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Plenary Session 29-30 April 2025 - Councillor Ulgiati with colleagues Reale and de Lotto, together with the Executive Vice President of the Commission, Raffaele Fitto

THE EESC AND THE MID-TERM REVIEW OF COHESION POLICY

During the latest Plenary Session of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), held in Brussels in April, an interesting debate on the “Mid-term review of cohesion policy” took place with the participation, among others, of the European Commission’s Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reform, Raffaele Fitto. Cohesion policy is the European Union’s main investment policy; it benefits all EU regions and cities by supporting economic growth, job creation, business competitiveness, sustainable development and environmental protection. Councillor Luigi Ulgiati, who spoke on the subject, said: «In the light of the major changes taking place in the geopolitical scenario, a mid-term review of cohesion policy is becoming increasingly essential. It is also crucial to act on the next multiannual financial framework. First the pandemic, then the wars, now the tariffs, these are all events that have completely changed the prospects that Europe has to face and it is therefore necessary, today more than ever, to take into account the new critical issues related to energy dependence, the cost of raw materials, and the supply of rare earths». For the EESC representative, Europe’s strategic policy must therefore be rethought, considering the new needs, favouring the competitiveness of Italian companies, employment, the defence of the Continent, and also evaluating the economic disparities that exist in the various territories. The wish, expressed by Councillor Ulgiati, is that a new vision of Europe, in step with the times and able to give concrete answers to its citizens, may be realised.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE PENSIONERS-WORKERS

According to a recent survey by Eurostat - the Statistical Office of the European Union - regarding the 2023 data on the workforce in the 27 Member States, working after retirement is an increasingly widespread reality in the European Union, a condition that applies to practically all Member States, where men and women continue to exercise a profession after reaching retirement. Most of them are self-employed, i.e. self-employed workers, freelancers, entrepreneurs, subjects, therefore, who carry out an activity with a large degree of decision-making autonomy or are in charge of a trade or business they own. The study does not explain, however, why those who could enjoy the right to a pension continue to work instead. For some it might be passion for their occupation, for others it might be economic necessity, linked to a sub-optimal social security situation due to the absence of typical contracts. Among the EU Countries, the percentage of self-employed pensioners who continued working, or returned to the labour market, was highest in Sweden (98.4%), Finland (88.0%) and Ireland (87.7%), while at the other extreme, it was lowest in Spain (18.2%), Greece (20.3%) and Slovenia (40.4%). In absolute terms, however, Italy ranks first in terms of the number of people exiting the labour market, without ever really leaving it. There are in fact about 394,500 people who renounce the right to stop working, to continue doing so instead. Also in 2023, 10.2% of pensioners aged between 50 and 74 were still employed, with a significant figure regarding the mode of employment: 57% of them worked part-time, a much higher percentage than the 16.2% recorded among non-pensioners. Part-time employment among pensioners is a widespread trend in all Member States, but with clear differences. Croatia holds the record with the highest share of old age pensioners employed part-time, at 89.4%, followed by Sweden (79.2%) and Belgium (78.0%). Croatia also shows the largest gap with non-pensioners, with a difference of 86 percentage points. In contrast, Bulgaria records the lowest shares of part-time employment among pensioners (9.2%) and non-pensioners (1.2%), ahead of Lithuania (19.0%) and Latvia (23.2%). A curious fact, finally, comes from the Netherlands which, despite having the highest incidence of part-time work in absolute terms, shows the smallest gap between pensioners (57.8%) and non-pensioners (39.4%), testifying to a more flexible working culture across the various age groups.