

Commentary on the Cooperation Agreement Between the EESC and EP

Recently, the transformation of collaboration between the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the European Parliament (EP) has reached an unprecedented new level through the signing of the "Cooperation Agreement between the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee". This accord marks a major innovation in terms of EESC rapporteurs being able to directly engage with the EP committee work, thus bolstering the transnational structures of influence between an EU executive and legislature. Several important elements of this agreement need to be emphasized in terms of the role of EESC rapporteurs, the overall dynamics between the EESC and the EP, and the impact on national employers' organizations.

Enhanced Role of EESC Rapporteurs

Under this agreement, the role of a rapporteur at the EESC has been boosted in a major way. Previously, rapporteurs drafted the EESC opinions on different legislative acts. But these views often came only second or third-hand to the EP, making a diminished impression on it. The deal corrects this situation by subsequently granting rapporteurs direct entry to EP committees. This enables rapporteurs to present the EESC positions in person and defend them before MEPs — who themselves have legislative authority. Due to its direct participation, the opinion of EESC is considered most probably in the legislative procedure. For instance, if a rapporteur from the Employers' Group is involved in drafting an opinion on a piece of labor market legislation, they can now ensure that the specific concerns of employers are highlighted and addressed during committee discussions, potentially leading to more balanced legislation.

Broader Impact on EESC-EP Relations

The cooperation agreement between the EESC and the EP is set to improve the efficiency and inclusivity of the EU's legislative process. By getting involved directly, the positions of different parts of society (employers and workers, etc.) can be more effectively taken into account when EU legislation is developed. Furthermore, closer collaboration between the EESC and the EP also helps streamline the legislative process by reducing the gap between advisory opinions and actual legislative decision-making. This, in turn, can result in more coherent and complete policies that are also indicative of the interests, concerns, rights, etc. of all EU citizens, and finally, it reinforces the emphasis on participatory democracy within the EU and strengthens the role of organizations with consultancy status, contributing to the legitimization of EU institutions.

Importance for National Employers' Organizations

The agreement reinforces the motivation of national employers' organizations to be part of EESC's Employers' Group. The EESC is an important bridge to civil society and a platform for social partners — including employers — at the very early stages of EU legislation. Being a member of the Employers' Group enables these organizations to participate in the drafting of opinions on all matters that affect business across Europe. These opinions have gained additional influence as they can now be presented directly to the European Parliament through rapporteurs, thereby amplifying the employers' input in legislative proceedings and it is also crucial as it ensures that the perspectives and recommendations of businesses on prospective EU regulations are considered by MEPs when deliberating amendments

or provisions in legislative drafts. This membership also facilitates the exchange of views and engagement in discourse among national employers' organizations, enabling collective lobbying for policies that promote economic growth and EU-wide competitiveness.

In summary, the Cooperation Agreement between the EESC and the EP significantly strengthens the influence of the EESC in the EU legislative process. Overall, this agreement represents a major step forward in ensuring that the EU's legislative process is more inclusive and responsive to the needs of its diverse population.