

More unity, solidarity and competitiveness and no second-hand citizens, the EESC tells President Juncker

European Commission President **Jean-Claude Juncker** was warmly welcomed at the September EESC Plenary by **Georges Dassis**, President of the EESC: *“The fact that you are taking part in our debate shows that civil society and social dialogue are of great importance to you”* (see [debate on EbS](#)). **Dassis** gave **Juncker** the reports from the national debates on [The Future of Europe](#), organised by the EESC in 27 Members States earlier this year. The reports present the views of civil society organisations on the five scenarios in the Commission’s [White Paper on the Future of Europe](#) published in March 2017.

“Europe is back”, said President **Juncker** at the EESC Plenary. *“We have the wind behind us”*. The creation of 8 million new jobs, the reduction of the budget deficit, **more than EUR 225 billion in investments as part of the Juncker Plan**, the launch of the European Solidarity Corps, EU’s progress in international trade were some of the reasons behind his optimism. The EC President shared with the EESC members some of his concerns, too and asked for the Committee’s help in addressing them: *“The Social Pillar is something which I feel very strongly about. I believe Europe must better take on board the concerns and the needs of those who are working. Otherwise Europe is going to break up into two parts – those who are the winners, those who benefit and those who, whether it is wrong or right, believe they have been forgotten by the EU project.”*

“We will not leave you alone in your efforts,” replied EESC President **Dassis**. *“Whatever option for the future of Europe is selected, the EESC wants a cohesive and coherent European Union, a Union that is able to deliver in providing fully-fledged equal opportunities for all. The EESC is determined to help to achieve this.”*

Jacek Krawczyk, President of the Employers’ Group welcomed the Commission’s initiatives related to the European trade agenda and renewed industrial strategy. *“Our goal must be the most attractive ecosystem for investing, for operating and for trading. An ecosystem fit for all businesses: in industry or in services, operating both locally and globally.”* He also added that work needs to continue on strengthening the Monetary Union and developing its governance as well as on completion of the EU Single Market.

Gabriele Bischoff, President of the Workers’ Group, shared President Juncker’s concerns about the growing divide in Europe: *“We welcome very much your emphasis on unity and are deeply concerned about the divisions in Europe. There will be no Future of Europe if there is no strong social dimension and solidarity. For this we need a concrete social agenda with the adoption of a roadmap for the implementation of a European Pillar of Social*

Rights.” She pointed out that there could be no second-hand workers in the EU and underlined the need to revise the Directive on the Posting of Workers.

Luca Jahier, President of the Various Interests’ Group, thanked the Commission President for taking the very ambitious task of reinvigorating the EU project and promoting a common vision of Europe. *“The EU is a community of values and today we need a more ambitious and a more democratic EU that looks beyond Brexit. So let’s jointly push for a citizens’ convention in 2018. Let’s put Culture and Sustainable Development at the heart of EU priorities and policies.”* He also underlined that 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage is an opportunity to mobilize positive forces for the future of Europe.

At the beginning of the Plenary Session on Thursday, the EESC also welcomed the President of the European Committee of the Regions **Karl-Heinz Lambertz** and discussed possible ways for cooperation between the two committees.

Background:

In April 2017 President Juncker asked the EESC to set out the views and priorities of the EU’s civil society organisations on the future development of the European Union, on the basis of the Commission’s [White Paper on the Future of Europe](#) published in March 2017. The Committee adopted a [resolution](#) on 5 July 2017 as the EESC’s first contribution to the EU-wide debate on the future of Europe. In May and June 2017 the EESC held a series of national debates, in the 27 Member States concerned, to hear the views of civil society organisations on the five scenarios in the White Paper on the Future of Europe. A compilation of the outcome of these national debates is available [here](#).

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