

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on ‘European Climate Pact’**(Exploratory opinion)**

(2020/C 364/10)

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Referral	European Commission, 11.3.2020
Legal basis	Article 304 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
Section responsible	Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment
Adopted in section	29.6.2020
Adopted at plenary	16.7.2020
Plenary session No	553
Outcome of vote (for/against/abstentions)	206/4/2

1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1. We are in a climate emergency. At the time of the global health and impending economic crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU's commitment to the transition to a sustainable, resilient, climate-neutral and resource-efficient wellbeing economy must be reaffirmed. What we need now are transformational shifts in culture, infrastructure, behaviour, participation and livelihoods that will impact on, but also empower, citizens in multiple ways.

1.2. Climate change threatens us all, but, as with the pandemic, it has the most damaging effect on the most vulnerable and marginalised people. It is vital that the transition leaves no one behind.

1.3. The EESC underlines that the active participation of all parts of society — enterprises, workers, researchers, consumers, communities and citizens and their organisations — is crucial for mobilising the transition to climate neutrality.

1.4. The EESC thus supports the call for the European Union to commit to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, and accordingly adjust its greenhouse gas reduction target for 2030. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Emissions Gap Report 2019 indicates that global emissions need to be cut by 7,6 % per year, starting now, in order to limit global warming to 1,5 °C. Calculated, this means a reduction target of at least 68 % by 2030.

1.5. A shift to a participatory model is required at all levels of scale and, in implementing the Climate Pact, the Commission has an important opportunity and obligation to model an innovative approach which will mirror, support and inspire action already happening in civil society, within communities, cities and regions.

1.6. Participatory models which are too narrowly focused, or framed in ways which limit the scale of the changes explored, or which are capable of being ignored by the institution that has established them, will serve only to distract and disillusion those that engage.

1.7. Europe needs to catalyse systemic change for climate action through innovation (technological and social) by connecting the supply of innovation with demand-side actors, problem owners and those with a high ambition for change. The digital transformation should be guided by the SDGs to avoid risks, including those relating to workers' rights⁽¹⁾. The implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, in tandem with the EGD, provides an opportunity to ensure a just transition focused on the objective of quality jobs for all.

1.8. The overall challenges identified most by civil society actors engaging in climate action are a lack of access to finance, a lack of expertise, a lack of staff and a lack of recognition, as well as the lack of a consistent narrative from the EU and the national governments.

1.9. Achieving EU and international climate goals will require significant financial resources. The European Green Deal (EGD) budget (public and private funds), the EUR 750 billion of the recovery fund, including the allocation of funds for the EU semester process, should be focused on sustainable recovery, including climate action.

1.10. Funding conditionality on sustainable practices in all sectors should be the norm for designing post-COVID recovery plans geared towards the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Paris Agreement. The COVID-19 recovery response should not be to 'bounce back' to where we were before, but rather to 'bounce forward' to something new and better.

1.11. Capacity building and technical support are necessary for all stakeholders to make the transition to a more resilient and sustainable future. Setting up an EU Climate Finance Forum would stimulate access to finance and remove barriers.

1.12. 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.

1.13. The Climate Pact should be focused on empowering people to change systems — through exploration, experimentation and demonstration. Multi-level perspectives, visioning, story-telling and backcasting will all be crucial. A wide variety of climate initiatives should be fostered and facilitated.

2. Introduction

2.1. Tackling climate and environmental challenges has become an increasingly urgent task and requires a drastic revision of current unsustainable socio-economic approaches. The COVID-19 global pandemic has demonstrated that simple adjustments of our lifestyles and systems will not be enough. Fundamental changes in production methods, affecting businesses, workers and the organisation of work, were already taking place before the pandemic and may be accelerated as a result. The European Commission adopted a European Green Deal as the new strategy for the EU's socio-economic and financial models that are sustainable, cleaner, safer and healthier.

2.2. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, climate action and sustainability commitments must be put at the forefront of recovery and reconstruction policy, and of the corresponding budgets, in order not to lock the EU further into a high-carbon future. Post-crisis measures must be designed in a way that creates system resilience, protects and restores biodiversity, prioritises public health, while leaving no-one behind and paving the way for a wellbeing economy. In this context, the EGD should not be abandoned or delayed, but strengthened.

2.3. The success of the EGD will to a large extent depend on the EU's capacity to engage with its citizens. With this in mind, the Commission is preparing a European Climate Pact to bring together various actors, including regions, local authorities, local communities, civil society, schools, businesses and individuals.

⁽¹⁾ UN SDSN Six Transformations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. The need to engage with civil society and citizens on climate

3.1. We are facing a global climate emergency. The response of governments to the climate crisis thus far has not been sufficient and the world is not on track to meet the objective of the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. Youth climate strikers and others across civil society have been calling forcefully for much more ambitious and urgent climate action. The decision-makers, who have signed up to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, have the responsibility to urgently address these demands, take decisive and ambitious policy decisions and move towards a new model of inclusive climate action, where all stakeholders are actively engaged.

3.2. The EESC thus supports the call for the European Union to commit to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, and accordingly adjust its greenhouse gas reduction target for 2030 ⁽²⁾. The EESC expects that the new 2030 emissions target will be based on a broad review and proper impact assessment. The EESC also argues that there are decisive arguments for the aim of a minimum reduction of 55 % by 2030, in order for the EU to respond for its part to the massive global need for decreasing emissions. For example, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Emissions Gap Report 2019 ⁽³⁾ indicates that an even more ambitious 2030 emission reduction target is needed globally to achieve the 1,5 °C target set in the Paris Agreement ⁽⁴⁾.

3.3. The 2019 Eurobarometer finds that 93 % of EU citizens see climate change as a serious problem; 79 % see it as a very serious problem. The vast majority of respondents think it is important their national government sets ambitious targets to increase renewable energy (92 %) and improve energy efficiency (89 %).

3.4. The Climate Pact needs to leverage the power of Europeans to achieve the EGD's vision of a prosperous, inclusive, climate resilient society with a circular, net-zero emissions economy by 2050. The IPCC report explicitly refers to the need for 'rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society'. Incremental changes will not be enough. A narrow focus on CO₂ reduction is counter-productive at the grassroots level — limiting the engagement and the thinking and significantly limiting the changes that are imagined and implemented. What is needed now is a fundamental transformation of economic, social and financial systems that will trigger exponential change in decarbonisation rates and strengthen climate resilience. For this to happen, inspiring, broad and diverse narratives are needed, communicating why the world has to change.

3.5. The current global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has proven the ability of governments to take dramatic measures to mitigate an existential threat, as well as people's ability, at least in the short run, to adapt to new restricted lifestyles imposed by these measures. Importantly, communities, enterprises, social partners and other non-state actors are playing a critical role in the response to the pandemic, often identifying needs, designing and implementing context-appropriate interventions more quickly, effectively and creatively than has proven possible through top-down direction.

3.6. There is a huge opportunity and a huge risk as we move to the next phase of responding to COVID-19. The economic measures and fiscal packages that are being designed to sustain and restart the European economy must embrace EU taxonomy for sustainable investments and direct finance to those who are sustainable or have the potential to become sustainable and will make commitments — subject to monitoring — to identifying and making the necessary changes as a matter of urgency.

⁽²⁾ The European Parliament rapporteur on the European Climate Law (COM(2020) 0080), Jytte Guteland, is proposing 'that the Union 2030 climate target is raised to a reduction in emissions of 65 % compared with 1990 levels. Consequently, the Commission should, by 30 June 2021, assess how the Union legislation implementing that higher target would need to be amended accordingly'.

⁽³⁾ Emissions Gap Report 2019.

⁽⁴⁾ The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Emissions Gap Report 2019 indicates that global emissions need to be cut by 7,6 % per year, starting now, in order to limit global warming to 1,5 °C. Calculated for the EU, this means a reduction target of at least 68 % by 2030.

3.7. The tragic disruption caused by COVID-19, which has led to the suspension of fiscal rules, has shown that another vision is possible when people's lives, our economies and the survival of life on Earth as we know it are at stake. A vision of social progress which relies only on the pursuit of growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ignores fundamental elements of individual and social well-being and fails to account properly for environmental and social considerations. It is therefore necessary to make the leap from the GDP-based to the wellbeing economy⁽⁵⁾ (6).

3.8. One way of enhancing climate ambition is to create enabling environments for more action from non-state actors, including various types of business, including small, medium-sized and micro-enterprises; investors; social partners; cooperatives; cities and regions; trade unions; local communities and citizen groups; farmers; schools; faith-based organisations; youth groups; and other non-governmental organisations.

3.9. An enabling environment requires a key shift from consultation and top-down engagement to co-design, co-creation and empowerment. Standard consultation models rarely reach beyond very narrow, well-resourced sectors of society. Individuals, organisations and enterprises with the most to gain from and contribute to transformational change need to be offered genuine opportunities to participate in decision-making if they are to commit time and energy to the process.

3.10. In 2018 the EESC called for a 'European Dialogue on Non-State Climate Action' (7). The purpose of the dialogue should be not only to highlight and showcase actions, but also to respond to the needs of non-state actors by inspiring new partnerships between them and different levels of government; facilitating peer learning, training and advice sharing, and facilitating access to finance.

3.11. The EESC proposed (8) that a permanent citizens' dialogue be set up as a compulsory preparatory element of all major political decisions and all pertinent initiatives at all levels.

3.12. Until now, the Commission has not followed these recommendations (9). The Climate Pact provides an opportunity for the institutions to work closely together for an enabling framework for civil society and citizens' involvement, building on but going beyond the existing consultation processes.

4. Learning from existing practices on civil society and citizen engagement

4.1. Existing national, regional and municipal level examples of citizens' assemblies, citizens' dialogues and similar deliberative engagement processes (10) demonstrate the capacity and desire of citizens to take responsibility for climate crisis solutions. It is often the case that broader participatory approaches, when carefully framed, generate significant sustainability gains without being explicitly focused on the climate crisis. They testify not only to the strong need and appetite for participatory democracy, but also to governments' capacity to create such spaces and to follow up on their proposals politically.

4.1.1 In 2019, 150 randomly selected French citizens started deliberating on a question 'how can we reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 % by 2030, in a spirit of social justice?'. Sessions of this Citizens' Convention are held at the French Economic and Social Council. The Government plans to publicly address the proposals and publish a provisional timetable for their implementation (11).

4.1.2 The Irish Citizens' Assembly established in 2016 consisted of 100 citizens, randomly selected to be representative of the Irish electorate. They were tasked with deliberating on topics ranging from the constitutional ban on abortion to making Ireland a leader in tackling climate change. The parliamentary committee established to take forward the Assembly's recommendations on climate change shaped to a significant degree Ireland's landmark Climate Action Plan published in June 2019.

(5) EESC opinion on 'The sustainable economy we need' (OJ C 106, 31.3.2020, p. 1).

(6) Welfare economics — branch of economics that seeks to evaluate economic policies in terms of their effects on the well-being of the community. It became established as a well-defined branch of economic theory during the 20th century.

(7) EESC opinion on 'Boosting climate actions by non-state actors' (OJ C 227, 28.6.2018, p. 35).

(8) EESC opinion on 'Strategy for long-term EU greenhouse gas emissions reduction' (OJ C 282, 20.8.2019, p. 51).

(9) Proposed already in EESC opinion 'Building a coalition of civil society and subnational authorities to deliver commitments of the Paris Agreement' (OJ C 389, 21.10.2016, p. 20).

(10) <https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-blogs/2018/07/our-call-for-action-on-deliberative-democracy>

(11) <https://www.conventioncitoyennepourleclimat.fr/en/>

4.1.3 In Spain's two major cities, citizens' dialogues and local forums have been established to promote broader participation of citizens and civil society organisations (CSOs) in deciding on parts of the local budget and brainstorming about the future of the city.

4.1.4 The Youth Climate Council at the Ministry of Energy, Supply and Climate in Denmark aims to bring new thinking into climate policy and provide input to the minister on future climate solutions.

4.1.5 The city of Gdansk in Poland has organised three citizens' assemblies on adapting to extreme weather events, reducing air pollution and improving civic engagement.

4.1.6 In Finland, the first Citizens' Panel on sustainable development brought together about 500 Finns to assess the state of sustainable development. The results will be used to promote the work on sustainable development by the Finnish Government and Parliament.

4.1.7 In Italy, after COP 25, a legislative proposal was made by civil society representatives to set up a Citizens' Assembly on the model of the French one. A similar process was launched in the UK, with 'Climate Assembly UK: the path to net zero'.

4.1.8 In Bologna, Italy, the municipality created a 'Civic Imagination Office' as part of its wider work to re-engage citizens. It created six 'laboratories' which run regular visioning events, using Open Space and other tools. When strong ideas for projects emerge, the municipality creates 'pacts' with the community to ensure they become a reality. Over 500 pacts have been agreed in the last five years, ranging from new benches on streets to far larger and more ambitious projects. It has also become the channel through which participatory budgeting is organised.

4.2. Many other community-led initiatives (CLIs) mobilise local action to create a more sustainable future with remarkable and inspiring successes. Among others, 'Sustainable Neighbourhoods' in Brussels, the Scottish Communities Climate Action Network grassroots network of around 120 community groups, Coopérnico — a renewable energy co-operative (RESCoop) in Portugal, the Transition movement, now active in community-scale resilience-building efforts in over 50 countries, inspiring people to transform their ways of thinking, acting and being in the world. The 'Communities for Future' Action Programme, which will be launched this summer, can help provide the institutional setting for public participation.

4.3. At the European level, structured involvement of civil society is necessary and a clear mandate for civil society's participation in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies and strategies aiming to achieve climate neutrality should be provided.

4.3.1 The Multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) on Sustainable Development Goals played an important role, but also left room for improvement in terms of resourcing, frequency of meetings, ownership of the agenda setting, opportunities for extended debate and engagement and facilitation of more regular, transparent and accessible public consultations.

4.3.2 The European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, run jointly by the EESC and the Commission, provides a space for a wide-ranging group of stakeholders to exchange good practices and ideas, and create valuable networks. Giving the ownership of the platform to the stakeholders represents the main difference with the MSP on SDGs and is a good practice to follow.

4.4. The Paris targets will not be met without strong engagement of the social partners at all levels and particularly in industries and sectors that are heavily affected by decarbonisation and digitalisation. The implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, in tandem with the EGD, provides an opportunity to ensure a just transition, focusing on the objective of quality jobs for all. The social dialogue led by trade unions and employers is one of the best places to raise awareness of the climate crisis. They are the key protagonists if we are to realise a socially fair, productive and commercial transformation that the EGD brings. These scenarios range from Social Dialogue Summits at European level, through cross-border dialogue, which is essential to give muscle to European social integration, and to sectoral and company level collective agreements. Workers' involvement forms an integral part of democracy in the workplace and gives working people an opportunity to play an active part in workplace decisions that can make a positive contribution to climate action.

4.5. Climate-KIC of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology focuses on designing, executing and connecting entrepreneurial experiments and deep demonstration effects on levers of systemic change. EIT Climate-KIC has a portfolio composed of experiments focused on triggering new ways of thinking, leveraging exponential effects of new technologies, networks and community forces, and seeking to learn faster than the pace of change⁽¹²⁾.

5. Learning from business responses

5.1. Innovation refers to adding extra steps of developing new services and products in the marketplace or in the public that fulfil unaddressed needs or solve problems that were not in the past. Technological Innovation, focuses on the technological aspects of a product or service. Social innovation refers to new social practices that aim to meet social needs in a better way than the existing solutions, resulting from — for example — working conditions, education, community development or health. Digital Technology plays an important part in social innovation through the use of ICT such as online networks and other digital tools.

5.2. The process of Systemic Innovation should be made available at an affordable cost for all stakeholders that need to be engaged in the co-design of the solutions that will drive the needed sustainability transition. Financial viability is a prerequisite for social cohesion and 'leaving no one behind' in the process of implementing the EGD. For this reason, aspects of systemic change that have public good characteristics should be funded or subsidised by public sources which will allow further leveraging of private funds for climate change investments.

5.3. Communities that succeed in bringing about systems innovation are those that excel at understanding the problem, at gathering solutions, at allocating solutions according to specific needs and resources of different places and contexts. We need to empower European communities with these skills and create the relevant enabling environments for more action from the non-state actors.

5.4. There is an urgent need for innovative funding mechanisms, which recognise and respond to the potential and challenges of community-led system innovation, which requires flexible, core support in order to be established and sustained, and at-risk start-up capital for bigger projects, as well as professional mentoring and support. The Climate Pact could create a hugely valuable route for social innovators to provide feedback on the policy and economic barriers, which block and disadvantage them and frequently render much-needed transformational projects unviable.

5.5. The responses of companies are a very important reference, as illustrated by these examples:

- Multinational corporations producing clothing to use and throw away, promoting a second-hand sales line, as a recycling strategy,
- The mentoring of large oil producers and insurance companies, which will have to reorient their businesses.

5.6. Examples of significant responses from the financial sector include:

- Investment funds' decision not to invest in projects that do not consider the climate variable,
- The Network for Greening the Financial System, founded by eight central banks and supervisors, for green finance.

⁽¹²⁾ EIT C-KIC 'Deep Demonstrations' represent a potential economic 'growth edge' from Europe's most ambitious 'challenge owners' to understand their 'problem space' and 'designers' to map the system and create a portfolio of intervention positions.

6. Information sharing and public understanding of climate action

6.1. Direct dialogues with citizens to raise awareness of the importance of a transition to more sustainable societies and healthier local communities are needed. Such dialogues have most added value when organised at local, regional or national level. Nevertheless, guidance, coordination and support from the EU level would be essential.

6.2. It should be primarily incumbent on individual countries to develop a system of environmental regulation that is based on their local environment and its needs, and adjusted to the sustainable development of that country. Recognition of the rights of nature would be an important element of this ⁽¹³⁾.

6.3. Any EU level intervention should be co-designed with the users, learning from, modelling and inspiring the participatory approach required at other levels of scale. There is a need to bring in expertise and resources to support the design and facilitation of innovative collaborative spaces, compelling story-telling and the use of innovative technology. Fundamental to the success of the Climate Pact will be the ability of the communities involved to become the best story-tellers they can be, bringing to life the transformed future they are advocating, exploring and connecting with existing needs and desires, and empowering people to act.

6.4. A network environment that is conducive to encouraging and supporting climate action requires an online platform for exchanging practices and lessons learned from projects and approaches. Such a participatory platform could facilitate peer learning and advice sharing among actors by helping them to overcome regulatory obstacles. It could stimulate education and innovation by providing online courses, webinars and workshops.

6.5. Recognition, and credible communication of existing actions may be strong stimuli to take climate action. Funding and other resources, specialist support and the power to help shape decisions that impact on their work will enable the wider application of proven approaches.

6.6. Ambassadors for climate action could be tasked with facilitating cooperation between multiple actors; setting strategic/thematic priorities; convening events; and incentivising new climate actions.

6.7. Such Climate Pact Ambassadors could serve as focal points for different sectors of the economy. Specific ambassadors for youth, local communities, cities and regions should also be appointed. Ambassadors at EU level would have a different role from ambassadors at national/regional/local level. Coordination between various levels would need to be ensured.

6.8. Appointing members of the EESC and the CoR as EU-level ambassadors for the constituencies they represent would build on their extensive networks among civil society and local and regional authorities, as well as reinforce cooperation between the advisory bodies and the Commission.

6.9. For instance, trade unions and business organisations have an on the ground perspective, and democratically represent workers in various sectors. They are key in shaping the different measures so as to accommodate the needs of workers and businesses and in identifying the challenges. Climate ambassadors at different levels in the trade union and business environment could build on the strengths of social dialogue, effectively boost information sharing and stimulate climate action. This work requires an institutional environment favourable to rights at work.

6.10. The digital transformation changes the organisation and the way of producing of companies, and many SMEs are struggling with very serious shortcomings in digitalisation. The concerns of many workers are about the impact of digitalisation on their jobs, which could lead to rising unemployment and inequalities.

⁽¹³⁾ EESC opinion Reflection Paper on 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030'; EESC opinion on 'Climate Justice' (OJ C 81, 2.3.2018, p. 22).

6.11. In order to ‘promote financing and green investment and ensure a just transition’ in the EGD, the Commission has developed a taxonomy to incentivise investments in 8 large economic groups and 70 activity sectors, which will radically transform their production and the quantity and quality of their jobs. In this document, the cornerstone of the Investment Plan for the EGD, there is only one reference to labour rights of the fundamental ILO standards.

7. Creating real and virtual spaces for exchange on climate

7.1. The Climate Pact should be focused on empowering people to change systems — through exploration, experimentation and demonstration. Education and training programmes covering the whole spectrum of civil society, and other non-state actors, are needed. Improving the knowledge and understanding of the climate challenge by going deeper and broader and by improving the quality of the discussions and conversations around the problem among stakeholders is crucial.

7.2. Ready-to-implement tools to structure and manage the challenges and exploit opportunities of sustainability innovations and transitions will be needed. The EC Horizon 2020 programme has produced and pilot many of these tools. In multidisciplinary settings the approach should be to follow ‘learning by doing through the application of tools on the users’ cases’.

7.3. Stakeholder management, multi-level perspective, visioning and backcasting, and niche management will be crucial in mobilising the Climate Pact. This structure is meant to facilitate the problem-solving process by setting out a pathway for system innovation for climate change and EGD implementation.

7.4. The success of the Climate Pact will be partly defined by the ability of entrepreneurship and businesses to attract grant funding from public, philanthropic and private sources. Such funding should have the ambition of addressing the market failures that have caused climate change, has the appetite for disruptive change and can reach a significant scale. The EU Multilateral Funding Framework, mission-driven European and international public and private funds with an appetite to drive systemic change in the areas of climate mitigation and adaptation can be used to leverage billions of innovative climate action. The overall aim should be to generate resources, experience and capability around purposeful outcomes on emission reductions and increased climate resilience that can be multiplied to accelerate change and generate hope. The Climate Pact should welcome the engagement of the national and international financial sector, including the relevant multilateral and private funds. Moreover, the tax system should reflect the principle of maximising and sustaining the well-being economy.

7.5. Incorporating physical and virtual spaces for climate exchanges into existing civil society associations, which would interact through the Climate Pact Stakeholder Platform, should also be considered.

7.5.1 In the field of work, the constitution of Observatories of Foresight, Analysis and Interpretation of labour, organisational and technological changes, covering the eight taxonomy groups, with the participation of trade unions, employers and administrations, at European and Member State level, would be appropriate, with material support from the Commission.

8. Building capacity to facilitate grassroots initiatives

8.1. The general framework should be clearly defined, in order to avoid inconsistencies with the EGD.

8.2. The overall challenges identified most by civil society actors for engaging in climate action are a lack of access to finance; a lack of expertise; a lack of staff; and a lack of recognition ⁽¹⁴⁾, as well as the lack of a consistent narrative from the EU and the national governments.

⁽¹⁴⁾ EESC study.

8.3. Multiple stakeholders have been pointing out complex regulatory and administrative environments as obstacles to climate action. CSOs, and CLIs, could benefit from capacity-building efforts that help them navigate regulatory and administrative environments.

8.4. Providing both material (technical assistance, capacity building, funding, etc.) and non-material (recognition, greater visibility, etc.) support, as well as facilitating networking and connections to specific policy areas and processes, should be essential elements of a *European Climate Pact Stakeholder Platform* that aims to stimulate climate action on the ground.

8.5. Non-state actors might face various challenges in accessing finance for their climate initiatives, including: prohibitive project size requirements, reluctance of private investors to finance projects, complicated processes and requirements for applying for and accessing funds⁽¹⁵⁾. Other barriers include a lack of awareness about climate financing options, insufficient administrative capacity and technical knowledge in securing financing, budgetary and regulatory constraints, ensuring the bankability of potential investments, political constraints, and difficulties in meeting overly prescriptive eligibility criteria for EU and international funds⁽¹⁶⁾.

8.6. The EESC has proposed the establishment of a Climate Finance Forum, which would bring together key stakeholders to address the main issues, identify barriers, design solutions, and identify the most efficient mechanisms for improved distribution of finance in line with the principle of subsidiarity. A study⁽¹⁷⁾ is being carried out in order to propose an action plan and ultimately to improve the access of non-state climate actors to finance.

9. Towards a European Climate Pact Stakeholder Platform

9.1. In view of the positive experiences with the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, the EESC proposes to set up a similar European Climate Pact Stakeholder Platform.

9.2. Inclusiveness, transparency and genuine participation and ownership by local climate actors should be the guiding principles for the Platform.

9.3. The EESC has called for the transition to a sustainable, carbon-neutral and resource-efficient economy to be just and leave no households, communities, regions, sectors and minorities behind⁽¹⁸⁾. The European Climate Pact Stakeholder Platform should entail an Observatory of the transition to climate neutrality to monitor implementation of EU climate policy at national and regional level and gather data in support of policy-making at all levels.

9.4. The EESC supports organisation of Citizens' Assemblies in Member States to inform, inspire and foster understanding and to advise all levels of governance on climate policies. The European Climate Pact Stakeholder Platform could promote existing successful experiences and disseminate guidance and best practices to countries, regions and cities interested in hosting similar assemblies.

9.5. The European Climate Pact Stakeholder Platform could be tasked with organisation of a Citizens' Assembly at EU level co-hosted by the EESC, CoR and EP with the Commission's support.

9.6. An essential element of the Platform would be a capacity-building and finance hub, providing guidance, information and education on climate policies and strategies as well as to facilitate access to finance for small-scale projects. The EU hub as well as national hubs could be set up in cooperation with local and regional authorities.

⁽¹⁵⁾ EESC opinion on 'Facilitating access to climate finance for non-state actors' (OJ C 110, 22.3.2019, p. 14).

⁽¹⁶⁾ Rossi, L., Gancheva, M. and O'Brien, S., 2017.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Climate Finance Forum — modalities and first tasks, Study for the EESC by Milieu Consulting SPRL.

⁽¹⁸⁾ EESC opinion on 'Leaving no one behind when implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda' (OJ C 47, 11.2.2020, p. 30).

9.7. The European Climate Pact Stakeholder Platform's online platform would serve to create spaces for sharing information and knowledge, facilitating networking and building commitments.

9.8. The European Climate Pact Stakeholder Platform would require setting up a coordination group composed of representatives of various actors. Selection of coordination group members will require transparent and clear criteria in order to ensure inclusiveness and representativeness, while maintaining efficient governance of the structure. The following stakeholders should be represented: EU institutions, civil society, including business, trade unions, local and regional authorities, science community, finance community and youth. Stakeholders from institutions and sectors with fewer resources should be provided with sufficient resources to participate and have a decision-making role.

Brussels, 16 July 2020.

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Luca JAHIER
