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Resolution of the European Economic and Social Committee

The EESC's recommendations on the reform and investment proposals formulated as part of the 2025-2026 European Semester cycle

(C/2026/4648)

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Legal basis	Rule 52(4) of the Rules of Procedure
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Outcome of vote (for/against/abstentions)	175/3/0

1. Introduction

1.1. This resolution is part of a package, together with information report ([1]) and its detailed annex ([2]), that follows on from the annual work of the EESC's European Semester Group (ESG): consulting national economic and social councils, social partners and civil society organisations from EU Member States on key elements of the European Semester. The information report ([3]) compiles the views of social partners and civil society organisations in the 27 Member States on the national reform and investment proposals and their implementation (2025-2026 European Semester cycle) ([4]); this resolution complements it by providing the EESC's policy recommendations, conclusions and policy proposals based on the results of the stakeholder consultation as set out in the report.

1.2. This exercise continues the work that the EESC has been pursuing for the past several years on promoting a more participatory European Semester and economic governance framework, with greater ownership at national level and closer involvement of social partners and civil society organisations. Broad participation supports evidence-based decision-making and democratic legitimacy and expands public support for transformative policies and systemic change.

2. The EESC's recommendations on the reform and investment proposals formulated as part of the 2025-2026 European Semester cycle

The EESC:

2.1. reiterates **its recommendations** made in its opinions on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) ([5]), Autumn Package ([6]) and Performance Regulation ([7]);

([1]) The point of view of organised civil society in the EU Member States on national reform and investment proposals and their implementation (2025-2026 European Semester cycle).
([2]) Annex.
([3]) The ESG gathered the views of these stakeholders, by means of a questionnaire and five country visits, between January and March 2026.
([4]) The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions, grouped around four main topics: (1) Reform and investment measures in the Member States, particularly those based on the 2025 country-specific recommendations and their implementation; (2) Completion of the implementation of the national recovery and resilience plans; (3) Implementation and monitoring of national medium-term fiscal-structural plans; (4) The link between the multiannual financial framework and the European Semester.
([5]) *The road to the next Multiannual Financial Framework* (OJ C, C/2025/3202, 2.7.2025, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/3202/oj), and *Multiannual financial framework 2028-2034* (OJ C, C/2026/1974, 28.4.2026, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/1974/oj).
([6]) *2025 European Semester – Autumn package* (OJ C, C/2025/2019, 30.4.2025, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/2019/oj), and *Additional considerations on the way forward for the European Semester 2025* (OJ C, C/2026/10, 16.1.2026, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/10/oj).
([7]) EU Budget expenditure tracking and performance framework, ongoing.

2.2. highlights **its main findings**: the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) are certainly relevant, but the social dimensions are underweighted. The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) had strategic value, but it must be seen in the context of the pandemic and has overall proved to be too complex and too centralised and to have been implemented too hastily. The link between the MFF and the European Semester could enhance the EU's added value, but much depends on safeguards for democracy, subsidiarity and social balance. Most importantly from the EESC's perspective, the involvement of social partners and civil society organisations remains procedural, not impactful. Furthermore, general implementation gaps persist, and the EESC therefore calls for a greater emphasis to be placed on execution capacity, administrative efficiency and measurable outcomes;

2.3. affirms that the future of the EU depends on the dynamic and strong **interconnection between its four forms of capital** (economic, human, social and environmental), with a correspondingly intensified focus on enhanced sustainable competitiveness, firmly anchored in Article 3 of the Treaty on the European Union, the Green Deal and the European Pillar of Social Rights. The EESC calls on the Commission to weave these four forms of capital together, and to move **beyond GDP-centric growth** (as recommended by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) ([8])) to adopt a model of security defined by economic resilience, social cohesion and environmental sustainability. **Implementation of the single market**, paying **particular attention to the capital markets union,** must be fully integrated into the European Semester and the CSRs, together with political accountability for the enforcement of single market rules;

2.4. considers that, in order to pursue and deliver genuine European added value in the intertwining of the European Semester and the MFF, it is crucial to **unlock the EU's potential while preserving flexibility, subsidiarity and multilevel governance**. However, the EESC firmly rejects the logic of punitive macroeconomic conditionality and recommends a structure of positive incentives, in which the Semester identifies strategic bottlenecks and the MFF provides targeted support to address them. The EESC acknowledges the growing importance of defence resilience and readiness and calls for the establishment of a regulatory environment offering legal certainty and support to mobilise investment in EU-coordinated capabilities, with the aim of improving productivity, competitiveness, economic growth, cohesion, resilience and strategic autonomy;

2.5. recommends **learning from past experience** (in particular the shortcomings of the implementation of the RRF) and ensuring that the EU's social objectives and multilevel governance are preserved within the MFF architecture. In order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the EU's strategic objectives and the resilience of its economy, fiscal space should be created to achieve the EU's common social objectives and, in particular, to contribute to the Social Investment Hub recently launched by the European Commission;

2.6. underlines in particular that **social issues are often undervalued in CSRs,** while the level of implementation of social CSRs has historically been inadequate, inefficient or even non-existent. For this reason, the EESC is following the Social Convergence Framework with interest and will continue to monitor its actual impact on the overall cycle of coordination of the EU's economic and social policies. The EESC believes that, until the identified challenges are resolved, government action will need to be mandated and strengthened in order to trigger the necessary dynamism at national level, with a view to accelerating the design, implementation and delivery of reforms, as well as their democratic evaluation;

2.7. is firmly convinced that, in order to achieve this objective, the EU must **develop a more robust collaborative framework** in which results and performance are rewarded through targeted technical assistance and flexibility in co-financing, taking into account the specific characteristics of national and regional contexts;

([8]) Beyond GDP: delivering sustainable and inclusive wellbeing - Joint Research Centre.

2.8. therefore recommends **stepping up the involvement of social partners and civil society organisations** (with a view to enhancing the partnership principle step by step as the governance of the MFF and the European Semester converge) **by transforming it from a quasi-procedural requirement into a substantive driver of policy success**, based on a mandatory evaluation of stakeholder involvement throughout the entire policy cycle, as well as on genuinely simplifying, and ensuring the proportionality of, the administrative and regulatory burden placed on public authorities, business and civil society organisations, not just on the European Commission's services;

2.9. calls on the Commission to **improve both the quality and the timing of the information and consultation processes within the European Semester**. This includes investing in capacity-building for civil and social dialogue, strengthening consultation processes and improving their timelines, improving access to transparent and comparable data, and establishing a European code setting out how to conduct consultations within the framework of the European Semester and how to draft and implement national plans, in accordance with national practices and social dialogue frameworks;

2.10. calls, therefore, for the **introduction of a mandatory assessment of the quality and impact of the partnership**. This should not be limited to evaluating whether the partners have been consulted, but should also examine the extent to which their input has shaped final operational programmes. This must be **paired with a radical simplification of delivery mechanisms,** co-designed with managing authorities, regional bodies, social partners and civil society organisations, to ensure that audit and monitoring systems are proportionate and respect the principle of shared management without imposing excessive bureaucratic duplication.

Brussels, 18 June 2026.

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Séamus BOLAND