



European Economic
and Social Committee

Ideas and proposals
for the Working Group on Climate Change and the Environment
of the Conference on the Future of Europe

EESC Members: Reiner Hoffman and Cillian Lohan

The EESC, as an active partner on the Conference on the Future of Europe representing the organised civil society, has identified concrete proposals regarding four topics on Climate Change and the Environment, as listed below.

1. European Climate Pact

- The EESC strongly endorses the Commission's statement that **citizens are "crucial partners in the fight against climate change"**, because we believe that active participation of "all parts of society" is a necessary condition for climate policy to be successful within the EU.
- The EESC proposes a **European Climate Pact Stakeholder Platform based** on the principles of inclusiveness, transparency and genuine participation and ownership by climate actors at all levels.
- The Climate Pact should be focused on **empowering people to change systems** through exploration, experimentation and demonstration, therefore, the EESC is committed to exploring **engagement mechanisms** through the Climate Pact.

Related EESC opinion: NAT/785 [European Climate Pact \(exploratory opinion\)](#)

2. Environmental Law

- The EESC stresses the fact that **environmental legislation is not properly implemented** because of a lack of political will at all institutional levels.
- The EESC therefore calls on the EC to develop a **better compliance framework at EU level**. This should happen with **more transparent** and **resolute handling of complaints and infringements**, but also by adding greater **human and financial resources**. The aim is to explain what EU environmental legislation is, check whether it is properly implemented, evaluate it and assist the courts to carry out their remit when necessary.
- An **EU Fundamental Charter for the Rights of Nature ("Charter")** can be the instrument to establish this new blueprint at the highest level of law, ensuring that the European Union leads the way on the world stage in modelling best practice.
- The EU must establish itself as a reliable partner on the international stage by strengthening and implementing legislation incorporating a comprehensive, human-rights-based approach to

climate action, so as to guide climate change mitigation policies and measures while protecting the rights of all.

- To ensure that the Sustainable Corporate Governance Directive becomes a key component of the success of the European Green Deal, we recommend, in particular a **definition of adverse environmental impacts that contains references to normative environmental standards**, as well as an indicative list of **environmental matters** that should be considered when conducting **due diligence**, a broad scope of companies and coverage of the whole value chain.

Related EESC opinions: NAT/759 [A more constructive role for civil society in implementing environmental law \(exploratory opinion at the request of the European Commission\)](#); EESC [Study Towards an EU Charter of the Fundamental Rights of Nature](#); IR NAT/824 [Environmental protection as a prerequisite for respect for fundamental rights \(ongoing\)](#)

3. Youth engagement

- The EESC believes it is important to strengthen alliances with civil society and particularly with youth, who represent our future generation. In this regard, the EESC is committed to advancing a **more structured involvement of the youth** in its work and at EU decision-making level.
- For the first time ever, the EESC included successfully a youth delegate in its EESC delegation to the COP26. As a result, the EESC recommends the inclusion of a **youth delegate in the official EU delegation to the UNFCCC COP meetings**.
- The EESC hosted the second **Youth Climate and Sustainability Round Table** where youth representatives expressed their views and proposals on the topic '**protecting ecosystems and restoring biodiversity**' to the Commission. One of the key issues raised was the **importance of transformative education** that is holistic, accessible, comprehensive, sustainable, proactive, equitable and in harmony with nature. In this regard, it was proposed that the EU Commission leads the way in organising a **Summit for Transformative Education** to be held in-person in the summer of 2022, the European Year of Youth.

Related EESC opinion: NAT/788 [Towards structured youth engagement on climate and sustainability in the EU decision-making process \(own-initiative opinion\)](#)

4. Food

- The EESC reiterates its recommendation to explore the option of a **multi-stakeholder and multi-level European Food Policy Council**. In the context of open strategic autonomy, such a Council could play, inter alia, a monitoring role and help evaluate and anticipate the risks in the food supply chain. It would advise on the transitions which science suggests are needed to meet the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement.
- The EESC proposes a definition of **open strategic autonomy applied to food systems** based on food production, workforce and fair trade, with the overarching aim of ensuring food security and sustainability for all EU citizens through a fair, healthy, sustainable and resilient food supply.
- "**Open strategic autonomy**" provides an opportunity for the EU to ensure the security of its food supply and set high sustainability standards, particularly in the context of the European Green Deal and the UN SDGs.

Related EESC opinion: NAT/822 [Strategic autonomy and food security and sustainability \(own-initiative opinion\)](#)