

Strengthen Europe's economic foundations and its social dimension, the EESC urges Vice-President Timmermans

The European Commission Vice-President **Frans Timmermans** thanked the EESC members for their contribution to the Commission's 2018 work programme, which was presented in July 2017. He stressed that **the EESC's contribution had had an impact on the programme** he would be presenting next week. *"We are pleased that you have involved us in the decision-making process but we will be even happier if you involve us even more"*, commented **Georges Dassis**, President of the EESC. *"We need more unity and solidarity in Europe. We have a responsibility to face the challenges in front of us."* In his speech at the EESC's October plenary session, Vice-President **Timmermans** pointed out that even though the economic climate in Europe was better than it used to be, many people were still dissatisfied. The reasons for this were the increasing disparities within European society as well as the loss of control over our destinies, both collectively and individually. *"The only way I believe that we can, with reason and not just by symbolic gestures, fulfil the promise of convergence, the only way I honestly believe we can portray the vision of a society where people regain control over their destinies individually and collectively, is if we tackle problems that are of a global nature together as Europeans on a European scale"*, said **Timmermans**. *"The need for collective European action today is greater than ever before. It is about time we acted together."* Using the opportunities of the circular economy and the Digital Single Market, creating an Energy Union and building a strong Social Pillar were some of the things the Commission was planning to focus on in 2018.

Gabriele Bischoff, President of the Workers' Group, welcomed the fact that the Commission had given prominence to the Social Pillar: *"We as a Committee have done a lot of work to make it clear that this is one of the last chances the EU has to win back the trust of its citizens."* **Gabriele Bischoff** referred to the opinion being adopted at the EESC plenary session on the [Impact of the social dimension and the European Pillar of Social Rights on the Future of the European Union](#) urging the Commission to do all it can to prevent the Pillar from being hollowed out at the national level.

Jacek Krawczyk, President of the Employers' Group, emphasised the need to focus on issues where EU action had an added value. *"The EU must aim for an attractive ecosystem for investing, for operating and for trading which serves the needs of all businesses. We need a strong culture of entrepreneurship, a well-functioning Single Market, an efficient industrial policy and an active and strong European trade agenda."* He stressed the need for the Commission not only to have clear priorities but also to be able to deliver on them.

Luca Jahier, President of the Various Interests' Group, welcomed the 300

Citizens' Dialogues organised by the Commission in 27 Member States but stressed the need to go further. *"The EESC can become an important ally of the Commission, working in partnership on the EU Dialogues."* On the Sustainable Development Goals, **Luca Jahier** stated that *"it is our responsibility to deliver the 2030 Agenda and to lead by example, with a coordinated and systematic approach which includes sustainable development in all EU programmes, policies, actions and financial instruments"*.

Background:

The EESC adopted its [contribution to the Commission's 2018 Work Programme](#) on 5 July. The Committee called on the Commission to adopt sustainable development as an overarching approach to its work, making reference to the three "pillars" of sustainability: i) strengthening the economic foundations of Europe; ii) fostering its social dimension; and iii) facilitating the transition towards a low-carbon and circular economy. The EESC made detailed recommendations and proposals for action structured around six priority policy areas:

- further development of the single market;
- promotion of entrepreneurship, innovation and industrial development;
- the social dimension of the EU;
- focusing public finances on sustainable growth, innovation, employment and cohesion;
- protecting Europeans against security threats;
- and the development of a structured civil dialogue.