



THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is a consultative body of the European Union, based in Brussels. It is composed of 329 members. Its opinions are required on the basis of a mandatory consultation in the fields established by the Treaties or a voluntary consultation by the Commission, the Council, or Parliament. It may also issue opinions on its own initiative. Its members are not bound by any instructions. They are to be completely independent in the performance of their duties, in the EU's general interest.

LEGAL BASIS

Article 13(4) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), Articles 300-304 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), [Council Decision \(EU\) 2019/853 determining the composition of the European Economic and Social Committee](#) and subsequent Council decisions appointing the members of the EESC, proposed by different Member States, and [Council Decision \(EU\) 2020/1392](#) appointing the members of the European Economic and Social Committee for the period from 21 September 2020 to 20 September 2025.

COMPOSITION

A. Number and national allocation of seats (Article 301 TFEU and [Council Decision \(EU\) 2019/853 determining the composition of the European Economic and Social Committee](#)).

The [EESC](#) currently has 329 members, divided between the Member States as follows:

- 24 each for Germany, France and Italy;
- 21 each for Poland and Spain;
- 15 for Romania;
- 12 each for Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden;
- 9 each for Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania and Slovakia;
- 7 each for Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia;
- 6 each for Luxembourg and Cyprus;
- 5 for Malta.



Overall, the size of the committee was reduced from 350 to 329 members with effect from 1 February 2020 (following the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU).

B. Method of appointment (Article 302 TFEU)

The members of the committee are appointed by the Council by qualified majority, on the basis of proposals by the Member States (as in [this example](#)). The Council consults the Commission on these nominations (Article 302(2) TFEU). The Member States must ensure that the various categories of economic and social activity are adequately represented. In practice, one third of the seats goes to employers, one third to employees and one third to other groups (farmers, retailers, the liberal professions, consumers, etc.).

The maximum number of EESC members allowed by the Treaty of Lisbon is 350 (Article 301 TFEU). This was briefly exceeded between July 2013 and September 2015 owing to the accession of Croatia on 1 July 2013. By adding nine new seats for the new Member State, total membership increased to 353 (from 344). [Council Decision \(EU\) 2015/1157](#) adapted the composition of the EESC following the accession of Croatia: the number of members for Estonia, Cyprus and Luxembourg was reduced by one each in order to address the discrepancy between the maximum number of EESC members set out in the first paragraph of Article 301 TFEU and the number of members following the accession of Croatia. Therefore, the number of members for Luxembourg and Cyprus was decreased from six to five each and the number of Estonian members from seven to six. [Council Decision \(EU\) 2019/853](#) determined the final composition of the EESC in line with the distribution of seats in the Committee of the Regions, which also has 329 members, and in the light of the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, which resulted in 24 vacant seats. As a result, the number of members for Luxembourg and Cyprus was increased from five to six once more and the number of Estonian members from six to seven.

C. Type of mandate (Article 301 TFEU)

The members of the committee are nominated by national governments and appointed by the Council for a renewable five-year term of office (Article 302 TFEU). They are drawn from economic and social interest groups in Europe. The latest renewal was in October 2015 for the 2015-2020 term of office.

They belong to one of three groups:

- [Employers](#) (Group I);
- [Workers](#) (Group II);
- [Diversity Europe](#) (Group III).

The members must be completely independent in the performance of their duties, in the general interest of the EU (Article 300(4) TFEU). Every time a member's or alternate member's seat on the EESC becomes vacant following the end of their term of office, a separate Council decision is needed to replace that member.



ORGANISATION AND PROCEDURES

The EESC is not among the institutions listed in Article 13(1) TEU. However, Article 13(4) states that the EESC assists Parliament, the Council and the Commission by exercising advisory activities.

- The President and the Bureau, each with a term of office of two and a half years, are appointed by the Committee from among its members.
- The committee adopts its own rules of procedure.
- It may meet on its own initiative, but it normally meets at the request of the Council or the Commission.
- To help prepare its opinions, it has the following six specialised sections for the various fields of EU activity (and can set up subcommittees to deal with specific subjects):
 - Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment ([NAT](#));
 - Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion ([ECO](#));
 - Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship ([SOC](#));
 - External Relations ([REX](#));
 - The Single Market, Production and Consumption ([INT](#));
 - Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society ([TEN](#)).

The EESC is assisted by a general secretariat, headed by a Secretary-General who reports to the President. The general secretariat provides the EESC's members with policy, communication, organisational, linguistic and material support. The general secretariat is made up of approximately 700 staff members. For the sake of efficiency, the EESC shares its permanent secretariat services in Brussels with the secretariat of the Committee of the Regions (with regard to its seat in Brussels, see Protocol No 6 to the Lisbon Treaty on the location of the seats of the institutions). In addition, the Bureau of Parliament also entered into an agreement with the Committee, in the framework of the 2014 budgetary procedure, to jointly increase efficiency in the area of translation. The Committee has an annual administrative budget, included in section VI of the EU budget, of EUR 142.5 million (2020) – [a 4.22 % increase compared to the 2019 budget](#) – of which EUR 130.9 million was spent or carried forward to 2021 as commitments. The total increase for the [draft 2022 budget estimates](#) compared to 2021 is EUR 5 970 705 or 4.12 %.

POWERS

The EESC was set up by the 1957 Rome Treaties in order to involve economic and social interest groups in the establishment of the common market and to provide institutional machinery for briefing the Commission and the Council of Ministers on European issues. The Single European Act (1986) and the Maastricht Treaty (1992) extended the range of issues that must be referred to the committee. The Amsterdam



Treaty further broadened the areas for referral to the committee and allowed it to be consulted by Parliament. On average, the EESC delivers 170 advisory documents and opinions a year (of which about 15 % are issued on its own initiative). Opinions are published in the Official Journal. The committee also has an advisory function (Article 300 TFEU). Its purpose is to inform the institutions responsible for EU decision-making of the opinions of the representatives of economic and social activity.

A. Opinions issued at the request of EU institutions

1. Mandatory consultation

In certain specifically mentioned areas, the TFEU stipulates that a decision may only be taken after the Council or Commission has consulted the EESC. These areas are:

- Agricultural policy (Article 43);
- Free movement of persons and services (Articles 46, 50 and 59);
- Transport policy (Articles 91, 95 and 100);
- Harmonisation of indirect taxation (Article 113);
- Approximation of laws on the single market (Articles 114 and 115);
- Employment policy (Articles 148, 149 and 153);
- Social policy, education, vocational training and youth (Articles 156, 165 and 166);
- Public health (Article 168);
- Consumer protection (Article 169);
- Trans-European networks (Article 172);
- Industrial policy (Article 173);
- Economic, social and territorial cohesion (Article 175);
- Research and technological development and space (Articles 182 and 188);
- The environment (Article 192).

2. Voluntary consultation

The EESC may also be consulted by Parliament, the Commission or the Council on any other matter as they see fit. When these institutions consult the committee, whether on a mandatory or voluntary basis, they may set a time limit (of at least one month) after which the absence of an opinion cannot prevent them from taking further action (Article 304 TFEU).

B. Issuing an opinion on its own initiative

The committee may decide to issue an opinion whenever it considers such action appropriate.



ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Under the [cooperation agreement between Parliament and the EESC of 5 February 2014](#), both institutions committed to cooperate in order to reinforce the democratic legitimacy of the EU. Specifically, they agreed that:

- The EESC will prepare impact assessments with information and relevant materials from civil society on how existing EU legislation is working and what deficiencies need to be taken into account in making and revising EU legislation. This is sent to Parliament in due time before the start of the amendment procedure;
- In all relevant parliamentary committee meetings, one seat will be reserved for an EESC member. EESC rapporteurs will be invited to present substantial opinions in hearings of the relevant parliamentary committees;
- General legislative cooperation and the work plan are discussed twice a year between the Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs, Parliament committee Chairs and the President of the EESC.

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