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The **EESC** priorities during the **Luxembourg** **presidency**

July – December 2015

Presidency of
the Council of the
European Union . **luxembourg**

GRAND DUCHY OF

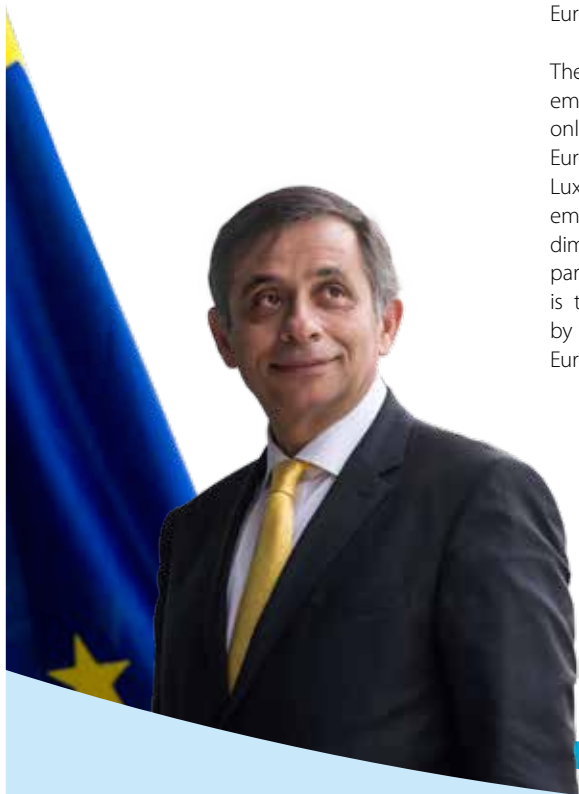


European Economic and Social Committee

Note from the President

The presidency is returning to Luxembourg, a founding Member State that not only plays joint host to the institutions but, thanks to its pivotal position in the centre of Europe, in fact helped to create the fledgling predecessor of today's European Union. The Grand Duchy will undoubtedly bring to bear its unique and successful experience both in genuinely integrating itself into Europe, and in integrating Europe within its borders.

The priorities for financial stability – growth, employment and a digital single market – serve only one purpose: that of bringing about a Europe of and for all Europeans. I know that the Luxembourg presidency wants to place special emphasis on the human, social and inclusive dimension of the EU and its single market. This is paramount if the European integration process is to be understood, accepted and supported by those who are in the front line, the people of Europe.





The Luxembourg presidency therefore will find in the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) an active and committed partner, as has already been demonstrated through the very close ties the EESC has maintained with the Grand Duchy over many years. And the EESC is especially committed to the issues that are at the heart of the presidency's programme:

- **A more social Europe.** The single market is not an end in itself. Whilst championing economic freedoms and free competition, the driving forces of the economy, it must also win its spurs as the instrument of social progress that all Europeans expect and deserve. It is now crucial that Europeans experience its benefits as they go about their daily lives, especially if the European project is to have a future at a time when populism is on the rise across the continent.
- **Boosting digital skills.** This vast undertaking will enable Europe to respond to the challenges of the future, particularly in view of global competition. European action must aim to put the citizen – as an economic, social and political player, in line with the four basic freedoms – firmly at the heart of the digital single market.
- **Investing in women and men.** The world is changing, and Europe is changing. What the people of Europe need is the means to adapt to these unavoidable changes. Vocational training

is a key factor here, one which must also keep pace by maintaining direct links with the sectors where the jobs are and creating real work opportunities.

- **A fresh impetus for a social and inclusive economy.** The dual components of the social economy and social entrepreneurship hold great promise for economic recovery and social cohesion in Europe. Although, surprisingly, there was no mention of them in the European Commission's reflections, the Committee welcomes the fact that the Luxembourg presidency is giving them the importance they deserve.

Throughout the course of its EU presidency, Luxembourg, offering a successful model of European integration and economic dynamism, will have the opportunity to make its mark on the development of the EU and of the single market. Its priorities are realistic and feasible. They set their sights on a people's Europe. And that is precisely what we need today.

*Henri Malosse
President of the EESC*

The Economic and Social Council of Luxembourg – a natural ally of the EESC

We have a long tradition of cooperating with the Economic and Social Council (ESC) of Luxembourg. The CESlink network of national economic and social councils in the EU was set up in the 2000s, with the direct involvement of the Luxembourg ESC. It also keeps directly abreast of our consultative activities and participates regularly alongside the EESC at the Europe Day celebrations in Luxembourg.

The Luxembourg ESC was established in 1966. It is comprised of 39 full members (with the same number of alternates), divided up as follows: 18 members representing employers – businesses (13), agriculture and viticulture (3) and the professions (2); 18 members representing workers – private sector (14) and public sector (4); and 3 experts appointed directly by the Luxembourg government. As the permanent, central consultative body working with the government in the area of economic and social policy, it is the forum for social dialogue and consultation between socio-occupational organisations at national and supranational level on economic, social and financial issues on which consensus-based solutions have to be found. Its current president, Pascale Toussing, was elected for a two-year term, from 2015 to 2017.

In terms of the institutional set-up, the role of the ESC, with its tripartite consultative structure, is to take part in the initial discussion of issues prior to final decisions being taken, the prerogative of the government and chamber of deputies. In so doing, it plays an important forward-looking role and acts as a catalyst for ideas. Its main function is to reconcile the views of the two dominant – and often opposing – forces in the economy, i.e. capital and labour, whilst taking account of the general interest. Its task is to put forward viable proposals to the government that can serve to guide choices in the implementation of future policies.

In order to guarantee coherent links between measures taken by socio-occupational representatives at national and supranational level, a formal consultation procedure has been instituted between the Luxembourg ESC and the Luxembourg delegations of supranational organisations, i.e. the Luxembourg delegations of the EESC, the Benelux Consultative Economic and Social Council and the ESC of the cross-border Grande Région.

From the left: Marco Wagener, Vice-President, Marianne Nati-Stoffel, Secretary-General, Pascale Toussing, President, Gary Kneip, Vice-President.



The Luxembourg members of the EESC



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The Luxembourg presidency sees eye to eye with the Committee on civil society priorities

At a time when the economic crisis has undermined years of economic and social progress and with poverty and social exclusion on the increase, the European Economic and Social Committee shares the concerns of the Luxembourg presidency and intends to focus on the **European social model**, placing special emphasis on **social investment** as a productive factor, and on efficient and reliable social benefit systems. The **human dimension** must be at the heart of all innovation, in the interests of striking the right balance between economic, social and environmental concerns.

To put the EU back on the path to growth, the Committee will also contribute actively to the roll-out of President Juncker's Agenda for **Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change**, with particular emphasis on the priorities related to implementing the ambitious investment package and to **deepening and completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union**.

The Committee will be a staunch supporter of a more open and humanist **common immigration and asylum policy** and of greater **solidarity and shared responsibility** in the European Union. It will work to ensure better recognition of the contribution immigrants make to Europe's economy and society, and to promote their integration into the labour market, improve their training and guarantee full respect of their fundamental rights.

The Luxembourg Presidency will have the possibility to assess the first results of the **reform of the Common Agricultural Policy** and the EESC is preparing a first evaluation in the form of an information report on «The reform of the CAP: implementing arrangements, diversity, redistributive effects and other decisions taken by the Member States when implementing the reform of direct payments».

The EESC will define its position for the Conference of Parties (COP) in Paris in December 2015 by adopting an opinion on **climate change** in July. The EESC will formulate concrete recommendations to promote strong civil society contributions to the global climate agreement. This will be done by hosting and co-organising a number of events, including a conference on civil society preparing for the COP21, organized jointly with the Committee of the Regions on 19 November. Particular emphasis will be placed on integrating the social dialogue and the labour perspective into the climate agreement; links with the Post-2015 agenda for sustainable development and policy coherence for climate in key EU policies, e.g. agriculture, energy and trade.

In September 2015, the UN will adopt a new **Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda** which will build upon the Millennium Development Goals, integrate them with the broader challenges of global sustainable development



and establish a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030. The EESC will promote an open debate on the implementation of the agenda in the EU, through discussions with civil society, EU institutions and UN bodies. Important issues will be the integration of the Post-2015 framework into the revised EU 2020 strategy and the involvement of civil society into the implementation and monitoring of SDGs. Possibly, this discussion could be structured around an exploratory opinion on the implementation of the Post-2015 agenda in the EU.

The EESC will continue to focus on **social entrepreneurship**, fully in line with the timetable and work programme of the Luxembourg presidency, which has made it one of its priorities. In addition to its **Social Enterprise: make it happen! project**, the conclusions of which are to be presented in the autumn, the EESC is currently preparing an own-initiative opinion at the request of the presidency. The presidency has also asked the EESC to assist with the organisation of the main events on its programme, including the closing conference to be held on 3 and 4 December.

Consumer issues will also be very high on the Committee's agenda, with special attention paid to new forms of consumption such as **collaborative consumption and the sharing economy**. Building on previous work on planned obsolescence, the Committee will launch a

study on how better information about product life expectancy could influence consumer behaviour, allowing manufacturers to adapt their production to consumers' requests.

The Committee will continue its critical assessment of the implementation of the **Europe 2020 strategy**, in close cooperation with the **network of national economic and social councils and other stakeholders**, and considers the mid-term review of the strategy to be a unique opportunity to inject the burst of new energy it needs to get back on the right track.

The Committee will expand the dialogue between authorities, and civil society on key policies such as the TEN-T network. A key area of interest will be **cross-border problems in transport**, which will be proposed as a topic for an exploratory opinion and a high-level event in **cooperation with the Economic and Social Council of Luxembourg**. The Committee will also continue its work on promoting the defragmentation of the European airspace and will formulate concrete proposals for an integrated aviation policy in the EU.

The EESC will build on its previous activities in the energy policy field to further promote the idea of a **European Energy Dialogue (EED)** as a parallel process running alongside the Energy Union. The EED will provide an independent framework for civil society dialogue, linked to

¹ This brochure was produced in June 2015.

national energy plans. Furthermore, the EESC will continue to support more **transparency in nuclear energy debates** and will propose to the Council Presidency to prepare an exploratory opinion on emergency preparedness, response and crisis communication in the event of a nuclear accident.

The **Digital Single Market** will be at the core of the Committee's work on digital agenda, aiming to maximise the opportunities offered by unhindered access to digital goods and services for both businesses and citizens. A secondary objective in this area will be to identify how to design and adapt cities and islands into smart and sustainable environments through strategic use of new technologies that better connect people and infrastructures.

The EESC will follow closely the roll-out of the **Investment Plan for Europe**, in order to ensure that the positions of all relevant civil society stakeholders will be duly taken into account. It will also continue to participate actively in the on-going debate on better economic, social, political and institutional **governance in the euro area** by providing appropriate feedback to the new report on EMU drawn up by the four presidents: Juncker, Tusk, Dijsselbloem and Draghi. This report is particularly important for the contents of the **Deepening EMU Package** announced in the Commission working programme for the second half of 2015.

The EESC will continue to support the EU's initiatives to improve cooperation between Member States in terms of their **cross-border tax rulings** and it aims to mark the start of a new era of transparency.

The EESC will contribute to legislative proposals and political initiatives that will follow up to the public consultation on the **Capital Markets Union**. The goal is to provide funding for the real economy and to diversify the financing options available to economic agents. The EESC will strive to improve access to finance, with a particular focus on SMEs.

It will also keep its focus on the **Neighbourhood policy. Migration**, youth employment and a more integrated civil society in the Southern countries will be the main topic in the activities related to **Euromed**. Opinions will be issued on the Agenda for Migration and on the review of the Neighbourhood Policy. Regarding the **Eastern Neighbours**, the involvement of civil society in the monitoring of the implementation of Association Agreements will be the main priority. Two Civil Society Platforms, with Moldova and Georgia, will be established during the Presidency.

The EU's **development policy** will be closely followed, in particular the July UN Conference on Financing for Development, on which the



EESC will issue an opinion. Other work in this area will relate to the **social security systems** as part of the development policy, the contribution of **economic and social actors to the EU-Africa Strategy**, the **revision of the Cotonou Agreement** after 2020 and the follow-up of the **post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals**.

Other priorities are the follow-up of the **EU trade negotiations** and the civil society monitoring of EU agreements. A special attention will be paid to the DCFTA agreements with Moldova and Georgia, as well as to the negotiations with the **USA and Japan**.

The Presidency will be associated to the EESC work related to **enlargement**, more specifically the setting up of an **EU-Serbia civil society Joint Consultative Committee**, and to the EESC work on **Latin America**, namely in relation to the setting up of an **EU-Chile civil Society Joint Consultative Committee**, and the contribution of the **EU-Brazil Round Table** to the EU-Brazil Summit.

An innovative and inclusive European Union – one of the priorities for Luxembourg’s Presidency of the EU Council du Conseil de l’Union européenne

As of 1 July 2015, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Our country is a founding Member State of the EU and has been able to contribute to its development over the decades. Because of its history and its geographical location, Luxembourg has always sought to be a key player in the process of European integration.

With an active Economic and Social Council that is involved in the country’s political decision-making, Luxembourg is a natural ally of the EESC. We attach great importance to the contribution of civil society organisations in the decision-making process, which should be based on consultation with stakeholders. The priorities of the presidency trio (Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg) provide the backdrop to Luxembourg’s six-month presidency, particularly with regard to financial stability, growth, employment and the Digital Single Market. The challenges we face today clearly have a political dimension, and we cannot simply restrict ourselves to a technocratic approach to European integration. We will use our presidency to bring the European Union closer to its citizens.

Employment must be at the heart of European policy. The approximately 5 million unemployed young people in Europe should be our top priority. There is therefore a need to target employment policies – including the Youth Guarantee – more accurately, and to formulate economic policy in such a way that the European economy gets back on track to achieve a more inclusive form of growth. Kick-starting investment is therefore crucial. The programme proposed by the European Commission may be considered a preliminary contribution, provided it includes funding for new and additional investments that will allow Europe and its Member States to prepare for the future in three strategic areas that require substantial innovation: climate change, digital transformation and social cohesion. These three areas will shape our economies and societies. They will determine Europe’s competitiveness in a globalised world and should therefore be fully incorporated into the EU 2020 Strategy review. Europe will need economic and social governance that is up to the task of dealing with these significant challenges.

Luxembourg’s presidency will focus in particular upon the social dimension. Social investment should not only modernise the European social model; it should also strengthen Europe’s competitiveness and ensure that the rising levels of inequality are reversed. More than ever before, investment is needed in skills, knowledge, research and innovation.



Presidency of
the Council of the
European Union .

GRAND DUCHY OF
luxembourg

To this end, I fully agree with the European Economic and Social Committee's thinking and initiatives on the subjects of social economy and social entrepreneurship, which hold considerable potential for innovation and will play a key role in economic recovery and job creation. Our presidency will place these among its top priorities in order to raise their profile at the European level and to provide them with momentum in the long term.

We consider the strengthening of social dialogue to be more necessary than ever in this rapidly-changing era. It must be given a boost and made to function effectively once more, with an approach that goes above and beyond the purely technocratic, in order to really listen to civil society. This is crucial to secure a more vibrant European democracy.

Our agenda is ambitious, and the EESC's experience as the institutional platform through which the European Union can access the relevant socio-economic stakeholders at the European, national and regional levels will be an invaluable source of inspiration. The economic and social councils, including Luxembourg's ESC, are also active links in this chain.



*Minister for Labour, Employment and the Social
and Solidarity Economy,
Grand Duchy of Luxembourg*

Some basic facts¹ about Luxembourg



Official name	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Political system	Constitutional monarchy
Capital	Luxembourg
Other main towns (in terms of population)	Esch-sur-Alzette, Differdange and Dudelange
Area	2 586 km ²
National language	Luxembourgish
Official languages	Luxembourgish, French and German
Currency	Euro
Population (1 January 2015)	563 000
Foreign population (% of total population, 1 January 2015)	45.9%
GDP in current prices (in millions of euro, 2013)	45 288
GDP per capita (in Purchasing Power Standards [PPS], EU-28 = 100, 2013)	264
Public debt (% of GDP, 2014)	23.2%
Domestic employment (2014)	395 825
Non-resident frontier workers (2014)	164 794
Employment rate (persons aged 20-64 years, 2014)	72.1%
Unemployment rate (as defined by the ILO, 2014)	5.9%
Unemployment rate for the 15-24 age group (as defined by the ILO, 2013)	15.5%
Life expectancy at birth (2010-2012)	Women: 84.3 years / Men: 79.5 years
Main exports (% of total exports, 2014)	Manufactured articles of base metal (26%) Other manufactured articles (16%) Machinery and equipment (16%)
Main countries of destination of exports (% of total exports, 2014)	Germany (28%) / France (14%) / Belgium (13%)
Main exports (% of total exports, 2014)	Vehicles (19%) Machinery and equipment (13%) Mineral fuels (13%)
Main countries of origin of imports (% of total imports, 2014)	Belgium (35 %) / Germany (27 %) / France (12 %)

1 Statistics portal of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg – <http://www.statistiques.public.lu/en/index.html>.

2 International Labour Office.



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European Economic and Social Committee

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