

# Civil society call for an inclusive and coherent long term sustainable post-2020 strategy for Europe

The Europe 2020 Strategy is soon coming to an end at a time when Europe is facing major challenges. Civil society should provide contribution to the shaping of the new post-2020 participatory long term strategy, as well as to its governance and implementation, was the event's message. Key priority for the future strategy should be to respond more effectively to rising inequality, to create trust and confidence across Europe and to ensure a fair transition for all.

The conference, which took place on 27-28 November 2017 in Budapest, was organised by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), with the support of the Hungarian Economic Association and the Hungarian Ministry for Human Resources.

The event gathered members of the EESC and national Economic and Social Councils, European Union institutions, representatives of the Hungarian government and representatives of Hungarian civil society.

Opening the conference, president of the EESC's Europe 2020 Steering Committee **Etele Baráth** underlined the importance of continuity and the still relevant objectives of the EU 2020 strategy in choosing the best scenario for 2030. The aim must be to improve governance and to further strengthen the objectives for a smart, inclusive and sustainable Europe.

**Juca Jahier**, President of the Various Interests Group of the EESC said *"The post 2020 Europe will have to be designed and delivered through a new governance, working transparently and in partnership, driven by bottom-up initiatives. Sustainability should be at the very heart of the new strategy."*

**Philippe Lamberts**, Member of the European Parliament, **Péter Balázs**, Professor at Central European University and former European Commissioner for Regional Policy highlighted the need to invest in long term projects and avoid impact from more short term economic and political interests as well as to define the EU position in the world and what future EU we want. **Gyula Pleschinger**, President of the Hungarian Economic Association mentioned the Juncker five scenarios are a good starting point to trigger the debate. **Gábor Zupkó**, EC Representation in Hungary, added that building the capital markets union is more challenging now with the challenges Brexit brought about.

**Brenda King**, President of the Sustainable Development Observatory at the EESC, called for the European Commission to *"focus more on integrating the SDGs and the Paris Agreement fully into the European policy framework with the objective of setting out a vision for a fair and competitive Europe to the year 2050"*. Moreover, *"The EU must succeed in getting the best out of the digital revolution to build a new, competitive and sustainable economy;*

*shifting towards a low-carbon, circular and eco-friendly economy while ensuring a fair transition for all”.*

**Anne Demelenne**, EESC Member and **Pavel Trantina**, President of the Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship of the EESC highlighted consequences of technological changes on the quantity and quality of jobs (referring to the recently proclaimed ‘pillar’ of social rights), the need for an extended eurozone and the need to realise the benefits that migrants can contribute especially considering the European demographic situation.

The importance of striking the proper future balance concerning division of labour between EU institutions and member states, in order to create the flexibility needed to respond and adapt to future shocks, was highlighted by **Enrico Giovannini**, (Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development). **Csaba Kőrösi**, Director of Environmental Sustainability at the Office of the President of Hungary added the importance of an integrated approach and to avoid silo thinking.

Deputy State Secretary **Balázs Molnár** reminded the audience that higher social standards must not negatively impact on EU competitiveness. The Christian roots of Europe should be taken into account when shaping the future strategy was the opinion of **Attila Szücs**, President of the National Economic and Social Council of Hungary.

Several speakers touched upon the issue of funding. The next multiannual financial framework should be geared towards the new strategy, the EU own resource budget should be increased, an organisation responsible for sustainability should be set up and there should be civil society funding.

**Etele Baráth**, closed the event by concluding that the next strategy must be horizontal, geared towards the long term (2030, 2050) and should build on the concept for an enhanced participative European development-oriented governance. The conference conclusions will be factored into future work by the EESC.

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