

EESC reiterates its call for a stronger architecture of the European Monetary Union



Cooperation and partnership between governments and civil society will be crucial for completing ambitious reforms needed for the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union. Taking into account economic, social and environmental aspects is equally important for strengthening the social role of the European semester, concluded a high-level panel of top EU officials and experts at the plenary session of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).

On 26 September, the **EESC** held a debate on the completion of the Economic and Monetary Union and the European Semester. The debate saw the participation of Vice-President of the European Commission **Valdis Dombrovskis**, former Greek Minister of the Economy **Louka Katseli**, **Christian Ebeke** of the International Monetary Fund and **Tuomas Saarenheimo** of the Finnish Ministry of Finance.

EESC President **Luca Jahier**, chairing the debate, stressed the important role and work of the EESC and its two relevant bodies, the **European Semester Group** and the **Study Group on Economic and Fiscal Governance of the Euro Area**.

The speakers agreed the debate was taking place at a decisive moment for the European economy, faced with a slowdown in growth, persistently low inflation and investment as well as rising domestic and international uncertainties.

Mr Dombrovskis announced that deepening the European and Monetary Union would be high on the next Commission's agenda. In his keynote speech at the plenary, the Vice-President Designate emphasised the important role of civil society in this regard:

In order to make real progress on difficult reforms, governments, social partners and civil society have to work hand in hand. This dialogue is especially important now, in light of the urgent challenges we face for the climate, digitalisation, globalisation – but also demographic challenges in our societies. We have to work together to turn these challenges into opportunities. For me, this is exactly the spirit of the European Economic and Social Committee.

Praising the work of the EESC, **Mr Dombrovskis** said, *You have demonstrated how effective this approach is: it was this Committee that drafted the text of the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers, and more recently led the consultation process on shaping the final text of the European Pillar of Social Rights. And you continue to inform the debate on the future of Economic and Monetary Union.*

Mr Saarenheimo, representing the Finnish Presidency of the Council, said that

competitiveness, climate and security were the key priorities for European economy under his country's Presidency. He also highlighted the importance of [taxation](#) and Banking Union and of mainstreaming climate aspects into economic and financial policy.

Mr Ebeke offered a more positive view of the European economy and the eurozone, describing the situation as *not bad as we are coming from a period of a high growth rate* **Mr Ebeke** put forward the IMF recommendations to strengthen the eurozone by insisting on structural reforms and the Banking Union.

It is time for the EU to defy gravity and fly high; we just need the political will to implement this. The challenges on the horizon do not leave any other alternative than to grow in a more inclusive way, **Mr Ebeke** concluded.

Mr Katseli presented the conclusions from the report [Sustainable Equality](#), which lists the reform of governance and of the European Semester among its main proposals.

We need to implement the 2030 strategy in European policies. Another Europe is necessary, another Europe is feasible, stressed **Mr Katseli**.

Gonçalo Lobo Xavier, President of the European Semester Group, presented the Group's initiatives and actions carried out as part of its visits to Member States. In his view, involving external actors in the European Semester gave added value to the process as European civil society had an important role to play.

Stefano Palmieri, President of the EESC Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion, called upon the European institutions and national governments to take more ambitious action towards deepening EMU in order to achieve a more integrated, more democratic and socially more developed/advanced Union.

The success of European economic governance will depend on the involvement of European society in the process, **Mr Palmieri** warned.

Concluding the debate, the **EESC President** said, *We support a strengthened EMU, because we know that in the globalised, highly competitive and rapidly changing economy of today, no individual EU state can thrive on its own.*

Background info:

The EESC has been urging EU leaders to strengthen the architecture of the EMU for a long time, including in its recent opinions on [Euro area economic policy \(2019\)](#) and [Economic and Monetary Union Package](#).

The [opinion on "Towards a stronger international role of the euro"](#) comes as a response to a specific Commission initiative in this field launched in December 2018. In July 2019, the EESC views expressed in this opinion will be complemented by two own-initiative opinions – one on [Towards a more resilient and sustainable European economy](#) and another one on [A new vision for](#)

[completing the Economic and Monetary Union](#). All three opinions have been drawn up in a bid to outline a comprehensive vision for the European economic agenda over the next EU legislative term and to feed into the forthcoming EU leaders' discussions on this.