

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# **ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COHESION**

1. [***Ex-post evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund 2014-2020***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/information-reports/ex-post-evaluation-european-regional-development-fund-and-cohesion-fund-2014-2020)

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| **Rapporteur** | Maria del Carmen BARRERA CHAMORRO (Workers' Group - ES) |
| **Reference** | Evaluation report at the request of the European Commission  EESC-2024-03238-00-00-RE |

**Key points**

The EESC:

* believes that both the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund (CF) should also focus on increasing access to reskilling and upskilling as well as on developing economic growth opportunities for all EU citizens;
* stresses that social dialogue can be a useful tool to that end;
* believes that the ERDF and the CF should focus more on vulnerable population groups, as the results achieved remain unsatisfactory;
* thinks that special attention should also be paid to ensuring balanced territorial development for all regions;
* supports that the core principles of cohesion (the partnership principle, shared management, and multi-level governance) are still relevant and should be maintained as guiding principles;
* acknowledges that improving consultation with civil society also means ensuring that their feedback is meaningfully incorporated into EU programme planning;
* asks that the economic and social impact of European fund investments should be properly assessed;
* pinpoints that the administrative capacity must be reinforced so that civil society actors can play a more active role;
* recommends to focus on long-term economic sustainability. This would entail integrating social, environmental, and accessibility factors into infrastructure planning;
* is of the opinion that more programmes are needed for SMEs and the self-employed. These two groups form the backbone of the economies of most EU Member States;
* believes that consulting civil society is important and necessary for the whole process of cohesion policy and the related funds, especially in view of the upcoming proposal for a new MFF, which is expected in the third quarter of 2025;
* stresses that social inclusion is important and needs to be further strengthened;
* recommends to include beneficiaries more effectively in ERDF and CF planning, since they have a deep knowledge of the current challenges and which priorities should be set. It is difficult to design such programmes without the active participation of all stakeholders;
* believes that the sense of ownership over programmes is crucial for effective implementation, as is the provision of sufficient resources allocated to NGOs for monitoring and overseeing the use of EU funds;
* believes that simplifying application and implementation processes is of vital importance in order to facilitate participation and cooperation;
* thinks that the complementarity of EU funds should be promoted, as this would improve efficiency and effectiveness;
* recommends that channels of participation should be broadened to include all types and new forms so that participation reaches everyone and all phases and is not limited to certain cases;
* thinks that strengthening the institutional capacity of the social partners is crucial in order to break the existing distrust;
* proposes that administrative flexibility should be considered a key objective of any cohesion policy;
* believes that more should be done for border regions that have experienced significant difficulties in recent years.

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# **EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND CITIZENSHIP**

1. ***[Crises and crisis phenomena in modern Europe and civil society](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/crises-and-crisis-phenomena-modern-europe-and-civil-society)***

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| **Rapporteur** | Ariane RODERT (Civil Society Organisations' Group - SE) |
| **References** | Exploratory opinion at the request of the Polish presidency of the EU  EESC-2024-03332-00-00-AC |

**Key points**

The EESC:

* welcomes the EU's focus on civil preparedness and crisis management, and the request from the Polish EU Presidency for an exploratory opinion on the role and experiences of civil society organisations in this context;
* stands ready to convey civil society’s perspective on next steps through follow-up opinions;
* emphasises the need for a mindset shift to foster a culture of preparedness across society and generations;
* stresses that preparedness initiatives must aim to a just and sustainable peace, addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering conditions that promote dignity, equal opportunity and social progress;
* highlights civil preparedness as essential for resilience but insists that EU and Member States remain responsible for citizen protection;
* recognises civil society’s diverse roles across Member States and calls for the development of a shared understanding between civil society and government at Member State level of each stakeholder’s respective role and responsibility;
* stresses that civil society contributes to preparedness in many ways including trust building trust, social cohesion, active citizenship, awareness-raising, risk identification, reach out to vulnerable groups, volunteers' mobilisation, humanitarian support, and safeguarding fundamental rights and freedoms;
* urges the European Commission and the Member States to provide the necessary conditions for civil society to participate, contribute, and engage on an equal footing with other stakeholders when developing civil preparedness;
* urges proactive investment in civil society in times of peace to ensure resilience and crisis response capacity in more difficult times;
* expresses concern over shrinking civil society space and threats to democracy, and calls for a comprehensive strategy and action plan;
* emphasises the need for transparent public funding for civil society preparedness, including capacity building and crisis support;
* recommends lowering barriers for cross-border cooperation to enhance crisis response and assistance.

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* [***Ex-post Evaluation of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund for the 2014-2020 programming period***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/information-reports/ex-post-evaluation-asylum-migration-and-integration-fund-2014-2020-programming-period)

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| **Rapporteur** | Nicoletta MERLO (Workers' Group - IT) |
| **Reference** | Evaluation report at the request of the European Commission  EESC-2024-01881-00-00-RE |

**Key points**

The EESC:

* recognises that the AMIF has been **essential** in responding to the needs of Member States in the areas of asylum, migration and integration. However, **administrative burdens risk undermining the effectiveness** of projects as staff are forced to spend more time on paperwork than on implementing activities on the ground;
* recommends that the **design and implementation** of AMIF should be **further improved** to take into consideration the **specific challenges** and **needs** **of** **all EU countries** (depending on whether they are first arrival, transit or destination countries) and their structures and capacities;
* recommends that input from the EESC, social partners, civil society organisations and other stakeholders involved in projects should also be gathered during the **ex-ante and mid-term evaluation stages** andincorporated into the design and implementation of the future programme to make it more effective;
* stresses that **more flexibility in the implementation of activities** is necessary to address local and individual priorities and needs in a timely manner, especially for those with specific vulnerabilities;
* notes that project initiators must be able to receive confirmation **of funding with reasonable notice, and funds must be sufficient** to cover the entire duration of the projects and they must **arrive on time**;
* stresses that **bureaucracy and administrative requirements** must be **lightened and simplified**, and the administrative burden must be reduced;
* **points out** that the fund has created **excellent opportunities** for building **stronger links and networks between stakeholders**. Communication and cooperation between project promoters and the responsible public authorities should be improved;
* stresses that **monitoring/supervisory committees** for the AMIF Fund should be set up in all Member States, and civil society organisations and social partners involved in this area must be **full members of these committees**.

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1. [***Health and safety at work - current and future challenges in light of traditional and new technologies, with a focus on AI***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/health-and-safety-work-current-and-future-challenges-light-traditional-and-new-technologies-focus-ai)

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| **Rapporteur** | Carlos Manuel TRINDADE (Workers' Group - PT) |
| **Reference** | Exploratory opinion at the request of the Polish presidency of the EU  EESC-2024-03858-00-00-AC |

**Key points**

The EESC:

* recalls that the Framework Directive 89/391/EEC has significantly improved worker safety and health in EU Member States. However, further efforts are required to ensure full and effective implementation of its provisions. The 2023 OSH stock-taking summit emphasised the need for stronger enforcement;
* recognises the potential of AI and robotics to create safer and healthier workplaces. It stresses the importance of implementing the EU OSH Strategic Framework with evidence-based policies and tripartite collaboration. Effective regulation is necessary to prevent risks associated with digitalisation;
* notes that work is evolving with increasing human-machine interaction, AI-driven decision-making, and remote work. The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated digital transformation, doubling the prevalence of remote work. These changes require updated OSH policies to safeguard workers;
* emphasises that digital technologies can reduce or introduce new workplace risks, requiring regulatory vigilance. Legal and negotiated measures are needed to manage emerging risks effectively. A proactive approach is essential to ensure worker safety in a digitalised work environment;
* warns about the EU’s lag in digital transformation, particularly in AI and digital innovation, affecting its competitiveness. The digital transition presents an opportunity to improve productivity while maintaining social cohesion. To close the digital gap, Europe must accelerate its efforts in technological advancement;
* stresses the need for digital skills development to ensure workers remain relevant in the labour market and maintain autonomy. There is a risk of deskilling due to AI-based work management systems. Policies should focus on lifelong learning and training tailored to digital transformation;
* calls for strong AI regulation and worker rights to ensure human control over AI-driven labour management systems. Workers, particularly e-platform workers, should have consultation rights regarding AI deployment. Transparent policies are necessary to prevent bias and discrimination in AI applications;
* underlines the importance of OSH training and literacy, especially when new technologies are introduced. Many workers lack basic literacy and problem-solving skills, which impacts their ability to understand safety instructions. Addressing these gaps is crucial for workplace safety;
* flags AI-related ethical and legal concerns, as AI can perpetuate biases related to gender, race, age and disability, posing risks to OSH. The EU’s legal framework includes 116 legislative pieces addressing AI’s workplace impact. Ensuring safe and fair working conditions requires strong worker involvement in AI deployment;
* raises concerns about workplace surveillance and data protection, warning against intrusive electronic surveillance while acknowledging its benefits for safety. The EU should monitor the effectiveness of existing regulations and introduce further measures if necessary. Transparency in AI decision-making and data security must be prioritised;
* encourages social partners to play an active role in regulating AI in the workplace through collective agreements. Given the limited number of such agreements, it urges stronger social dialogue to ensure a human-centric approach to AI. It also calls on the European Commission to provide social partners with the necessary resources, including capacity building and knowledge on the existing regulatory framework, to effectively address digitalisation challenges.

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1. [***Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers (including in the context of digital change and work automation): a legal and comparative analysis of the situation in the EU Member States***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/working-time-efficiency-economy-and-well-being-workers-including-context-digital-change-and-work-automation-legal-and)

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| **Rapporteur:** | Maria del Carmen BARRERA CHAMORRO (Workers' Group - ES) |
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| **Reference:** | Exploratory opinion at the request of the Polish presidency of the EU  EESC-2024-03947-00-00-AC |
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**Key points**

The EESC:

* defines 'working time reduction' as working fewer hours per reference period with the same salary levels, to clearly differentiate between shorter working days in the form of part-time work and compressed working days (that is, the same number of hours worked in fewer days, for example, 4 days of 10 hours);
* considers that working time is one of the aspects of work with the greatest impact on people’s quality of life and is key to the efficient organisation of economic activity in companies;
* notes that, although the average European working week is 37.1 hours, there are major differences between countries and sectors of activity. Available scientific evidence based on pilot projects shows that there may be a positive relationship between a shorter working week and productivity: the shorter the average working week, the higher the productivity. In this context, sector-specific experiments and pilot projects on the relationship between a reduced working week and productivity should be further explored;
* considers that social partners are the key actors in promoting measures to ensure that the highest number of sectors and companies adopt arrangements they deem appropriate. However, not in all countries, nor in all sectors, do the social partners have the same capacity to reach such agreements. The EU institutions and Member States should be encouraged to create favourable conditions in the form of incentives or legislation, for sectors and/or companies wishing to test or adopt such arrangements;
* encourages the introduction of flexible forms of working-time organisation to take into account the situation of different vulnerable groups, with guarantees of decent work;
* considers that social partners at all levels have an important role to play to discuss flexible arrangements, including related to reduction of working time. Social partners need active encouragement and support, through all necessary means, in order to increase the health, work-life balance and efficiency benefits of shorter and/or more flexible working hours;
* recommends promoting new models of flexible work organisation agreed by social partners, including the four-day working week and/or working-time reduction, to support work-life balance. Flexible working-time arrangements strike a balance between employers’ interest in increasing productivity and workers’ interest in improving their work-life balance and the feeling of having an influence on their working time arrangements;
* highlights the positive effects of reduced working time on society, such as demographic renewal, gender equality, a reduced burden on the healthcare system and potentially keeping workers in the world of work for longer, thus creating a positive environment conducive of creativity and innovation. A good social environment not only benefits the state but also companies and workers;
* encourages the EU institutions, national governments and social partners to accelerate the recognition of digital disconnection as a right for all EU workers.

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1. [***Including persons with disabilities in the development of new technologies and AI - possibilities, challenges, risks and opportunities***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/including-persons-disabilities-development-new-technologies-and-ai-possibilities-challenges-risks-and-opportunities)

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| **Rapporteur:** | Dovilė JUODKAITĖ (Civil Society Organisations' Group - LT) |
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| **Reference:** | Exploratory opinion requested by the Polish presidency of the EU |
| EESC-2024-04195-00-00-AC |

**Key points**

The EESC:

* believes it is crucial to include persons with disabilities throughout the process of designing, developing, assessing and implementing new technologies and AI-based applications. This involvement is key to mitigating potential discriminatory risks;
* invites the Member States and the EU to audit and evaluate to what extent AI applications are inclusive in critical fields;
* believes further follow-up is required to protect persons with disabilities from the harmful application of supposedly limited risk systems, particularly in the field of employment and recruitment;
* underlines the importance of ensuring the general accessibility of services and goods that apply new technologies and AI‑based solutions;
* believes that Member States must ensure that the opportunities generated by new technological developments and AI applications are translated by employers into accessibility improvements and reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities;
* recommends increasing public expenditure on research and development of AI‑based solutions for accessibility and technological assistance, and improving public knowledge about these technological advances;
* urges Member States to implement and increase the existing programmes on digital skilling for persons with disabilities, to improve their current situation and qualifications in these fields, while working to increase the inclusion of persons with disabilities in tertiary education and vocational training in technological sectors;
* highlights the need to promote reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities in the workplace, including in public and private recruitment processes, skilling and vocational training as well as in tertiary education.

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1. [***Access to social welfare for the self-employed – analysis, limitations and scope for improvement***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/access-social-welfare-self-employed-analysis-limitations-and-scope-improvement)

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| **Rapporteur** | Marcin Antoni ZIELENIECKI (Workers' Group - PL) |
| **Reference** | EESC-2024-03442-00-00-AC |

**Key points**

The EESC:

* recalls principle 12 of the European Pillar of Social Rights which affirms the right to social protection for all workers regardless of the type and duration of their employment relationship and, under comparable conditions, the self-employed persons;
* recalls the 2019 Council Recommendation on access to social protection and urges Member States to ensure effective coverage for all workers, including those in non-standard and self-employment, especially those engaged in platform work;
* acknowledges past efforts to improve social protection for the self-employed and stresses the need for continued EU action due to limited progresswhile fully respecting national and EU competences in this field;
* stresses the importance of developing and maintaining resilient employment retention schemes, including for the self-employed, and supports the ILO model for suitable and sustainable social protection systems which are essential prerequisites for ensuring a good quality of life for all;
* calls on the Member States, acting in accordance with national practices, to develop social protection systems covering all citizens, not just workers in standard or non-standard employment. These systems should provide a minimum income for those unable to work while supporting those who can through incentives and return-to-work assistance, in line with principle 14 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, while guaranteeing the financial stability of these social protections at all times;
* urges further measures to align labour market and social protection policies and continued monitoring of social protection issues, particularly for non-standard and self-employed workers, within the European Semester to identify and address gaps effectively and efficiently;
* advocates for further exchanges of best practices among Member States to adapt their social protection systems with appropriate involvement of the social partners organisations.

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# **TRANSPORT, ENERGY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND INFORMATION SOCIETY**

1. [***Revision of the gas storage regulation***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/revision-gas-storage-regulation)

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| **References** | Category C opinion  COM(2025) 99 final  EESC-2025-00873-00-00-AC |

**Key points**

* The Committee agrees with the extension of the existing framework until the end of 2027, hence it decided to issue an opinion fully endorsing the proposal.

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1. [***Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for 2026-2027***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/research-and-training-programme-european-atomic-energy-community-2026-2027)

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| **References** | Category C opinion  COM(2025) 60 final  EESC-2025-00986-00-00-AC |

**Key points**

* The Committee agrees with the Proposal for a Council Regulation establishing the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for the period 2026-2027 complementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and repealing Council Regulation (Euratom) 2021/765, hence it decided to issue an opinion fully endorsing the proposal.

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# **SINGLE MARKET, PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION**

1. [***Application and reporting deadlines/CSRD and CSDDD***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/application-and-reporting-deadlinescsrd-and-csddd)

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| **References** | Category C opinion  COM(2025) 80 final |
| EESC-2025-0963-00-00-AC |

**Key points**

The EESC endorses the content of the proposal and feels that it requires no comment on its part.

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# **AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

1. [***Evaluation of Directive E (EU) 2019/633 of 17 April 2019 on unfair trading practices in B2B relationships in the agricultural and food supply chain (Incl. Mapping of national UTP legislation)***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/information-reports/evaluation-directive-e-eu-2019633-17-april-2019-unfair-trading-practices-b2b-relationships-agricultural-and-food-supply)

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| **Rapporteur** | Antje GERSTEIN (Employers' Group - DE) |
| **Co-rapporteur** | Branko RAVNIK (Civil Society Organisations' Group - SI) |
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| **References** | EESC-2024-02156-00-00-RE |

**Key points**

The EESC:

* recommends enhancing enforcement mechanisms at EU level to provide greater legal certainty, a level playing field across the EU and stronger protections specifically targeted at the weaker actors in the supply chain;
* recommends to work towards harmonising the Directive so that it is suitable for the single market;
* suggests to ensure that the costs of sustainable development are shared across all stakeholders, including consumers, to build a more equitable system and to support endeavours for more price transparency;
* suggests to address challenges like price volatility, seasonal shortages and administrative burdens by improving risk management and providing better support for producers and to broaden protections for producers, including stricter prohibitions on logistics fees, undisclosed rebates, and sales bonuses;
* suggests to strengthen measures to preserve small farms, and to implement appropriate penalties for violations to ensure the Directive’s deterrent effect and enhance compliance;
* recommends to improve information campaigns so that stakeholders are aware of their rights and obligations, of protection procedures and of how the authorities operate;
* suggests the establishment of an EU-wide portal for reporting UTPs in order to address fears of retaliation and improve complaint mechanisms as well as the establishment of forums at both national and EU levels to foster dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders in the food supply chain; The EESC recognises that the creation of the European Board on the Agriculture and Food as a follow-up to the open dialogue launched by the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture is a significant step forward;
* encourages the Commission to present its draft revision of the Food Information to Consumers Regulation, improving information on the origin of products to increase traceability;
* recommends to examine the Directive’s scope to address power imbalances, foster efficiency along the supply chain and ensure fairness, including an appropriate allocation of risks and profits, in supplier relationships, and increase compliance with bans on certain practices to protect all market participants effectively.

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1. [***Civil society's vision for a European Oceans Pact***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/civil-societys-vision-european-oceans-pact)

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| **Rapporteur** | **Javier GARAT PÉREZ** (Civil Society Organisations' Group - ES) |
| **References** | Exploratory opinion at the request of the European Commission  EESC-2024-04595-00-00-AC |

**Key points**

The EESC:

* welcomes the European Oceans Pact among the Commission’s priorities for its new term of office and calls for a comprehensive approach that combines economic prosperity and competitiveness with environmental regeneration and the promotion of social equity;
* recommends that the pact be closely aligned with the EU Blue Economy Strategy, the SDGs and the European Green Deal. It should focus on both maritime and land-based industries and be aligned with other EU policies, in particular the Clean Industrial Deal, the Maritime Industrial Strategy, and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive to ensure coherence and make sure that it has a significant impact. The EESC also believes it essential to improve the EU Maritime Security Strategy and evaluate existing policies such as the Common Fisheries Policy;
* calls to strengthen and improve the EU maritime governance framework by more efficiently coordinating existing policies and bodies, avoiding fragmentation and duplication of efforts, improving diplomatic efforts and fostering cooperation networks between coastal communities, productive sectors and scientists. The EESC therefore recommends setting up specific working groups in all EU institutions with the central topic of seas and oceans;
* urges the Commission to establish a cooperation mechanism between European agencies competent in ocean matters, with a view to optimising data and knowledge collection. Science is key to efficient ocean management;
* recommends revising maritime spatial planning (MSP) to facilitate synergies and balance conflicting interests arising from the expansion of new maritime industries. An approach of positive coexistence should be promoted as well as an ecosystem-based approach;
* calls for the creation of an ‘Industrial Alliance for Blue Economy Value Chains’ bringing together all relevant stakeholders (businesses, social partners, research organisations, policymakers, investors, etc.);
* calls for funding to be mobilised for ocean action in support of SDG 14. In this regard, it is essential to mobilise public and private funding. The EESC recommends establishing specific budget lines for oceans in horizontal funds such as Horizon and the EU Social Fund and bolstering sectoral funds such as the EU Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF);
* urges the Commission to incorporate a social dimension into the pact, ensuring a just and digital transition in the maritime sector, with comprehensive support for workers, and fostering generational renewal through initiatives aimed at attracting young people, improve labour protection and facilitate vocational reskilling and upskilling;
* calls to ensure a level playing field and establish a strong maritime cluster with clear decarbonisation objectives to safeguard a flourishing and lasting maritime industry in Europe;
* recommends setting up a comprehensive mechanism for evaluating and monitoring the pact’s progress. The mechanism should include the EESC.

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1. [***New rules on cross-border enforcement against unfair trading practices***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/new-rules-cross-border-enforcement-against-unfair-trading-practices-0)

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| **Rapporteur** | **Émilie PROUZET** (Employers’ Group - FR) |
| **References** | COM(2024) 576 final  EESC-2024-04652-00-00-AC |

**Key points**

The EESC:

* supports strengthening cooperation between national authorities within the internal market and the spirit of open dialogue between the various players in the food supply chain that has prevailed over the last few months and would like to see this continue within the recently created European Board on Agriculture and Food (EBAF);
* notes the extent to which seeking better communication, coordination and cooperation among national authorities is essential to provide complainants with better support for when they lodge complaints. In this context, the EESC once again highlights the crucial role played by interpreters and translators. Language is still a major obstacle that restricts access to procedures;
* welcomes the Commission’s decision to swiftly start incorporating the recommendations of the Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture into the legislative process;
* understands why there is no impact assessment given that the proposed regulation in question only aims to clarify the arrangements for cooperation between national authorities that were already laid down in the Unfair Trading Practices Directive (UTP);
* asks the co-legislators to ensure that the proposed regulation remains a legislative act that seeks only to specify administrative and procedural measures and that businesses which operate in the internal market benefit from legal certainty and remain free to choose the law and jurisdiction applicable to their contracts, while still complying with competition law;
* calls for the measures in the regulation to apply only to cooperation between the authorities responsible for enforcing the legislation on unfair trading practices and the thresholds harmonised at EU level under Articles 3 and 4 of the UTP Directive;
* urges the co-legislators to ensure that the enforcement authorities have an absolute right to refuse requests for the exchange of information on national rules that are not harmonised by the UTP Directive and to avoid proposing measures that could lead to renationalising supply in Europe and that could in this regard legitimise regional supply constraints that have serious consequences for consumers and for product sustainability.

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1. [***Amendment of the Common Markets Organisation (CMO) Regulation on rules on contracts, producer organisations and cooperation between farmers***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/amendment-common-markets-organisation-cmo-regulation-rules-contracts-producer-organisations-and-cooperation-between)

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| **Rapporteur** | Stoyan TCHOUKANOV (Civil Society Organisations' Group - BG) |
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| **References** | COM(2024) 577 final  EESC-2024-04584-00-00-AC |

**Key points**

The EESC:

* supports the European Commission’s proposal which seeks to give producers a stronger position in the agri-food chain, while recommending additional improvements;
* welcomes the requirement for written contracts for the delivery of agricultural products, which are to include objective indicators on production costs and information about market prices, and recommends that the exemption from the value threshold be set at EU level at EUR 5 000;
* recommends that each Member State establish and publish objective and transparent national and/or regional indicators on production costs and information about market prices, in consultation with all stakeholders in the value chain;
* supports the introduction of a mandatory revision clause in written contracts that could be triggered by the producer and would allow a new negotiation about prices paid to farmers in line with changes in production costs and market prices, with due regard to sustainability criteria, while proposing conditions for this negotiation;
* supports the short-term establishment of mediation mechanisms in each Member State, taking into account that such equivalent mechanisms may already exist, and believes that a mechanism for making decisions within short deadlines must be established;
* supports the proposal to allow non-recognised producer organisations to benefit from the same exceptions to the competition rules accorded to recognised ones, but suggests that this possibility should be a transitional step towards official recognition within two years;
* is in favour of establishing rules for using the terms ‘equitable’, ‘fair’ and ‘short supply chains’ and recommends that the concepts of ‘equitable’ and ‘fair’ be clarified, incorporating the remuneration of producers and ensuring a fair standard of living for the agri-food community;
* supports the Commission’s proposal to strengthen sustainability objectives in concerted practices between producers (including on working and safety conditions);
* recommends revising and updating the reference thresholds for agricultural products to bring them in line with current economic circumstances;
* proposes that ad hoc financial support be mobilised instead of the agricultural reserve to support operators in the event of serious market imbalance.

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# **EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

* [***Competitiveness and economic security – how should EU trade policy contribute to the objectives of the Draghi report?***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/competitiveness-and-economic-security-how-should-eu-trade-policy-contribute-objectives-draghi-report)

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| **Rapporteur** | **Georgi STOEV** (Employers’ Group - BG) |
| **References** | Exploratory opinion at the request of the Polish presidency of the EU  EESC-2025-00020-00-00-AC |

**Key points**

The EESC:

* believes that if trade is to make an effective contribution to the objectives of the Draghi report, trade policy must be closely coordinated with industrial policy and European economic security policy. This requires a common European foreign policy and security strategy, one of the main components of which is a foreign economic and trade policy;
* points out that the main objectives of this policy coordination should be in line with an integrated concept of open, sustainable and assertive trade policy, aimed at: a) securing the supply of critical raw materials and sustainability of supply chains in general; b) enabling Europe to be competitive and produce using the most advanced technologies and to lead fair and sustainable ecological and digital transitions; and c) contributing to a significant reduction in energy prices – a major factor in the loss of competitiveness of the European economy;
* believes that, in view of the current evolving circumstances, there is a need for unified action, and potentially for a response at EU level; this will require strong leadership, including making use of existing trade-defence tools if tariffs are imposed illegally, including retaliatory tariffs, economic diplomacy action, and WTO challenges. Trade diversification is also strongly recommended;
* proposes the establishment of an EU Investment Fund for Economic Resilience and Sustainable Competitiveness to help strengthen the financial capacity of the EU and the EIB’s lending capacity for supporting InvestEU programmes. The completion of the Banking Union and the Capital Markets Union would facilitate the transfer of private capital into investment at a significantly higher rate;
* stresses that, to ensure that EU trade standards remain effective in protecting the wider interests of the EU, civil society must have a role in the negotiation procedures. The structured participation of civil society organisations in the form of consultations during negotiations would provide an opportunity to highlight certain critical issues regarding the impact of agreements before they are approved.

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1. [***EU-India Strategic Partnership***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/eu-india-strategic-partnership)

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| **Rapporteur** | Aurel Laurenţiu PLOSCEANU (Employers' Group - RO) |
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| **References** | Own-initiative opinion  EESC-2024-04035-00-00-AC |

**Key points**

The EESC:

* urges the European Commission to work consistently towards upgrading the Strategic Partnership with India, the largest formal democracy in the world, proposing a new ambitious roadmap adapted to the current political and strategic circumstances;
* asks the European Commission to urgently step up negotiations with India on a Free Trade Agreement, with a view to establishing India as a preferential partner of the European Union in a strategic context;
* advocates expanding cooperation between the EU and India in all fields, further promoting fair, inclusive and rules-based international trade, building on the shared history and values of our ancient civilisations, as well as on our common understanding of contemporary realities;
* recommends furthering cooperation between the EU and its Member States and India in bilateral and multilateral projects on infrastructure, construction – especially deep-water ports and airports – and energy connectivity;
* advocates further deepening cooperation between the EU and its Member States and India on defence and security, especially in the R&D and innovation sector, including joint space and dual use projects, with special emphasis on the contribution of small and medium enterprises (SMEs);
* recommends furthering cooperation between the EU and its Members States and India in joint projects of maritime security, especially in the Western Indian Ocean and the shipping lanes crossing it;
* recommends further expanding cultural exchanges between the EU and its Member States and India, in particular through university cooperation and student exchanges, as well as exchanges between teaching and scientific personnel;
* recommends expanding cooperation with India in the framework of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC); to that effect, it will prepare a comprehensive opinion on the IMEC project and its perspectives in the near future;
* calls upon the European Council, the European Commission and the EU Member States to urgently reactivate the EESC’s EU-India Round Table with the involvement of civil society;
* welcomes the upcoming EU-India Summit, including the Youth Summit component; to that effect, it would be available to contribute to it accordingly;

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1. [***Moldova Growth Plan***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/moldova-growth-plan/related-links-rex-595)

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| **Rapporteur** | Dumitru FORNEA (Workers' Group - RO) |
| **Reference** | COM(2024) 470 final  EESC-2024-04655-00-00-AC |

**Key points**

The EESC:

* welcomes the European Commission’s initiative and the European Parliament’s report on the Moldova Growth Plan (hereafter ‘the Plan’) – the largest financial support package the EU has ever granted to Moldova;
* underscores the need to engage the social partners, civil society organisations, the expert community, academia and local public authorities in the development, monitoring and implementation of the reform agenda, as well as in the formulation and monitoring of specific indicators and intermediate indicators to measure progress. The important part is the involvement of organised civil society representatives in developing the Plan’s scoreboard and independent monitoring of the implementation of the reform agenda;
* recommends that funding be allocated from the grant component of the Growth Plan to support the activity of CSOs that contribute to the implementation of the Plan;
* recommends two conceptual adjustments to the parameters of this support:
* increasing the share of grants from the current proportion of 16% to 35%, followed by a proportional decrease in the share of concessional loans;
* increasing the minimum share of the total loan amount to be allocated to investments from 25% to 35%;
* endorses the three pillars of the Plan as they will accelerate the country’s economic and legal convergence with EU standards, while points out other aspects to take into account in implementing the Plan: environment, digitalisation, social investments, decentralisation and local autonomy, respect of EU quality and food safety standards etc.
* emphasises the need to improve the efficiency of Moldovan state-owned enterprises;
* recommends that at least 20% of all investments is directed towards local and regional development thus ensuring balanced and sustainable development across the entire country;
* insists that human rights issues, including a gender balance, inclusion of people with disabilities and ‘no one left behind’ principles, should be considered horizontal priorities in all the projects implemented under the Plan;
* considers that the proper funding should be provided for setting-up of an economic and social committee in the Republic of Moldova.

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* [***Action Plan for enhancing cooperation between civil society organisations in the European Union and Kazakhstan in the framework of the implementation of the New Strategy on Central Asia and of the Global Gateway***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/action-plan-enhancing-cooperation-between-civil-society-organisations-european-union-and-kazakhstan-framework)

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| **Rapporteur:** | Dumitru FORNEA (Workers' Group - RO) |
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| **References** | Own-initiative opinion  EESC-2024-02254-00-00-AC |

**Key points**

The EESC:

* supports strengthening cooperation between the European Union and Kazakhstan, in view of the priorities and opportunities resulting from the New EU Strategy on Central Asia and the Global Gateway initiative;
* recognizes that partnership with the EU is a foreign policy cornerstone for Kazakhstan, the first Central Asian country to sign an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) with the Union. The EPCA fosters collaboration in key sectors such as trade, investment, energy, agriculture and connectivity. The EU is Kazakhstan’s largest trading partner, and the country is building bridges between Asia and Europe by developing connectivity and transport networks;
* considers it essential to ensure that these relations prioritise sustainability, human rights and inclusiveness, and that they align with EU values and strategic goals, by integrating environmental, social and geopolitical concerns. Kazakhstan can easily synchronise with the EU in the social and civic dialogue programmes, thanks to the experience it has already gained within the annual EU-Central Asia Civil Society Forum;
* supports the development of civic and social dialogue in Central Asia and advocates for it to be formalised, along the lines of the good practices in relations with organised civil society of other regions, like the Western Balkans;
* believes that relations between organised civil society in the EU and Kazakhstan can develop in a structured way on the basis of an Action Plan, with several priorities and in line with the objectives of the New EU Strategy for Central Asia. Funding should be provided by the Global Gateway initiative, with the proportional governmental contribution of the states in this region, as well as other international donors;
* thinks that the EU could help support the development and consolidation of civil society in Kazakhstan by creating a programme for the exchange of experiences between civil servants;
* considers that the EU should also support the development of civil society in Kazakhstan by increasing the educational opportunities for young Kazakhs through the Erasmus programme.

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# **CONSULTATIVE COMMISSION ON INDUSTRIAL CHANGE**

* [***A European Liquid Fuels Strategy for a sustainable, affordable and resilient low-carbon transition***](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/european-liquid-fuels-strategy-sustainable-affordable-and-resilient-low-carbon-transition)

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| **Rapporteur** | Veselin MITOV (Workers' Group - BG) |
| **Co-rapporteur** | Alessandro BARTELLONI (Category 1 - IT) |
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| **References** | Own-initiative opinion  EESC-2025-03709-00-00-AC |

**Key points**

The EESC:

* calls for an EU strategy on liquid fuels that ensures the transition from fossil fuels to decarbonised and renewable alternatives, addressing sustainability, affordability and reliability across all modes of transport;
* observes that such strategy would not only support climate goals, but primarily help diversify energy sources, while improving security of supply, as well as stimulate renewable investments, promote circular economy, standardise biofuel and e-fuel production for cross-border trade together with aligning it with sustainability, and serve as alternative where electrification is challenging;
* recommends improving the efficiency of decarbonised and renewable liquid fuel supply chains by improving feedstock sourcing, blending and storage, and by optimising logistics through industrial hubs;
* stresses the need of using decarbonised and renewable liquid fuels existing infrastructure, which is able to accommodate sustainable liquid fuels (SLFs), in order to minimise the high costs to society;
* calls for unlocking the full potential of sustainable biomass, and ensuring open dialogues with key industries;
* emphasises the importance of reducing the production costs of decarbonised and renewable fuels by ensuring cost-efficient access to clean electricity and feedstocks, scaling up production plant capacity, while leveraging EU R&D initiatives, including the EU ETS Innovation Fund, to drive innovation and investments in low-carbon technologies for SLF production;
* calls for establishing training programmes and educational initiatives through social dialogue,to enhance the skills of the workforce, improve employability and create ‘green decent jobs’ essential for the economy.

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