

Brussels, 6 November 2020

## **Note for the File**

### **Main activities of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)**

#### **Results of the 686th Bureau meeting, Brussels, 28 October 2020 (held in hybrid format)**

The **President-elect, Mrs. Christa SCHWENG**, welcomed all the members of the Bureau, congratulating them on their election and expressing the wish that her mandate would be characterized by a **revival of the prestige and the political impact of the Committee**, in a climate of good cooperation in the service of the European project. The slogan that the president proposes for her mandate - "United for the future of Europe", would be the synthesis of this vision.

The Bureau adopted the **draft schedule of meetings for 2021**. The dates for the plenary sessions in 2021 are: 27 and 28 January, 24 and 25 February, 24 and 25 March, 27 and 28 April, 9 and 10 June, 7 and 8 July, 22 and 23 September, 20 and 21 October and 8 and 9 December 2021. Nine ordinary Bureau meetings are scheduled, each for the day before the plenary session as well as two extraordinary Bureau meetings on 18 May and 16 November 2021.

It decided that the constitutive plenary session of October 27, 28 and 29 would be convened as a hybrid meeting.

The draft agendas for the forthcoming plenary sessions in December and January were discussed. In December, the EESC plenary will hold a debate with Margrethe VESTAGER, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission on "*A Europe Fit for the Digital Age*" as well as a debate on the occasion of the *International Day of People with Disability*. In January, debates will focus on a presentation of the priorities of the Portuguese Presidency, Brexit (with the participation of Michel Barnier, Head of Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom) and the European Commission Work 2021 Programme.

The bureau took note of the proposals with regard to the **general composition of the specialized sections and their respective bureaus** and decided, in accordance with Articles 18 and 19 of the EESC Rules of Procedure, to submit the lists to the assembly for approval.

Mrs. BARBUCCI, presented the **priorities of her mandate**, as vice-president in charge of **budgets**. She recalled that budgetary action will take place in the difficult context created by the European Parliament's refusal to grant discharge for the 2018 financial year, highlighting that this decision is not based on mismanagement of resources, and on the need to re-establish the Committee after the major crisis COVID-19 represents.

The Bureau renewed its call to the Advisory Committee to submit a proposal for the **revision of the EESC Code of Conduct** and the Rules of Procedure by December 2020; and decided to ask the EESC plenary to

set up an RoP panel for the partial revision of the EESC RoP, of the CoC and of its implementing provisions, and to appoint the members of the Advisory Committee as its members; it also decided to adopt the implementing provisions for the Code of Conduct and for the Rules of Procedure in the February Bureau meeting, and to ask the secretary-general to provide all the required assistance, including legal service, to work with the Advisory Committee and the RoP panel.

The Bureau decided to **amend the decision on the reimbursement of expenses** incurred and the allowances received by Committee members, delegates of the Committee's consultative commissions, their respective alternates and the Committee's experts in order to allow for and set out specific provisions regarding the remote attendance to meetings. The decision, in force until 31 January 2021, foresees that, when sanitary measures or related circumstances prevent the organisation of, or attendance at, duly authorised physical meetings, beneficiaries may attend such meetings remotely through electronic means.

The **687th meeting of the Bureau** will take place on Tuesday 17 November 2020 in a web meeting format without any physical presence. The **556th plenary** session is scheduled for **Tuesday 1, Wednesday 2 and Thursday 3 December 2020** (time to be confirmed).

#### **Results of the 555nd Plenary meeting, Brussels, held 26 to 28 October 2020 (held in hybrid format)**

The EESC held its **inaugural plenary session** on 26, 27 and 28 October 2020 as it began its **2020-2025 term** of office. During its session of October 27 and in accordance with Articles 4 and 7 of the Rules of Procedure, the Assembly elected by 267 votes in favour, 3 against and 8 abstentions a list of 36 candidates for the Bureau for the first period of the 5 year term (October 2020 - April 2023 ).

**Christa SCHWENG** (AT- Group I) became the **33rd president** of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) with 275 votes in favour, 2 against and 8 abstentions. She is the fifth woman to head the EESC since its establishment in 1958. **Two new vice-presidents** were also elected: Giulia BARBUCCI (Italy) for budget and Cillian LOHAN (Ireland) for communication.

The Assembly then elected the presidents of the specialized sections in accordance with Article 7.6 of the EESC Rules of Procedure.

- J Alain COHEUR (BE – III), president of the INT section, was elected by 278 votes in favour, 2 against and 9 abstentions.
- J Stefano PALMIERI (IT-II), president of the ECO section, was elected by 278 votes in favour, 5 against and 10 abstentions.
- J Aurel LAUREN IU PLOSCEANU (RO – I), president of the SOC section, was elected by 281 votes in favour, 3 against and 8 abstentions.
- J Baiba MILTOVI A (LV-III), president of the Section TEN, was elected by 279 votes for, 4 against and 9 abstentions.
- J Peter SCHMIDT (DE – II), president of the NAT section, was elected by 279 votes in favour, 4 against and 9 abstentions.
- J Dimitris DIMITRIADIS (EL – I), president of the REX section, was elected by 278 votes in favour, 4 against and 11 abstentions.

Following the inaugural plenary session, **three new Group presidents** of the EESC Groups were elected and will **serve for the 2020-2023 period**. The new Group presidents are:

- Employers Group (Group I): Stefano MALLIA (MT)
- Workers Group (Group II): Oliver RÖPKE (AT)
- Diversity Europe Group (Group III): Séamus BOLAND (IE)

The full list of Bureau Members for the period 2020-2023 can be consulted [here](#).

Afterwards, the plenary voted the composition and Bureau of its specialized sections as well as of its observatories, consultative commissions, subcommittees and delegations in accordance with the EESC Rules

of Procedure. It also elected its Quaestors and an **Advisory Committee on Member Conduct** was established. More information can be found [here](#).

The session on 29 October 2020 was marked by a **debate** on the "**Recovery for the future of Europe – The role of the European Economic and Social Committee**" with:

- David Maria SASSOLI, president of the European Parliament;
- Charles MICHEL, president of the European Council (video message);
- Ursula VON DER LEYEN, president of the European Commission (video message);
- Apostolos TZITZIKOSTAS, president of the European Committee of the Regions (tbc);
- Geert PAUWELS, chief executive officer of Lineas (private rail freight operator);
- Luca VISENTINI, secretary-general of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC);
- Jeremy WATES, secretary-general of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB).

In his speech, President SASSOLI congratulated Ms Christa SCHWENG with her election as President of the EESC and expressed that Parliament is ready to work together in a constructive way.

He expressed his gratitude to the European Economic and Social Committee for expressing clearly and on numerous occasions the deep concerns of all those who have been deeply affected by the COVID-19 crisis, urging the EU to provide an adequate response to this challenge. President SASSOLI then presented the state of play regarding the MFF, the "Recovery and resilience facility" and the InvestEU program (including the appointment by the EESC of an expert for the InvestEU advisory board). He stressed that all EU institutions should continue to try to respond to this crisis together. He stressed that one will have to work hard to ensure that the single market can return to the same condition it was in before the crisis. As, in an increasingly competitive global economy, European citizens must increasingly rely on a well-functioning European market to thrive. For the long-term relaunch, European industry needs to be strengthened, making it more resistant to global shocks and safeguard European resources, without falling into the trap of protectionism. The President also reminded about low-wage jobs and in-work poverty (ie relative income poverty) remaining the great European challenge.

In this context, he welcomed the Directive on adequate minimum wages: it is a step forward to ensure that all workers earn enough to escape poverty and live in dignity, while considering that the right to Collective bargaining between unions and employers is key and has already proven to be the best way to ensure fair pay. He ended by stating his belief that this crisis can be an opportunity to put Europe on the right path for a different, more reactive, inclusive, sustainable and fairer Europe, which offers tangible benefits to citizens and all the professional categories represented in the European Economic and Social Committee.

## **Opinions and reports**

A total of 17 opinions was submitted for approval, of which 5 were approved under the procedure with a debate and 12 under the procedure without a debate.

The main opinions were: The Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2020 (ECO/520), Migrant integration and target language levels (exploratory opinion at the request of the German presidency) (SOC/641), Diversity management in the EU Member States (exploratory opinion at the request of the German presidency) (SOC/642), Social dialogue for economic sustainability and resilience (exploratory opinion at the request of the German presidency) (SOC/644).

## **IMCO**

### **L-category vehicles / COVID**

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 168/2013 as regards specific measures on L-category end-of-series vehicles in response to the COVID-19 outbreak

**[COM(2020) 491 final – [2020/0251 \(COD\)](#)]**

EP Rapporteur: GRAPINI Maria

[INT/915-EESC-2020](#)

*In view of the COVID-19 crisis, which has led to a virtual halt in sales in 2020, the EESC has examined the European Commission's proposal for a regulation which would allow Euro 4 motorcycle manufacturers to sell beyond 1 January 2021 vehicles they had in stock on 15 March 2020.*

## **ENVI + DEVE (associated)**

### **Union Civil Protection Mechanism**

Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and the Council amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a European Union Civil Protection Mechanism

**[COM(2020) 220 – [2020/0097 \(COD\)](#)]**

EP Rapporteurs : ANDROULAKIS Nikos and TOBÉ Tomas

[NAT/798-EESC-2020](#)

*The revamped Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) is a tool through which the EU supports, coordinates and supplements actions of EU Member States in the field of civil protection in order to prevent, prepare and respond to natural and man-made disasters within and outside the EU. The new proposal aims to strengthen the UCPM to ensure that the EU and its Member States are better prepared to respond to large-scale emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic.*

## **ENVI + ITRE (associated)**

### **Achieving climate neutrality**

Amended proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 (European Climate Law)

**[COM(2020) 563 final – [2020/0036 \(COD\)](#)]**

EP Rapporteurs: GUTELAND Jytte and KRASNOD BSKI Zdzisław

[NAT/804-EESC-2020](#)

## **PECH**

### **Canary Islands – extension of tariff quotas for fishery products**

Proposal for a Council Regulation opening and providing for the administration of autonomous Union tariff quotas for imports of certain fishery products into the Canary Islands from 2021 to 2027

**[COM(2020) 437 – [2020/0209 \(CNS\)](#)]**

[NAT/802-EESC-2020](#)

## ECON

### **VAT - Identification of taxable persons in Northern Ireland**

Proposal for a Council Directive amending Directive 2006/112/EC on the common system of value added tax as regards the identification of taxable persons in Northern Ireland

**[COM(2020) 360 final - [2020/0165 \(CNS\)](#)]**

EP Rapporteur: TINAGLI Irene

**[ECO/532-EESC-2020-04038](#)**

### **Amendments to financial regulation to facilitate economic recovery post Covid-19**

Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2014/65/EU as regards information requirements, product governance and position limits to help the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

**[COM(2020) 280 final - [2020/0152 \(COD\)](#)]**

**[COM(2020) 281 final – [2020/0155 \(COD\)](#)]**

**[COM(2020) 282 final – [2020/0151 \(COD\)](#)]**

**[COM(2020) 283 final – [2020/0156 \(COD\)](#)]**

**[ECO/529-EESC-2020](#)**

### **The Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2020 (additional opinion)**

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European investment bank – Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2020

**[COM(2019) 650 final]**

**[ECO/520-EESC-2020](#)**

*This additional opinion complements and updates the proposals made in the original 2020 Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy (ASGS) opinion, adopted in February this year, produced under time pressure and before the COVID-19 outbreak so it could not take into account recent developments. The Semester exercise will be geared towards exiting the current crisis and the opinion is necessary for the EESC to make related proposals. The additional opinion will be presented for the October 2020 Plenary, to provide a timely input to the Commission's preparation of the next ASGS expected again for November 2020. It will therefore target directly the next European Semester cycle at the right political and institutional moment.*

### **Amendment to the Benchmark Regulation**

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2016/1011 as regards the exemption of certain third country foreign exchange benchmarks and the designation of replacement benchmarks for certain benchmarks in cessation

**[COM(2020) 337 final - [2020/0154 \(COD\)](#)]**

EP Rapporteur: NAGTEGAAL Caroline

**[ECO/530-EESC-2020-03369](#)**

### **Euro area economic policy 2020 (additional opinion)**

Recommendation for a Council recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area

**[COM(2019) 652 final]**

**[ECO/521-EESC-2020](#)**

## EMPL

### **Updated skills agenda**

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience

[COM\(2020\) 275 final 2020/0137\(NLE\)](#)

[SOC/637-EESC-2020](#)

### **Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee**

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Youth Employment Support: a Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation

[\[COM\(2020\)276 final\]](#)

Proposal for a Council recommendation on A Bridge to Jobs - Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee and replacing Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee

[\[COM\(2020\) 277 final\]](#)

[SOC/647-EESC-2020](#)

## LIBE

### **Victims' Rights Strategy**

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions EU Strategy on victims' rights (2020-2025)

[\[COM\(2020\) 258 final\]](#)

[SOC/652-EESC-2020](#)

### **Combatting child sexual abuse online**

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a temporary derogation from certain provisions of Directive 2002/58/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the use of technologies by number-independent interpersonal communications service providers for the processing of personal and other data for the purpose of combatting child sexual abuse online

[\[COM\(2020\) 568 final – 2020/0259 \(COD\)\]](#)

EP Rapporteur: SIPPEL Birgit

[TEN/721-EESC-2020](#)

### **Exploratory opinions at the request of the German presidency**

**Social dialogue as an important pillar of economic sustainability and the resilience of economies taking into account the influence of lively public debate in the Member States (Exploratory opinion at the request of the German presidency)**

[SOC/644-EESC-2020](#)

*Social dialogue, at national and European level, plays a key role in shaping economic, labour and social policies that promote the upward convergence of living and working conditions across Member States. Growing globalised and interconnected economies have caused an evolution of social dialogue and require a common and coordinated approach at European level. European social dialogue is an inalienable component of the European social model and is enshrined in the Treaty, supported by EU legislation and recognised in the European Pillar of Social Rights. The EESC encourages the European social partners to exploit all of the potentialities the Treaty offers them to engage in negotiations to address the new topics and rapid changes in the labour market.*

**Diversity management in the EU Member States (Exploratory opinion at the request of the German presidency)**

[SOC/642-EESC-2020](#)

*This opinion, requested by the German Presidency of the Council, makes the following main recommendations:*

- data collection and monitoring of diversity policies in the labour market must be improved at all levels;
- the principles of diversity management must be integrated into EU rules and generalised;

- more funds should be allocated to diversity management, in order to support the work of civil society organisations working with racialized groups and the diversity policies put in place by the social partners;
- to tackle the underutilisation of migrants' skills and increase their participation in the labour market, these need to be further recognised. In addition, migrants should benefit from free and universal training, including language courses;
- migrants should be active, not only in the labour market, but also in politics;

**Integration of women, mothers and families with a migrant background in the EU Member States and target language levels for integration (Exploratory opinion at the request of the German presidency)**  
**[SOC/641-EESC-2020](#)**

*The EESC describes integration as a dynamic process, involving both migrants and the receiving society. It believes that migration challenges should be addressed in a holistic manner. Gender equality should become one of the key pillars in integration. Migrant families and parents should be involved in the local and school community as from the early stages of reception. On language training, the EESC believes that this should foresee cultural exploration and involvement in the community and society, as well as guidance and information to migrants on the advantages and the aims of language training. In view of the disparities that exist in Member States with regard to language teaching, the EESC calls for common EU guidelines for language training, which can help ensure a unified and holistic approach.*

**Next Bureau meeting:** 17 November 2020

**Next Plenary meeting :** 2-3 December 2020

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