

SUMMARY OF THE RESOLUTION

European Economic and Social Committee's contribution to the 2021 European Commission's work programme

1. As the EESC pointed out in its resolution "EESC proposal for post-COVID 19 crisis reconstruction and recovery", the EESC warmly welcomes and fully supports the proposals of the European Commission: the Next Generation EU plan and the overall EU budget for 2021-2027. The Committee hopes and expects that the lines set out by the Commission in these plans, due to the need for recovery and reconstruction after the coronavirus crisis will be fully and concretely extended in the Commission's work programme for 2021.
2. For the EESC, the work programme should focus on restructuring and improving our economy and society, to be based on the following principles: protecting human and social rights, democratic values and the rule of law; unlocking the full potential of the Single Market; achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); creating a circular economy and achieving climate neutrality in the EU by 2050 at the latest, and ensure good governance and democratic accountability.
3. The EESC underlines that the six headline ambitions chosen by the Commission (A European Green Deal, A Europe fit for the digital age, An economy that works for people, A stronger Europe in the world, Promoting our European way of life and A new push for European democracy) provide a powerful framework for working out the work programme for 2021. Perhaps, a more explicit focus should be made on investments and the need to accelerate them also thanks to the measures currently being adopted.
4. Especially now that we experience the importance of cooperation between countries in these times of crisis, the EESC hopes that the forthcoming Conference on the future of Europe will lead to strengthen and deepen the EU's institutional structure and for a real renewal of the EU project, capable to face the challenges of the next decades. The Commission can therefore count on the full support of the Committee.
5. The EESC is convinced that the process of recovery and reconstruction of the economy and society will only be possible with the active participation of civil society organisations and social partners.
6. The EU Green Deal can be seen also as an effective tool to sustainably restart economy through massive investments supporting the necessary structural changes that is Europe facing. From this point of view, it could be considered as an opportunity to support a longer-term economic recovery. It requires a new consensus in Europe to concentrate for this purpose sufficient public and private financial sources and adopt a new governance to successfully implement it in practice.
7. Public money invested in recovery plans should not only help restore the European economy and society but also help reduce drastically the impacts of further shocks by investing in a resilient, inclusive and climate friendly economy (so-called "well-being economy").
8. The EU's sustainable finance taxonomy should guide public and private investment throughout the recovery to accelerate the shift from polluting sectors into green sectors.
9. The coronavirus crisis shows that the digital revolution is an important part of increasing our societies' crisis resilience. Investing in digitalisation of essential services and increasing the ability of governments, legislators and public institutions to deliver their services during a crisis is paramount.

10. The Commission is invited to continue to use the Semester as a driver for recovery based on the investment and reform priorities identified as part of the European Semester. The recent emphasis on better including social matters and the European Green Deal is welcomed by the Committee, as is the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility via the Semester.
11. There is an opportunity in promoting social innovation as a model for recovery through co-creation, co-design and co-production. Organised civil society is a catalyst for social innovation, a movement that has contributed to design welfare systems resulting in new policies, structures, products, services and working methods. The participation of civil society is needed now more than ever – but true social innovation only happens when organised civil society is involved.
12. Most importantly, one of the main lessons of the coronavirus crisis is that health systems in almost every European country need to be strengthened, first and foremost by focusing on prevention. While the responsibility for health care is a national responsibility, the spread of the virus is not bound by borders. It is affecting the whole of Europe both within and beyond our borders with sanitary, social and economic consequences which urge common responses at European level.
13. The EU needs to strengthen and support its global position in terms of playing a more important and strategic role in the world economy as well as politics. The EU economy has a potential to better utilize its comparative advantages in the global trade and investment market, especially in advanced manufacturing and innovative services, with ambition to be a global leader. This effort should be accompanied by a better and more effective representation of the EU in the key global organisations and speak there one voice. The EESC calls upon the European Commission to make a relevant effort to strengthen the global position in the EU to be also reflected in its work programme for 2021 more specifically.
14. Beyond economic and environment issues, the EU work programme in 2021 must be driven by the social dimension. This means that its commitment to a social and sustainable Europe shall be a priority. In this, civil society organisations play an important role as well.
15. The EESC strongly supports the European Commission's proposal to develop a "European Democracy Action Plan" which should be comprehensive and continuous, with the capacity to effect change, assured by financial support and inter-institutional coordination.

Based on the work of the *ad hoc* group: "EESC contribution to the European Commission's 2021 work programme", adopted by the European Economic and Social Committee on 16 July 2020.

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