



*European Economic and Social Committee*

# **LIAISON GROUP WITH EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND NETWORKS**

## **OPERATING RULES**

### **1. Membership**

The Liaison Group shall comprise:

- 14 members of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), including the EESC President, the three group presidents, the six section presidents, the president of the Consultative Commission on Industrial Change, the President of the European Semester Group and the presidents of the three EESC Observatories;
- Organisations and networks representative of the main sectors of organised civil society at European level based on existing organisations and networks within these sectors.

### **2. Mandate**

The Liaison Group shall have the following mandate:

- Exchange of information and views on the respective work programmes and relevant events.
- Identification of themes on which cooperation would be appropriate and possible.
- Examination of the feasibility of, and practical arrangements for, greater involvement of the networks in the EESC's consultative work. Consultation or cooperation on the preparation of certain hearings, seminars, conferences, etc.
- Examination of any other issues of common interest, particularly as part of the dialogue with the EU institutions.

### **3. Work programme**

Each year, the Liaison Group shall adopt its work programme.

The political priorities and the respective work programmes of the EESC and the European civil society organisations and networks which are members of the Liaison Group shall be taken into consideration when devising the work programme.

### **4. Presidency**

The presidency of the Liaison Group shall be constituted jointly by the EESC President and a Co-chair from the European civil society organisations and networks which are members of the Liaison Group (hereinafter the "Co-chair").

### **5. Appointment of the Co-chair**

The Co-chair shall be appointed by a simple majority of all members of the Liaison Group from European civil society organisations and networks.

The appointment of the Co-chair shall be ratified by all members of the Liaison Group.

The Co-chair shall be appointed for a term of two and a half years, ending at the same time as that of the EESC President. This term may be renewed.

### **6. Timetable for meetings**

The EESC President and the Co-chair shall jointly draw up the timetable for meetings.

### **7. Notice of meetings**

Liaison Group meetings are convened by the EESC President and the Co-chair.

### **8. Meeting agendas**

The EESC President and the Co-chair shall jointly decide on the draft agenda of meetings.

Each member of the Liaison Group shall have the right to propose in advance the inclusion of an item on the agenda for a given meeting.

### **9. Chair of meetings**

Meetings shall be chaired jointly by the EESC President and the Co-chair.

If the EESC President is unable to attend, he/she shall be replaced by one of the EESC Vice-Presidents.

#### **10. Alternates**

The presidents of the EESC groups, sections, CCMI European Semester Group and of the EESC observatories may appoint an alternate to replace them at meetings, if they are unable to attend.

#### **11. Changing the membership**

Decisions on Liaison Group's membership shall be taken by all members on the basis of a joint proposal by the EESC President and the Co-chair.

#### **12. Participation criteria**

In order to represent a sector of European organised civil society, the relevant organisation or network must meet the following criteria for representativeness:

- Members representing a sector of activities covered by civil society organisations and networks that form a de jure or de facto "family" of associations must be from European organisations or networks that have a permanent legal structure;
- The "family" must have members in more than half of the EU Member States;
- The "family's" member organisations must be non-profit making;
- The "family's" member organisations must be non-governmental;
- The "family's" member organisations must be independent, in particular from political parties;
- The "family's" member organisations must be engaged in activities that are not covered by the institutional framework for social dialogue.

#### **13. Representation of the Liaison Group**

Only the EESC President shall be entitled to represent the Liaison Group in external relations which may have a bearing on the EESC.

The Co-chair shall be entitled to use his or her position in external relations that do not have a bearing on the EESC.

Any member of the Liaison Group may, with the joint agreement of the EESC President and the Co-chair, be authorised to present the results of the Liaison Group's work and assess the implementation of its mandate.

#### **14. Attendance at meetings**

To ensure the good organisation and smooth running of the Liaison Group's work, any members who are unable to attend a meeting to which they have been convened are asked to send their apologies to the Liaison Group's secretariat in advance.

If an organisation or network representing civil society does not participate in three consecutive meetings, including the meetings of the civil society organisations component of the Liaison Group, without having apologised, it will lose its membership.

In the absence of over half of the Liaison Group's members at a meeting, the EESC President and the Co-chair shall take a decision on whether to hold the meeting or not.

#### **15. Appointment of rapporteurs**

The Liaison Group may appoint one or more rapporteurs and set up working groups drawn from its members to investigate any item included on the agenda.

#### **16. Decision-making**

Decisions shall be reached on the basis of a consensus, unless otherwise specified in the operating rules.

#### **17. Working languages**

The Liaison Group's working languages shall be English and French.

Where possible, documents may be made available to Liaison Group members in other languages.

Any additional interpreting needs shall be assessed in the light of the composition of the Liaison Group.

#### **18. Public access to meetings**

The Liaison Group's meetings shall be public.

Any request to attend a meeting must be made in advance to the Liaison Group's Secretariat.

The EESC President and the Co-chair may jointly decide to grant observer status to any European civil society organisation or network that makes such a request.

In particular, this status may be granted when the relevant organisation or network:

- is active in a sector of European organised civil society which is already represented by the Liaison Group;

- does not fulfil the criteria for representativeness laid down in the operating rules.

### **19. Minutes**

A record of each Liaison Group's meeting shall be drawn up by the Liaison Group's secretariat. These minutes shall then be submitted for the Liaison Group's approval at its next meeting.

### **20. Publication of work**

To ensure that the work of the Liaison Group is as widely available as possible, all documents pertaining to its work shall be accessible on the EESC's website.

The Liaison Group may, however, decide that certain documents of a provisional nature should not be posted on the EESC's website.

### **21. Secretariat**

The secretariat of the Liaison Group shall be provided by the Unit responsible for *Relations with Organised Civil Society and Forward Studies* within the EESC's Secretariat.

### **22. Access to EESC premises**

Members of the Liaison Group shall have free access to EESC premises.

The practical arrangements for this access shall be decided by the EESC.

### **23. Adoption and amendment of operating rules**

The Liaison Group shall adopt its operating rules by consensus and, if need be, amend them in the same manner, on the basis of a proposal from the EESC President and the Co-chair.