

EESC meets #EUcivilsociety to discuss tomorrow's Europe: "We are fighting for everybody's future," says 16-year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) discussed the key role that organised civil society must play for the future of Europe during an event on 21 February 2019 – just over 90 days from the European elections – that brought together the highest representatives of the European institutions and civil society organisations from across the entire EU.

The EESC president, **Luca Jahier**, referring to growing Euroscepticism, xenophobia and racism across Europe, said that democracy was under attack and that European values were being questioned. "This is not the time for resignation, it is the time to dream and to dare," he declared. "The 2030 Agenda is a win-win situation, it sums up the efforts of all of us and represents the economic and social contract for the 21st century." The EESC has a key role to play: "We give voice to the thousand faces of 'Europe at work', we have to make sure that this dialogue will never be compromised. The worst thing would be to remain silent, we have instead to make the voice of the 'good ones' heard," he continued. "Whatever it takes, we will dare a sustainable Europe," he exclaimed.

"We need to protect the biosphere, the air, the oceans, the soil, the forests," pointed out 16-year-old Swedish climate activist, **Greta Thunberg**, who made it clear that it was imperative to take action now against climate change. "Our political leaders have wasted decades through denial and inaction. Not only do we need new policies, we also need a whole new way of thinking. Our political system is all about competition: you cheat when you can, because all you want to get is power. This must change. We just want politicians to listen to the scientists". Mentioning the data from the latest UN reports, she warned that our planet was only some 11 years away from an irreversible situation. "We are not fighting for the future of young generations only, we are fighting for everybody's future. We have started to clean up this mess and we will not stop until we are done," she concluded.

The president of the European Commission, **Jean-Claude Juncker**, congratulated the movement against climate change put together by Greta Thunberg because, he emphasised, "it can bring about change, it has spread to many cities and now there is a common message in the streets of Europe". He also highlighted the vital contribution of the EU to this fight: "In 2014 the economic situation of Europe was at a dead end, so we launched a large investment plan and the majority of these investments went towards the environment." The Paris agreement remains a cornerstone in the action against climate change, although "some people think that climate change is invented, a sort of an ideological concept."

A positive note came from the president of the European Committee of the Regions, **Karl-Heinz Lambertz**, who acknowledged that the event marked “the common will to work together for our Union”. Borrowing the EESC president’s mandate motto, “rEUnaissance – Dare a sustainable Europe”, he maintained that “we talk about the same thing, that is rebuilding the Union. We need to be concrete to avoid frustration, because unkept promises are always devastating. Our citizens and regions are still the uncharted territory of our democracies. We need to fully involve them in the European construction. The Union can only be reborn from the desire of the Europeans.”

The “Civil Society for rEUnaissance” event opened the doors of the EESC to civil society at all levels in the run-up to the European elections. BusinessEurope Director General **Markus J. Beyrer**, ETUC Secretary General **Luca Visentini**, Solidar Secretary General and Co-Chair of the Liaison Group **Conny Reuter** participated in the debate, among many other speakers including **Madeleine Kay**, the ‘EU Supergirl’ (full list [here](#)).

For further information on the event, please consult our [website](#).