

What is the European Economic and Social Committee?



European Economic and Social Committee

What is in this booklet?

Inside this booklet you will read about the European Economic and Social Committee.

The European Economic and Social Committee is called the 'EESC' for short.

You will read about:

What is the European Economic and Social Committee?

What does the EESC do?

How does the EESC work?

What topics does the EESC work on?

What else does the EESC do?

How to find out more about the EESC

What is the European Economic and Social Committee?



The European Economic and Social Committee is an **organisation in the European Union**.

The European Economic and Social Committee is called the 'EESC' for short.

An organisation is a group of people working together.



The European Union brings together 28 countries in Europe.

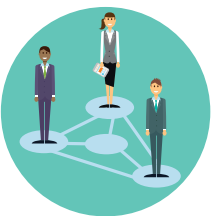
These 28 countries are also called 'Member States' of the European Union.



These 28 countries work together to give their citizens a better life.

Citizens are ordinary people of countries.

You are a citizen.



The EESC connects **civil society** with the European Union.

Civil society is made up of groups and organisations that represent citizens with different interests.

For example: organisations representing employers, workers, consumers, families, young people, farmers, and people with disabilities.



The EESC has **350 members**.

1 of the members is the EESC president.

The president has the highest position in an organisation.

2 members are EESC vice presidents.

Vice presidents have the position immediately below the president.

EESC members come from the 28 countries of the European Union. They live and work in their own country. At least 9 times each year they travel to Brussels in Belgium to have discussions at meetings called 'plenary sessions'. In-between these sessions they can also meet to prepare for the plenary debates.

EESC members are divided into **3 groups**:



1. The **employers' group** represents people who give jobs to other people. For example: people or organisations who have their own business in industry, commerce, services or agriculture.



2. The **workers' group** represents people who have jobs. Some workers join 'trade unions'. 'Trade unions' are organisations that represent workers who have the same kind of job and similar interests in their work. For example: trade unions of construction workers, teachers and policemen. Trade unions discuss their members' pay and working conditions with employers.



3. The **various interests group** represents other professions and organisations. For example: organisations representing families, farmers, young people, women, people protecting the environment and people with disabilities.

The EESC was created in 1957.

Its first plenary session was in 1958.

The EESC is in Brussels, the capital of Belgium.

In Brussels there are also many other European organisations.

What does the EESC do?



The EESC gives **advice** to the European Union.
By doing this, the EESC helps the European Union to make better laws and policies.
Better laws and policies ensure a better life for citizens.



Laws are rules which control the way society works.
For example: laws that affect businesses, workers, families, people without a job, women, young people, nature and elderly people.



Policies are plans of action decided by organisations and states.
Member States of the European Union decide European policies.
For example: economy, consumers, health, trade, energy, environment, farming and training policies.

The EESC helps the European Union to make better laws and policies in **3 ways**:



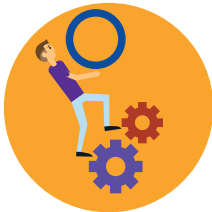
- 1.** The EESC gives advice to the main European Union institutions when they pass laws.
An institution is a type of organisation.

The main European institutions are:

- the European Parliament
- the Council of the European Union
- the European Commission.



- 2.** The EESC passes on the views of civil society organisations to the main European institutions about different topics.
These topics are important for European citizens.



- 3.** The EESC supports the work of civil society organisations in the European Union and around the world.

How does the EESC work?

The main **European Union institutions** pass laws.

To do this, they **ask** the EESC for advice.

The main European Union institutions are the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission.

In their own countries, EESC members look at how these new laws will affect citizens.

They decide together what response they will give to the main European Union institutions.



EESC members write documents called '**opinions**' about the needs and views of citizens.

They travel to Brussels to prepare for the plenary session.



They **discuss** and **vote** on the opinion at the plenary session.

The EESC **sends** the final agreed opinion to the main European institutions.

The EESC **publishes** the opinion in the 'Official Journal of the European Union' so that everyone can read about it.

EESC members **inform** European civil society organisations, European and national politicians and citizens about the opinion.

Sometimes, the EESC decides itself, without being asked, to write opinions about topics that are very important for European citizens.

EESC opinions **help** the main European Union institutions to make better laws and policies for citizens in the European Union.

What topics does the EESC work on?

The EESC works on many topics.

These topics are important for the European Union and its citizens.

The EESC is divided into **6 sections** and a **commission**.

The sections and the commission work on their **own topics**.

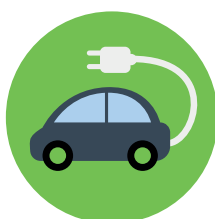
EESC members work in one or more of these sections or the commission.

They work on the topics they know best.



The section 'Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion' works on topics such as:

- › helping the European Union to use its 'budget' better
The budget is the amount of money the European Union can spend to make the life of its citizens better.
- › making the euro stronger
The euro is the currency used in 19 countries of the European Union.
- › making regions and cities better.



The section 'Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society' works on topics such as:

- › making transport better and safer
- › producing energy in a way that protects the natural environment
For example: using the wind, water or the sun.
- › making mobile phone charges cheaper.



The section 'Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment' works on topics such as:

- › helping farmers to grow good and healthy food for everyone
- › making food safer
- › producing less waste.



The section 'Single Market, Production and Consumption' works on topics such as:

- › supporting the 'single market' in the European Union
- › supporting small and medium-sized companies
- › protecting the rights of consumers

The 'single market' means that Member States of the European Union can easily buy and sell each other's goods.

Consumers are people who buy services and goods such as food, cars and washing machines.



The section 'Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship' works on topics such as:

- › creating more and better jobs
- › helping people with disabilities
- › making sure men and women have equal rights.



The section 'External Relations' works on topics such as:

- › working together with civil society organisations in countries that are not members of the European Union
- › helping the European Union to work better with these countries.



The commission called the 'Consultative Commission on Industrial Change' works on topics such as:

- › helping countries in the European Union to adapt to changes in industry, called 'industrial change'
- › helping citizens and organisations to adapt to these changes.

What else does the EESC do?

The EESC organises special **events** for citizens in Brussels and in other European Union countries.



For example:

The EESC invites young people from schools all over Europe to an event called 'Your Europe, Your Say!' At this event, young people play the role of EESC members.

They share their views on topics that are important for all European citizens.



EESC members visit schools and universities in Member States of the European Union.

They talk to young people about the EESC and the European Union.

The EESC also attends events organised in all European Union countries such as:

- › European Day of People with Disabilities
- › European Consumer Day.

How to find out more about the EESC

You can find out more about the EESC.

Visit the following websites:



The EESC website:
www.eesc.europa.eu



The EESC on Facebook:
www.eesc.europa.eu/facebook



The EESC on Twitter:
www.eesc.europa.eu/twitter



The EESC on YouTube:
www.eesc.europa.eu/youtube



The EESC on LinkedIn:
www.linkedin.com/company/european-economic-and-social-committee



The EESC president's website:
www.eesc.europa.eu/president



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