

Fighting against populism is everybody's business, says EESC Diversity Europe Group

Economic progress and social stability are two key elements in the fight against Euroscepticism but they alone are not enough: civil society needs to get involved!

At the presentation of the study “Societies outside Metropolises: the role of civil society organisations in facing populism”, held on 20 February 2019 in Brussels, the EESC Diversity Europe Group reviewed the rise of populism in the EU, analysing how and why it had emerged, and highlighting the key role that civil society can play in countering it.

Currently, populism in Europe is at its highest level since the 1930s. The average populist vote in the EU Member States now stands at 24%, up from 8.5% in 2000. Right- or left-wing populists are members of numerous European governments while, in other Member States, populists also influence the agenda, as members of the opposition, forcing moderate parties to embrace extremist policies. In this context, Euroscepticism is often the direct result of populist resentment.

While economic progress and social stability have an essential part to play in addressing the concerns that give rise to Euroscepticism, these factors alone are not enough. Civil society organisations have to take action to communicate a more positive message about the value and importance of Europe and to bring Europe closer to its citizens. “The preservation of liberal democracy is everyone’s business,” said the President of the EESC Diversity Europe Group, **Arno Metzler**. “I believe that the only way to counter populism is through our democratic system, the very system that populists are trying to undermine: the EU must not only speak to people but must actively listen and engage in dialogue. European civil society should help the Union to reach out to citizens, thus preventing and limiting the appeal of populist parties,” he continued.

Research shows that economic decline, social instability and limited levels of education are some of the most significant factors behind the increase in support for populists throughout the EU. However, other more complex and interdependent issues also need to be considered, such as the desire to preserve the status quo and the need to protect traditional values, monocultures or particular identities.

The study was commissioned by the Diversity Europe Group from the European Citizen Action Service ([ECAS](#)) and involved extensive desk research, two statistical analyses, 616 survey responses, three focus groups and 54 in-depth interviews with civil society organisations and experts. It compares two regions with a high populist vote from four EU countries, with one of the

regions in each case being at the lower end of the scale and the other at the higher end:

- **Austria: Klagenfurt-Villach and Niederösterreich-Süd;**
- **France: Drôme and Aisne;**
- **Italy: Udine and Reggio di Calabria;**
- **Poland: Płocki and Nowosądecki.**

“Populism and Euroscepticism have to be combatted, first of all, at national level,” concluded **Mr Metzler**. “As members of the EESC, we have a double responsibility: we have to step up our activities to link the European level and the national level and to work more closely together. Only by strengthening networks, by offering a better explanation of Europe’s important role and by bringing “Europe” closer to its citizens can we help to reduce the misplaced fears that populists are so successfully manipulating”.

Background

For further information on the activities of the EESC Diversity Europe Group, please consult our [website](#).

EIOPA sets out framework for identifying conduct risks

Today, the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA) published a framework for assessing conduct risk through the product lifecycle.

The purpose of the framework is to clarify drivers of conduct risk and their implications in the emergence of consumer detriment. It provides an aid for understanding issues faced by consumers and input on the types of conduct risks EIOPA and the national competent authorities (NCAs) should focus on. It sets a common starting point for more practical supervision of particular products, services or market segments, for instance, through “deep dive” thematic work or for future policy development. A strong view on conduct risks is essential for evidence-based and risk-based preventative conduct of business supervision.

The framework focuses on conduct risk throughout all stages of the product lifecycle, that is to say, from the point before a contract enters into force through to the point when all obligations under the contract have been satisfied.

The risks set out in this framework cover the following areas:

- **Business model and management risks** – risks arising from how undertakings structure, drive and manage their business and from relationships with other entities in the value-chain
- **Manufacturing risks** – risks arising from how products are manufactured by insurance undertakings prior to being marketed and how they are targeted to customers
- **Delivery risks** – risks arising from how products are brought to the market and from the interaction between customers and insurance undertakings or intermediaries at the point of sale
- **Product management risks** – risks arising after the sale of the insurance product relating to how products are managed and how insurance undertakings or intermediaries interact with and service customers until all obligations under the contract have ceased

While the framework is not setting out supervisory processes at national level, it nonetheless supports NCAs in identifying conduct and consumer protection risks sufficiently early and sufficiently clearly for the preventative goals of effective conduct supervision, further enhancing market monitoring and conduct risk assessment and driving forward practical supervisory convergence. It provides a catalogue of risks to consider in practical supervisory work.

Going forward, EIOPA expects the framework to contribute to the effective implementation of [EIOPA's Conduct of Business Supervision Strategy](#). EIOPA anticipates further work in linking the identified conduct risks with the tools for assessing their impact and supervisory importance, leveraging readily available data as far as possible. This approach will evolve into more systematic ongoing conduct risk monitoring as an integral part of practical supervision both at national and European levels. It includes, for instance, the development of periodic conduct risk dashboards as a platform for high-level debate and convergence on the evolving conduct risk landscape.

The Framework is accessible via the following [link](#) to EIOPA's Website.

Clean mobility: Putting an end to polluting trucks. Commission welcomes first-ever EU standards to reduce pollution from trucks

Today's deal follows the agreement reached in December on new CO2 emission standards for cars and light vans in the EU for the period after 2020. As part of the sets of [legislative proposals on clean mobility](#) introduced by the Juncker Commission, it is a further stepping stone for modernising the

European mobility sector and preparing it for [climate neutrality in the second half of the century](#). Under today's agreement, emissions from new trucks will have to be 30% lower in 2030 compared to the 2019 emissions.

The new legislation will help Member States' emission targets, incentivise innovation, promote clean mobility solutions, strengthen the competitiveness of EU industry and stimulate employment, while reducing fuel consumption costs for transport operators and contributing to better air quality.

Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy **Miguel Arias Cañete** said: "*With the first-ever EU emission standards for trucks agreed, we are completing the legal framework to reach the European target of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030. The European Parliament and Council have reached an ambitious and balanced agreement. The new targets and incentives will help tackle emissions, as well as bring fuel savings to transport operators and cleaner air for all Europeans. For the EU industry, this is an opportunity to embrace innovation towards zero-emission mobility and further strengthen its global leadership in clean vehicles.*"

Tackling emissions from road transport is a key building block of the EU's efforts to achieve its target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. The CO2 emission standards for trucks complete the EU's economy-wide legislative framework for achieving this target. They are part of the EU's contribution to fighting climate change under the Paris Agreement and the Juncker Commission's priority of a resilient Energy Union and a forward-looking climate change policy.

Next Steps

Following this provisional political agreement, the text of the Regulation will have to be formally approved by the European Parliament and the Council. Once endorsed by both co-legislators in the coming months, the Regulation will be published in the Official Journal of the Union and will immediately enter into force.

For More Information

[Commission's proposal for CO2 targets for trucks](#)

[European strategy for low-emission mobility](#)

[European Commission 'Clean Planet for All' Communication](#)

Immigration liaison officers: Council

Presidency and European Parliament reach provisional agreement

The EU is strengthening the cooperation and coordination between liaison officers deployed to third countries by member states or the EU to deal with immigration-related issues.

Today, representatives of the Council Presidency and the European Parliament reached an informal agreement on a regulation to improve the functioning of the European network of immigration liaison officers. It will now be presented to EU ambassadors for confirmation on behalf of the Council.

Coordination between member states in cooperation with third countries is essential to make sure the EU's response to migration is as strong as possible. These new rules will allow us to make the most of the activities of our liaison officers on the ground, including in areas such as returns and fighting migrant smuggling.

Carmen Daniela Dan, Romanian minister of internal affairs

The informal agreement includes the following provisions:

- a steering board at EU level to strengthen the management of the network and the coordination of liaison officers, while maintaining the competence of the deploying authorities so as to ensure effectiveness and clear lines of communication
- a stronger role for liaison officers in combatting migrant smuggling
- liaison officers will collect information to assist third countries in preventing illegal migration flows and to support border management at the EU's external borders
- liaison officers may also assist member states in facilitating returns of illegally staying third country nationals
- funds will be made available in support of activities of immigration liaison officers that will be allocated in agreement with the steering board

Background

Immigration liaison officers are deployed to third countries by member states and the EU in order to establish and maintain contacts with the authorities of the host country on migration issues (prevention and combatting of illegal migration, facilitating return, managing legal migration). In 2004, the EU adopted a regulation creating a European network of immigration liaison officers to coordinate the efforts of officers within a third-country or region.

However, with almost 500 immigration liaison officers currently deployed by

member states to more than 100 countries, gaps in coordination persist. Moreover, as part of the comprehensive EU response to migration the role of liaison officers in certain fields could be expanded. To respond to this, the European Commission presented a proposal for a regulation to strengthen the European network of immigration liaison officers on 17 May 2018.

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ESMA renews binary options prohibition for a further three months from 2 April 2019

The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) has agreed to renew the prohibition of the marketing, distribution or sale of binary options to retail clients, in effect since 2 July 2018, for a further three-month period.

ESMA has carefully considered the need to extend the intervention measure currently in effect. It considers that a significant investor protection concern related to the offer of binary options to retail clients continues to exist. ESMA has therefore agreed to renew the measure from 2 April 2019 on the same terms as the previous renewal decision that started to apply on 2 January 2019.

The renewal was agreed by ESMA's Board of Supervisors on 14 February 2019.

Next steps

ESMA intends to adopt the renewal measure in the official languages of the EU in the coming weeks, following which ESMA will publish an official notice on its website. The measure will then be published in the Official Journal of the EU and will start to apply from 2 April 2019 for a period of three months.