

European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is an advisory body of the European Union, which includes representatives of various interest groups in civil society. With its studies, recommendations and advice EESC helps the work of the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament and the European Commission.

The Union noted that the continent feels "democratic deficit'. EESC is an institution of great importance for cooperation among decision makers in the EU and civil society.

EESC was established in 1957. With the Treaty of Rome, this Committee was established as a mechanism by which interest groups of civil society will engage in the common market and establish communication between the economic and social actors and institutions in the EU. Commission, Council and EU Parliament are obliged to consult the Committee when making decisions in the field of economic and social policy.

EESC is free to make suggestions regarding any other issues on their own initiative. EESC has 317 members from all EU countries, and the number of representatives from each state is determined in accordance to number of residents.

Members of the EESC represent the interests of different sectors of civil society. The committee is divided in three groups: Employers, Employees and Miscellaneous. The first group consists of representatives of private and public enterprises and institutions, small and medium enterprises, economic associations, banks and agriculture. In the other group are representatives of trade unions, while the third includes representatives of different interests, NGOs, organizations for protection of the environment, consumer associations and academic institutions.

The members are being proposed by national governments, and appointed by the EU Council for a period of four years. Every two years the EESC elects a Board, which has 37 members.

The committee meets in plenary session, held once a year. Meanwhile working groups within the committee held constant communication with the Economic and Social Councils nationwide, by gathering information and organizing topics.

EESC has developed extensive cooperation with economic and social associations worldwide.

These associations organize a joint meeting of an international character every two years.

The Committee is divided into six sections, dealing with different areas of economic and social life. These are NAT group for agriculture, rural development and environmental protection, the group ECO is the economic and monetary union and economic and social cohesion; in the SOC group - employment policy, social issues and civic issues; INT is the common market, production and consumer society; TEN is for transportation, energy, information society and infrastructure and REX for Foreign Affairs.

Within the REX group there are delegations for different regions of interest for the EU, including the contact group for the Western Balkans. The task of this contact group is to maintain and develop relations with civil society and economic and social councils in the region. It helps to establish relations with the EU institutions and participate in the processes of stabilization and association. A few years ago this working group is held the first Forum of Civil Society in the Western Balkans.

Twice a year EESC is announcing contest for apprenticeship lasting five months.

Web address of the EESC is eesc.europa.eu