



Europe III

The voice of
Various Interests' Group
October 2017

ED
Editorial

Financing of Civil Society Organisations



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Jean-Marc ROIRANT (FR)
Education League /
President Civil Society Europe
Member of the Various
Interests' Group

Mr. Roirant is the Rapporteur of the SOC 563 opinion on the Financing of Civil Society Organisations by the EU, an own-Initiative opinion promoted by Group III. The opinion was adopted unanimously by the SOC section on 27 September 2017, and debated in view of adoption during the October Plenary Session of the EESC.

This own-initiative opinion is well timed as regards both the institutional calendar and contributing to the debate on the civic and social functions of CSOs at a difficult time for European associations.

Discussions are being launched on the new Multiannual Financial Framework, which will be in force from 2020. At the same time, criticisms and serious charges are being levelled at CSOs and, in particular, NGOs working to promote and safeguard fundamental rights.

The situation is becoming paradoxical: on the one hand implementation of the principles and values inextricably linked to European integration entails ongoing involvement of CSOs, but on the other hand civic space is shrinking dangerously in some Member States.

In addition to increasing difficulties in accessing public financing, CSOs are also suffering

malicious accusations and denigration cultivated by the ambient populism.

Civil society organisations clearly play a crucial role in promoting active citizenship in Europe. Participatory democracy needs intermediary bodies if it is to involve the public and encourage them to express their views.

A robust, independent and diversified organised civil society is underpinned by adequate public financing. This multiannual financial support, which can take the form of operating grants, concerns non-governmental, non-profit-making organisations independent of public institutions and commercial interests, whose activities contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, such as social inclusion, active participation of citizens, sustainable development in all its forms, education, health, employment, consumer rights, support to migrants and refugees, and fundamental rights.

The opinion sets out some twenty recommendations to strengthen and develop clear, sustainable relations between CSOs and the European institutions and,

more generally, all administrative and public authorities.

Taking their cue from some Member States that have adopted “charters of reciprocal commitment” or “pacts” to this end, the European institutions could take steps to establish genuine European civil society dialogue in which CSOs play a full part. Discussions must be resumed on a statute for European associations and a statute for European foundations, and Article 11 of the TEU on structured dialogue with civil society must be implemented.

Furthermore, the European institutions should promote a positive image of CSOs and preserve their independence.

Lastly, concerning the future Multiannual Financial Framework, it is proposed that the budget authorities increase funding for CSOs, including in the form of operating grants and multiannual financing.

A hearing was held by the Committee on 6 September to fine-tune the recommendations. The fact that the European Parliament rapporteur, the representative of the Commission’s DG Budget and over a hundred NGOs participated is a sign of recognition of the collective work undertaken.



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MODELS OF CIVIL SOCIETY



Luca JAHIER (IT)
President of the
Various Interests' Group

On 27 September, President Jahier made a key note speech at the European Parliament, during a conference organised by the EPP on "Models of Civil Society".

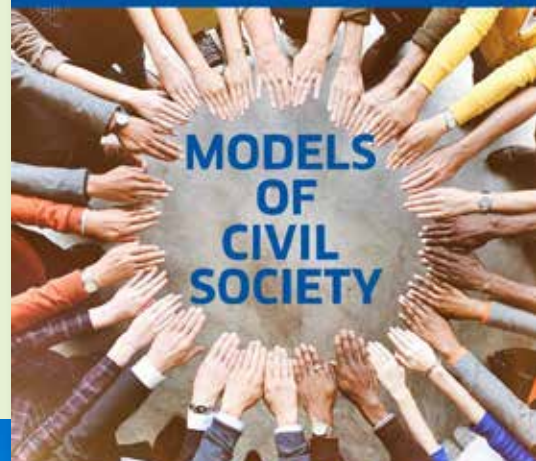
Other speakers included: **Michał BONI**, EP Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, **Charlotte RYDH**, Secretary-General of Frii, Frivilligorganisationernas Insamlingsråd (Swedish Fundraising Council), **Jean-Marc ROIRANT**, President of the Civil Society Europe, **Pál CSÁKY**, Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the EP.

President Jahier began by saying that civil society plays a pivotal role in promoting and defending the EU's fundamental values, including forging and consolidating identity, trust, and solidarity, in consolidating and in repairing the social fabric. Civil Society Organisations are like the glue in our societies, as they inform the population on matters of public interest, providing channels of communication with the political elite and holding public authorities to account. This is not to say that civil society should compete with the executive, the legislative or the judiciary – neither at national nor European level. In democracy, each actor has a specific role. But ultimately, these roles are complementary and they ensure the resilience of the democratic system.

President Jahier concluded by saying he hoped that in the near future, the EESC and the EP would engage in structured cooperation, to bring the EU closer to its citizens. He suggested setting up a joint citizens' outreach programme, or in the case of the EESC, making use of the European/national/regional networks of CSOs by working together, in a complementary fashion. Within this context, future EESC cooperation with national parliaments and the EP could also be envisaged.



Wednesday 27 September 2017, from 15.00-17.30 hrs
Room ASP 3E-2, European Parliament, Brussels



Hosted by MEPs **Michał Boni** and **Pál Csáky**
Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
of the European Parliament

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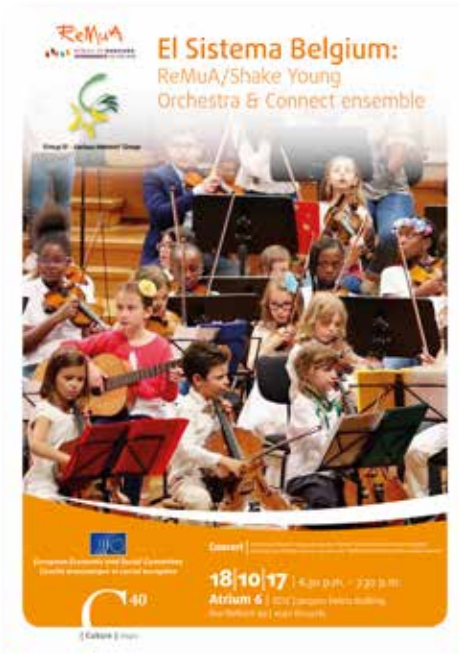


Interpretation:
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NEWS from Group III

Bringing CULTURE at the HEART of the EU



Under chairmanship of its President Luca Jahier, the Various Interests' Group organises a concert on Wednesday 18 October 2017 entitled:

“El Sistema Belgium: ReMuA / Shake Young Orchestra and the Connect Ensemble.”

This is the first cultural initiative at the EESC organized in the framework of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018.

El Sistema Belgium: ReMuA/Shake Young Orchestra and the Connect ensemble ReMuA, a non-profit association, has been sending its musicians into schools in Brussels and Liège since 2013 to run weekly music workshops based on the famous Venezuelan project, El Sistema, with its group approach to learning an instrument. After a number of years learning an instrument with El Sistema Belgium, the most advanced children are now playing in the ReMuA/Shake Young Orchestra.

This vibrant, multicultural youth orchestra will be accompanied by the Connect ensemble. The El Sistema Belgium project, run by ReMuA, has over a number of years given hundreds of children the chance to start studying music and to learn an instrument at school or in their local neighbourhood. Learning to sing and/or play an instrument – from the violin to the flute, cello, clarinet or even the saxophone and trombone – as part of a group becomes a regular part of these children's lives, with workshops of between 1hour30 and 5 hours every week. Orchestra rehearsals are the expression of a community where listening, respect and the spirit of cooperation are paramount. In Brussels, the municipalities of Molenbeek, Laeken, Schaerbeek, Forest, Ixelles and Bruxelles-Ville are alive with budding, ReMuA-trained musicians performing in one or other of the El Sistema Belgium orchestras.

EESC GROUP III EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

ROME, Sala Protomoteca del Campidoglio,
Piazza del Campidoglio – 1 December 2017

“The Liberal Professions, a lever for the Development of Europe: towards a European Manifesto of Professionals”

47 million people in Europe work in regulated professions i.e. 22% of the working population. Liberal professions therefore undeniably play a very relevant role in our economies and societies. Being aware of this, the EESC Various Interests' Group (III) has dedicated its last extraordinary meeting of the year to discussing the challenges faced by these professions and laying the foundations for ensuring that they reach their potential in the European Union in the coming years.

Institutional greetings from the President of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani and other major representatives of the Italian Government will be followed by a presentation of the main ideas outlined in the draft Manifesto of Professionals and a general overview of how liberal professions contribute to the development of the EU, in terms of economic growth and employment as well of social inclusion – with particular reference, for example, to young people and women.

In the afternoon, participants will have the opportunity to take a closer look at the regulation of liberal professions in Europe. They will focus on how to reconcile internal market and competition requirements with measures to safeguard deontological independence and public interest in the liberal professions (e.g. the role of doctors in public health or of engineers in building and road safety). Last but not least debates will focus on cross-cutting issues such as payment equity, professional independence, service quality and the ethical, social and freethinking value of these professions, which is a key reason to safeguard them and their dignity in Europe.

Ideas and proposals put forward in the presentations and during the debates of the day will be outlined in the conclusions of the meeting and will contribute to the European Manifesto of Professionals.



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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SEPTEMBER PLENARY SESSION

Group III members co-ordinating the work on new opinions



Panagiotis GKOFAS (EL) is the Co-Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "Promoting SMEs in Europe with a special focus on a horizontal legislative SME approach and respect of the SBA's "think small first" – [INT/832](#)

Victor ALISTAR (RO) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "Fraude et contrefaçon de moyens de paiement autres que les espèces" – [INT/831](#)

Christian MOOS (DE) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "A socially sustainable concept for raising living standards, boosting growth and employment, as citizens' security in the digital era" – [SOC/568](#)

Gabriel SARRÓ IPARRAGUIRRE (ES) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "Common fisheries policy — discard plans" – [NAT/725](#)

Cillian LOHAN (IE) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "Monitoring framework for the circular economy " – [NAT/722](#)

Mindaugas MACIULEVIČIUS (LT) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on waste water reuse" – [NAT/723](#)

Roman HAKEN (CZ) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "Advantages of the Community-led Local Development approach (CLLD) for integrated local and rural development" – [NAT/724](#)

Antonio LONGO (IT) is the Co-Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "Cybersecurity Act" – [TEN/646](#)

Jorge PEGADO LIZ (PT) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "Free flow of non-personal data in the European Union" – [TEN/645](#)

Ionut SIBIAN (RO) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "Economic and social cohesion and European integration of the Western Balkans – challenges and priorities" – [REX/497](#)

Mihai IVAȘCU (RO) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "Adopting a comprehensive approach to industrial policy in the EU – improving business environment and support for the competitiveness of the European industry" – [INT/833](#)

Carlos TRIAS PINTÓ (ES) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "Investing in a smart, innovative and sustainable industry – A renewed EU industrial policy strategy" – [CCMI/157](#)

Kinga JOÓ (HU) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "Regulation on the European Citizens' Initiative" – Sub-Committee [SC/049](#)



The full listing of membership of the above study groups for the new work may be consulted here: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/news/work-progress-and-new-work-september-2017>



Europe is back

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker attended the September EESC Plenary to hold a debate on the Future of Europe. "Europe is back", said President Juncker at the EESC Plenary. "We have the wind behind us". The creation of 8 million new jobs, the reduction of the budget deficit, more than EUR 225 billion in investments as part of the Juncker Plan, the launch of the European Solidarity Corps and the EU's progress in international trade were just some of the reasons behind his optimism.



Luca JAHIER (IT)
President of the Various Interests' Group

A common vision for Europe

President Jahier thanked the Commission President for taking on the very ambitious task of reinvigorating the EU project and promoting a common vision of Europe. "The EU is a community of values and today we need a more ambitious and a more democratic EU that looks beyond Brexit. So let's push jointly for a citizens' convention in 2018. Let's put Culture and Sustainable Development at the heart of EU priorities and policies." He also underlined that 2018, as the European Year of Cultural Heritage, is an opportunity to mobilize positive forces for the future of Europe.

Furthermore, President Jahier added that (...) "Because if the wind has changed, we need to seize this window of opportunity to make the most of the decision, projecting the image of a stronger, more ambitious, more democratic Europe that looks beyond the 2019 deadline (Brexit and the European elections).

The proposal of its "sixth scenario" for the future of Europe, based on the fundamental concepts of freedom, equality and the role of the law, is a political operation of breathing. Europe is first and foremost a community of values and destiny, where equality between States, citizens, workers and consumers has very concrete implications. Where Europe as a community of law, based on the power of law and its laws, is not an "à la carte" option, but a constituent and generative constraint. Without returning to the law of force, the erosion of democracy and even war.

With practical wisdom, Juncker pushes for significant institutional and democratic advances, but packages them separately, so that they can be achieved without passing through the rocky terrain of Treaty change for which, today, there is little prospect. To summarise the main points: including other countries in the Schengen area, re-launching enlargement to include the Balkan countries, taking steps to make the euro the currency of all EU countries, transforming the ESM into a European Monetary Fund and switching to a minister of European economy and finance, completing the banking union, increasing decision-making capacity by allowing qualified majority voting on new legislation, and achieving the European Defence Union by the end of 2025. These are areas that can profoundly change the European Union, pushing it towards its necessary destiny of greater integration and political unity."



Christian MOOS (DE)
German Civil Servants' Association
Member of the Various Interests' Group

Citizenship and Democracy in Europe

Christian Moos, Rapporteur of the EESC Resolution on the Future of Europe, intervened during the debate with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker

During his intervention, Mr Moos stated that (...) "as representatives of civil society, we welcome this opportunity to carry out a real debate on the future of Europe - our Europe - which is our future and our destiny. The time has now come to take decisions. And the timing of elections in Member States should not prevent us from doing so."

Mr Moos reminded Mr Juncker of what the EESC stated in the resolution, adopted in the July 2017 Plenary Session: "Whatever option for the future of Europe is selected, the EESC wants a cohesive and coherent European Union." And heads of state and government should demonstrate that they are able to shoulder their responsibilities towards the European Union.

Mr Moos urged the Commission to do everything it can to make sure that Member States regain a sense of their responsibilities. The people of this European Union and civil society organisations are awaiting results and decisions which are still consistent with the goals and values of the Lisbon Treaty. These results should be obtained in a transparent fashion, in keeping with the democratic process.

It is precisely on this point that Mr Moos thanked Mr Juncker and the Commission for having placed considerable emphasis on citizenship and democracy in Europe. However, he also asked them not to forget the principles of sustainability and solidarity.

"We need to demonstrate our solidarity with those who are suffering and who find themselves beyond the reaches of the economic recovery", continued Mr Moos, "and with those who are more and more disappointed by the European idea and are also all too often ready to be seduced by those who are propagating ideas which in truth are no more than lies, from the sound of their speeches which ooze chauvinistic nationalism."



Group III Members in the Spotlight playing a key role



Luca JAHIER (IT)
President of the Various Interests' Group

60th anniversary of the Eurocoop

On 26 September, President Luca Jahier opened the celebrations for the 60th anniversary of the Eurocoop, alongside Massimo Bongiovanni – President, Euro Coop, Vytenis Andriukaitis, European Commissioner, Health and Food Safety & Guy Ryder – Director General of the ILO (International Labour Organisation)



Luca JAHIER, Massimo BONGIOVANNI, Vytenis ANDRIUKAITIS

On 26 and 27 September, Euro Coop officially celebrated its 60th Anniversary. The event brought together leaders of the European consumer co-operative movement, EU institutions, International Labor Organisation, Brussels-based stakeholders, and the media.

Euro Coop represents the European consumer co-operative movement and its 32 million consumer-members. Their national members are Europe's largest retail force in terms of turnover and store network. Established on 11 July 1957 in Brussels, the association has a shared history of fruitful partnership with the EU institutions and has witnessed their growth since the Treaty of Rome. Due to their governance model, which empowers the member-owners with fair and democratic participation in the management process, consumer co-operatives have an imbedded social commitment to serve local communities.



Mihai IVAŞCU (RO)
Chamber of commerce and industry of Romania
Member of the Various Interests' Group

Wider measures are needed to ensure efficient control of cash movements

The rapporteurs for the opinion on ECO/427 – “Terrorism Financing – Controls of cash movements”, Mr Doz Orrit and Mr Ivaşcu presented the EESC opinion to the Permanent Representations of France, the UK and Germany. As one of the follow-up activities to their opinion on ‘Terrorism financing – Controls of cash movements’, Mr Doz Orrit and Mr Ivaşcu met with representatives of the Permanent Representations of France, the UK and Germany, in order to present and discuss the main recommendations of their opinion. These meetings aimed to make the Committee’s views on the proposal for a new regulation on cross-border control of cash movements known to key Member States that have been hit by terrorist attacks in the recent past. This proposed regulation is an important element in the new initiatives against terrorism financing and money laundering.

Mr Doz and Mr Ivaşcu stressed the need to strengthen cooperation between Member States’ intelligence services and police services and suggested that a plan to reduce the use of cash should be considered. They argued for sanctions to be harmonised across Member States and called for an improvement in information sharing between Member States’ authorities and with third countries. Moreover, they proposed that in addition to gold, other commodities of high value should be listed as cash, such as precious metals and gemstones. They underlined that a new list of tax havens should be compiled, thereby creating a single merged list of third countries and territories not cooperating in the prosecution of financial crimes and terrorist financing. Finally, in the rapporteurs’ view a comprehensive European analysis of the EUR10 000 threshold – above which there is an obligation to declare across the EU – should be carried out and, although fully acknowledging the social value of prepaid cards, special attention must be paid to the possibility that terrorists might use them, as they did in the 2015 Paris attacks.



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The representatives of the three permanent representations welcomed the opportunity to meet with the EESC rapporteurs and were open to promoting the EESC’s recommendations.



Victor ALISTAR (RO)
Transparency International Romania
Member of the Various Interests' Group

Victor Alistar, elected CSM member from civil society



The Senate Plenum elected Victor Alistar as a member of the Superior Council of Magistracy on Monday by secret ballot.

Victor Alistar received 78 votes for and 43 against, according to News.ro.

Out of the 12 enrolled candidates, who fulfilled the legal conditions and were voted by the Senate plenary, only Alistar and another candidate received the majority vote of the Senators present.



Luca JAHIER (IT)
President of the Various Interests' Group

The COR President Karl-Heinz Lambertz attends the EESC Plenary

The 528th plenary session of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) included a debate with Karl-Heinz Lambertz, President of the European Committee of the Regions.

In his remarks, President Jahier emphasized that tangible and sustainable solutions come from local and regional level; – they come from civil society, local and municipal authorities, citizens – i.e. from those who are close to the problems and can propose the appropriate solutions.

He insisted there is indeed a window of opportunity to boost European integration, to render it more democratic, more transparent and more relevant to our citizens. The upcoming European elections and the need for a re-invigorated EU after Brexit should be our driving force.

In this positive spirit, with focus on rebuilding the democratic fabric of our continent and on reconnecting with citizens, President



Jahier called for an alliance between the CoR and the EESC. This alliance would aim to establish a coordinated, joint outreach strategy to connect with European citizens, to jointly bridge the gap between “Brussels” and the local/regional level, to organise joint events, to coordinate our consultative roles and to genuinely work together and complement representative democracy at this critical moment in Europe’s future.

To finish, President Jahier thanked President Lambertz for accepting the invitation to the EESC Plenary and suggested that this be made an annual rendez-vous.



Dilyana SLAVOVA (BG)
*National Association “Mountain Milk”
Member of the Various Interests' Group
President of REX section*

Trade with Latin America and the Caribbean - facts and Opportunities

The 9th Meeting of the EU-Latin America and Caribbean organised civil society took place on 3-4 October in Panama City. Latin America and the Caribbean are a key component of the EU external policies. To the EESC, the continent is an old partner and most of you are old friends to us. We started our bi-ennial Meetings of organized civil society in 1999.



*Dilyana SLAVOVA (EESC), John BRYAN (EESC),
Anastasis YIAPANIS (EESC)*

One of the issues debated was open and fair trade between the two regions.

The situation in terms of foreign trade in Latin America over the next few years is seen as uncertain. The fall in the price of raw materials and the sluggish growth of world demand have left their mark on the region’s economic situation.

ECLAC states that for 16 years the area has maintained, with only minor variations, a 6% share in world exports of goods and services. This contrasts with the performance of Asian developing countries, whose share has increased considerably during the same period. Much of this increase is down to China, whose participation trebled, rising from 4% in 2000 to 14% in 2015.

Trade between the EU and the ECLAC region has grown rapidly: trade in goods between the EU and Latin America more than doubled over the last decade, reaching EUR 213.2 billion in 2015, corresponding to 6.1% of the EU’s total trade. In 2015, the EU imported EUR 95.9 billion in goods from the region and exported EUR 117.4 billion to it. Collectively, the countries that form the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) represent the fifth largest partner for the EU.

So the trade opportunities between the EU and Latin American and Caribbean are huge and it is up to us to avail of them promoting and guaranteeing decent work, environmental protection, human and social rights.

Welcome Filippos!

In September, the Group III Secretariat welcomed the new trainee Filippos Metaxas, who will be working there until February 15th.

Filippos, 34 years old, grew up on the Greek island of Kefalonia. He did his bachelor’s at the University of Athens in History and Archaeology. In the next years he worked in various fields, including running his own business.

After graduation, he worked as a text editor (development of an online language tutor), at



northern Greece, as a member of a consortium of three individuals (2006-2008) and worked for Emerald Developments (2008-2011), an international property developer, based in Athens. In parallel, he runs his own seasonal hospitality business in Kefalonia, from 2006.

the University of Simon Fraser in Vancouver, Canada (2005-2006). Later, he undertook the licensing of a solar park project in

From 2013 to 2016, he moved to the Netherlands, where he did a master’s in Political Science (European Union in a Global Order program) at the University of Amsterdam. This experience fostered his interest in EU affairs and resulted in his current traineeship in the EESC. He was also a member of a local chamber of commerce (2011-2013) and continues to be a member of a society for the preservation of prehistoric cultural heritage (2010-...), both in Kefalonia. He speaks Greek, English, Dutch and Spanish.



Spectre of Brexit

A sword of Damocles over Ireland?



Jane MORRICE (UK)
Equality Commission for
Northern Ireland
Member of the Various
Interests' Group

The EU Council insists that the challenges facing the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland must be a priority in the Brexit negotiations and rightly so. Although part of the UK, Northern Ireland is different because of its geography, history and culture. It is the only part of the UK with a land border with another EU country and it is the only part of the UK where entitlement to dual Irish/British, therefore European, citizenship is guaranteed by an international peace agreement.

Known as the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, it faces serious hurdles on the road to its 20th anniversary next year. The power-sharing government, set up under the Agreement, has collapsed. Peace talks to resolve long-standing issues between the two main parties are in stalemate. Sectarian attacks are back in the headlines and the UK Government may implement direct rule from London in weeks if no agreement is reached. These are difficult and delicate times which run the risk of throwing the peace process into reverse.

Against this backdrop, the spectre of Brexit is hovering like a sword of Damocles over the island of Ireland and has been described as the most far-reaching issue facing Northern Ireland since the partition of Ireland in 1921. The fact that the majority in Northern Ireland voted to remain (56%/44%) is hard to ignore, particularly because the divide is primarily split between the two main parties with separate Irish/nationalist and British/Unionist allegiances. But there are a growing number of others who see themselves as both British and Irish or Northern Irish and European.

In the absence of an Assembly a local group has launched a petition urging Northern Ireland civil society to make their voices heard, which was presented to President Juncker last month. It calls on decision-makers in the UK, Ireland and the EU to recognise the will of the Northern Ireland people to stay in the EU, the UK and the British/Irish Council and to respect their right to remain European citizens. It calls for guarantees that the Irish border will stay open, that Northern Irish people will remain free to live, work, study and travel throughout Europe and reciprocal rights for EU citizens in Northern Ireland. It also calls for EU funding for peace, prosperity and progress to be continued beyond Brexit.

Underlining the vital role played by the EU in the peace process it calls for Northern Ireland to be granted 'Honorary EU Association' as a European Place of Global Peace building to protect the peace process and promote peace building worldwide. This would be done by launching an EU-led global peace initiative from Northern Ireland modelled on the EU PEACE



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programme set up in Northern Ireland after the ceasefires in 1994. That programme has since invested more than €2 billion in EU funding for cross-community, cross border peace and reconciliation projects.



Jane MORRICE during the debate with EC President JUNCKER



Named White Dove after Columbanus, who is described as the first European, the initiative would include a European centre of Peace Building in Belfast and a White Dove Path of Peace from Northern Ireland to Nicosia. The path would follow in the footsteps of the pilgrim and go beyond to pass through former war and conflict zones throughout Europe from Flanders fields through the Balkans to Cyprus, it would be launched in 2018 to mark the 20th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, the European Year of cultural heritage and the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War.



Towards a United Nations Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas



Geneviève SAVIGNY (FR)
Confédération paysanne
Member of the Various
Interests' Group



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The process towards a Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas aims at creating an international human rights instrument, improving the promotion and protection of their rights and drawing attention to the threats and discrimination suffered by peasants and people involved in small-scale food production across the world. The current draft declaration is the result of the work undertaken by La Via Campesina (LVC) over more than 15 years, supported by FIAN International and CETIM (Europe Third World Centre), with the support of other social movements. This process has a unique strategy: have the Declaration recognised by the UN, the international human rights governance system, based on issues coming from grassroots peasant movements. Indeed, small-scale peasants belong to the groups who are the most politically oppressed. They are increasingly at risk and are often victims of forced eviction, violence and harassment. Thus, a better recognition and protection of the rights of small peasants is a pressing issue.

Peasants and other people in rural areas are victims of systematic discrimination

The treaty bodies monitoring the implementation of the main human rights treaties, namely IESCR, ICCPR, CEDAW and CERD, have collected abundant evidence about the widespread and systematic violations of the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas as have the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. The Advisory Committee's study also identifies key patterns of the human rights violations committed against peasants and other people working in rural areas and of their systematic discrimination:

- ▶ Unequal access and control over land and other natural resources
- ▶ Agricultural policies skewed in favour of a tiny elite of farmers and of industrial agriculture



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There is no doubt at all that peasants and other people working in rural areas are victims of systemic discrimination and human rights violations and abuses. A UN declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas is a first important step in overcoming systemic discrimination and ensuring substantive equality.

Crucial rights

The recognition of crucial rights of peasants is essential for the object and purpose of the Declaration to be fulfilled.

- ▶ The **right to land** is about access, use and management of land, necessary for the realization of the rights to an adequate standard of living, to health and to participate in cultural life, as well as the right to be free from forced evictions or from contamination and destruction of water bodies and fisheries. It involves freedoms and entitlements, crucial for the fulfilment of rural people's rights.
- ▶ The **right to seeds and biodiversity** includes right to use, grow, reuse, store, develop, exchange, transport, give and sell seeds. By developing their seeds, peasants build more resilient and sustainable farming systems, able to feed others in spite of climate change. Thus, we want States to promote and support peasant seed banks and their conservation in situ, prohibit GMOs and limit the use of industrial seeds, respect extraterritorial obligations with specific reference to the regulation of non-state actors like transnational companies. These provisions should also be applied to animal breeding.
- ▶ By the **right to food sovereignty**, we refer to the right to a development model in which peasants can not only choose but also develop their own means of production, processing, distribution and consumption, in such a way that it values and improves the social and working conditions within agricultural and food systems. In this development model, peasant men and women have the right to manage common goods and participate in public policy in order to better regulate agricultural and food systems. Even here in Europe, peasant organisations are not always listened to by policy-makers. Thus, we also claim the right to access to justice and we ask for an ending to the repression and criminalisation of peasant organisations and trade unions.
- ▶ The **right to decent income and means of subsistence** basically means the right to a decent standard of living. States would have the obligation of regulating markets, prohibiting dumping and monopolies, guaranteeing fair and profitable prices for agricultural production, protecting access to markets, direct sale, and traditional means of production, exchange and processing of peasant produce, differentiated and adapted rules. We claim the right to set prices and choose markets.
- ▶ Collective **rights corresponds to the way in which rural communities operate**, especially in relation to the use, access and management of their resources, since most of them are socially defined and organized collectively. As echoed during the session, an exclusively individual rights approach could actually be detrimental to communities and contribute to antidemocratic practices within them, which would be contrary to the object and purpose of the Declaration itself.

On Friday, 29 September, the Human Rights Council in Geneva voted FOR the continuation of work for a Declaration of the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas.

Of the 47 countries voting 34 for which Switzerland and Portugal, 11 abstentions are the European countries, Korea, and Japan, the United States and Great Britain against.

The process continues for a tool of protection and valorization of peasants and peasants!



Overview of our Members' Work in the EESC

At its plenary session on 20–21 September 2017 the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted the following opinions for which Group III members were Rapporteurs or Co-Rapporteurs.



Carlos TRIAS PINTÓ (ES)
Spanish Union of Consumer Cooperatives
Member of the Various Interests' Group

INT/822 - Consumer financial services

The EESC:

- welcomes the fact that at this stage the European Commission is refraining from regulatory measures,
- supports it in its determination to apply the relevant competition rules;
- notes that particular attention is to be paid to the traditional retail banks ("boring banking") as a key intermediary of such products and services;
- recommends taking steps to ensure that the tax arrangements for products and services are no longer an obstacle to fair competition;
- urges the Commission to make provision for appropriate, independent, obligatorily certified comparison tools for different financial products in the various legal jurisdictions of the EU;
- recommends regulation of non-European IT giants, such as Google, Apple etc., which use their customer databases to offer customised products for direct sale without being subject to EU rules;
- recommends that the Commission define additional products, which are simple, with the same characteristics and so comparable and transparent alongside the consumer products already set out in the action plan.



Indre VAREIKYTĖ (LT)
Lithuanian Youth Council
Member of the Various Interests' Group

SOC/562 - Skills/New forms of work

The scope of the Ecodesign Working Plan 2016-2019 is too limited to be a Due to the availability of very high-capacity broadband networks, a growing number of **atypical work forms** are being developed. The EESC emphasises that, in view of this growth of atypical work, the provision of **social security** and the **avoidance of poverty** must be given high priority and that social risks should be dealt with through the **coordinated efforts of all stakeholders**. In this context, the EESC would like to see certain national initiatives developed by trade unions and the civil society for the **provision of guidance** to crowdworkers, taken up by the Commission and applied at European scale. Increasing information asymmetry between consumers and businesses, on the other hand, will have to be dealt with by methods such as the **ethical codes** for liberal professions.

Automation and robots will also have a significant impact on the future of work: they can replace monotonous, heavy or dangerous work and can be particularly helpful for people with physical disabilities; they have the potential to stabilise the economy in an ageing society. Yet, a significant number of **jobs will be affected** by the introduction of more robots into the workplace. This is why the EESC believes that a **social dialogue** will be needed at an early stage.

Taking into account these challenges, the EESC is of the opinion that it should be ensured that **appropriate skills** will be available, so that Europe

remains competitive and is able to create new businesses and new jobs, people can remain integrated into the labour market throughout their entire working lives, and well-being for all is assured. These future skills should match **societal needs** and the **demands of the labour market**. **Lifelong learning**

will be a necessity for everyone, while much more time will have to be devoted to **professional training and informal learning**. More specifically, public and private organisations will have to provide professional training in **new technologies**, especially for those who do not have the capacity to organise training themselves, such as SMEs, the liberal professions and the self-employed. Long-term developments though, which may lead to new and unpredictable challenges where today's skills can quickly become obsolete, can best be dealt with by **general education**. Qualitative preparation of educators will, therefore, be of key importance, according to the EESC, as well as their status in terms of professional flexibility, remuneration, and social guarantees.



Alain COHEUR (BE)
Union Nationale des Mutualités Socialistes/Solidaris
Member of the Various Interests' Group

INT/816 - Impact of the digital healthcare revolution on health insurance

The EESC believes that equal access to healthcare, one of the main objectives of health policies, can benefit from digital support provided certain conditions are met:

- equal geographical coverage;
- bridging the digital divide in terms of use by the public, health professionals and stakeholders in health insurance schemes;
- interoperability among the various components of the digital architecture (databases, medical devices);
- protection of health data which must under no circumstances be used to the detriment of patients.

The EESC also highlights the need to:

- develop and facilitate people's digital health literacy to encourage a critical approach to health information;
- guarantee good quality information in the field of health, particularly by encouraging labelling/accreditation procedures for health applications;
- bolster the relationship of trust between patients, health professionals and stakeholders in health insurance schemes;
- introduce a training system suited to health service users and health professionals alike;
- support the development of a nomenclature of reimbursable treatments and well-being services by taking account of technical innovations made possible by digitisation;



ADOPTED



Michael MCLOUGHLIN (IE)
 Youth Work Ireland
 Member of the Various Interests' Group

ECO/419 - Common (Consolidated) Corporate Tax Base

The EESC endorses the aims of the Commission proposals in the area of the CCCTB and recommends the greatest efforts be made to pursue the CCCTB by consensus, allowing for the sensitive nature of the issues in terms of subsidiarity and state sovereignty.

The Committee understands the reasons behind the two-stage approach adopted by the Commission but urges the speedy introduction of stage two after the agreement of a common base, as it is only after consolidation that companies will feel the major benefits. There will be some benefits in terms of combating aggressive tax planning from stage one but the consolidation completes the task.

The EESC recognises that the Commission relaunched the CCCTB proposal both with the objective to aid the single market and to combat aggressive tax planning, attributing income where the value is created.

The Committee recommends a re-examination of the apportionment formula for the CCCTB. The Commission and the Member States should reflect on whether to exclude intellectual property (IP) from the formula. The sales by destination key may also need changes to ensure equitable implementation and there is concern that the operation of the proposed sales key will result in many of the smaller exporting Member States losing substantial amounts of taxable income to the larger consuming Member States. The EESC believes the proposal should aim for an equitable formula and to avoid systematically unbalanced effect.



John COMER (EESC)

The EESC urges caution on the proposals on depreciation to ensure they reflect the real experience of businesses.

The Committee welcomes the recognition of the tax treatment of equity financing for corporate investments, through the proposal to put debt and equity financing on an equal footing. However, companies facing economic hardship should not be exposed to a greater tax burden.



ADOPTED

OUR GROUP'S STRENGTH



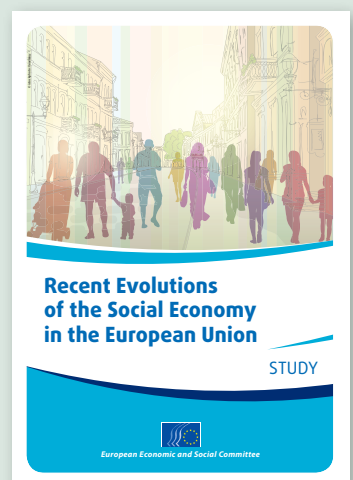
The last meeting of the **Farmers' Category** took place on 26 September 2017. In the morning, there was a presentation of "Save the Landscape Forum" by **Mario CATIZZONE**, Referent Europa Soil Group, followed by a debate. In the afternoon, the category took a look at what the EU Parliament expects from CAP post 2020 and the different budget scenarios together with **Mr Czesław Siekierski**, Chairman of the AGRI Committee of the European Parliament.



John BRYAN (EESC Spokesperson Farmers Category)



The next meeting of the **Social Economy Category** will take place on 10 November, presided by the co-Spokespersons **Messrs. Krzysztof BALON** et **Alain COHEUR**. The principal topic for debate will be the presentation of the new study "Best Practices in Public Policies Regarding the European Social Economy Post the Economic Crisis", which was commissioned by the EESC to CIRIEC. Other topics for discussion will include the 2018 Work Programme of the Category and a presentation by the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) of an EU-funded project for a European Network for Employers in Social Services (EU PESSIS 3).



<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.categories>



REFLEXION CORNER

Europe – what is your story?



Thierry LIBAERT (FR)
Fondation Nicolas Hulot pour la Nature et l'Homme
Member of the Various Interests' Group

What remains of the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome? The commemoration ceremonies passed completely unreported, and not only because of the constant series of jolts in our presidential campaign. From Brexit to an image of ethics of "variable geometry" painted by the revolving door approach adopted by the former European Commission president, Manuel Barroso, in Goldman Sachs - the list of symptoms of an apparent break-up in Europe is long. Even on environmental issues, the European Union - which has for a long time been crowing that it is at the forefront of the fight against global warming - was incapable of ratifying the Paris agreement until very late on, which led its new president, Jean-Claude Juncker, to state publicly that this made us look ridiculous.

2017 could have been Europe's year. We celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome which, on 25 March 1957, founded the European Economic Community. This year also saw the 30th anniversary of the Erasmus programme, adopted on 15 June 1987. Likewise, we could take pleasure from the 15th anniversary of the birth of the Euro - a currency common to 19 countries - which amongst other things frees us up from incessant exchange rate issues and calculations when travelling in Europe.

However, this was not to be: the causes of the disaffection are numerous and often structural in nature. Some responsibility lies with communication, which has proved itself unable to pass on the message about, and demonstrate the attractiveness of, the European narrative.

There are many obstacles and their solution goes beyond the oft-repeated mantra that Europe should do more to communicate its message. Merely from a communication perspective, Europe as such does not exist: there are just European institutions, each one aiming to promote its own activities.

And then there is the fact that the very foundations of the European narrative seemed to be largely outmoded. More than 60 years after the Treaty of Rome, Europe is concentrating the efforts to justify its existence on the issue of peace alone: such a fundamental matter, but completely outdated for a population which has not experienced war for more than 70 years. Young people in most of the countries of the European Union have never known war and cannot for one moment imagine that its members might enter into armed conflict with one another.

On top of all this, any communication that there is cannot be properly heard, because it is fragmented and ad hoc. Europe only takes the floor every 5 years when there are publicity campaigns urging people to vote in European Parliament elections. Everyone involved in communication knows perfectly well that in order to have an impact, communication measures have to be sustainable

and use a combination of multiple tools; communicating by buying advertising space every 5 years is at best ineffective and at worst only heightens the impression of a wide gap between European institutions and the public.

Lastly, communication from the European institutions is detached from the everyday lives of Europeans. Quite capable of showing how effective the EU is in saving Europe's big banks it struggles to convince people of the value of its efforts to improve life for consumers.

Of course, it would be futile to criticise a Europe which is still first and foremost the scapegoat for every Member State's difficulties and an outlet for populists to vent their wrath, detecting an easy target for scathing attacks - a target which is unable to defend itself.

A basic principle in communication is to clarify the stance of the party trying to communicate. It is vital that Europe speak with one voice. Failing that, the European narrative will continue to be nothing more than a juxtaposition of compartmentalised institutional messages. Europe must take the offensive again and this can only work through a central communication body endowed with a genuine long-term strategy.

Europe needs a new story; it has to be able to suggest ambitions which are not just a straightforward repetition of the reasoning the founding fathers put forward in the period immediately after the war. By working on its values, on culture, on the social model, on a vision of the need for an economic transition which places people at the heart of the matter, Europe will secure all the legitimacy it needs to provide an anchor for its new story.

Civil society is notable by its absence from a Europe which is built on a purely economic vision constructed around the principles of internal free trade. And it is precisely this model, which functioned perfectly well in the growth phase, which began to reveal its limitations when recession reared its head. There is no purely economic or institutional solution to the crisis in legitimacy and representativeness unfurling across Europe.

Europe's communication cannot function as an instrument; there is no tool able to restore Europeans' faith in Europe. At the European Economic and Social Committee, we have begun to experiment with "Going local" initiatives, which not only serve to convey civil society's expectations straight to European decision-makers, but also to encourage the 350 Committee members to go out and meet as many players in the field as possible, to speak to them directly and testify that real progress is being made in Europe, providing concrete examples. This human dimension is vital. The best way of communicating Europe's message is to communicate it in person.



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EESC Various Interests Group

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