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## EESC: ULGIATI AT BRUSSELS PLENARY ON SOCIAL RIGHTS

A packed agenda for the European Economic and Social Committee's (EESC) Plenary session, which has just ended in Brussels and which saw, during its two days of intensive work, very stimulating debates and the adoption of highly interesting Opinions, including the discussion on the new Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights, with the participation of Roxana Mînzatu, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for Social Rights, Korinna Schumann, Austrian Minister of Labour, and Katarzyna Nowakowska, Polish Deputy Minister for Family Affairs, as well as the adoption of the related Opinion SOC/822 on the "New Action Plan on the Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights". The European Pillar of Social Rights is a set of 20 Fundamental Principles and Rights in the social sphere, adopted by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on the 17th of November 2017 in Gothenburg, Sweden,

at the Social Summit for Employment, in order to respond to the social challenges facing Europe by guaranteeing employment and social protections. To translate these Principles into concrete policies, the European Commission presented on the 4th of March 2021 the Action Plan on the Pillar of Social Rights, with targets to be achieved by 2030 on employment, skills and social protection. A new Action Plan will be launched in the coming months by the Commission and should reflect the enormous changes that the labour markets, societies and economies of the Old Continent are undergoing, in order to turn them into opportunities for better jobs with more social security and inclusion. The EESC believes that, in order to draw up a new Action Plan on the implementation of the European pillar that is forward-looking and effective, established social rules and principles need to be carefully assessed and, where necessary, updated to adapt them to changing socio-cultural

needs and new geopolitical and economic challenges. For Councillor Ulgiati «concrete efforts are needed to increase productivity, social progress and employment, especially quality employment, including through support for training and skills upgrading, in the knowledge that with rapid technological development, the transition to a green economy and demographic change, people's skills and abilities are now key factors for the competitiveness and sustainability of the European social market economy model».



## EU: PLAN PRESENTED FOR ELIMINATION OF RUSSIAN GAS

Although the EU Energy Council, which took place in Luxembourg at the beginning of the week, failed to reach unanimity on the Russian gas ban, receiving the "no" vote from Slovakia and Hungary (the two Countries heavily dependent on Russian fuels) and thus failing to reach unanimous agreement on a document that contained a clear reference to cutting supplies from Moscow, a few days later, the European Commission presented the actual legislative proposal to phase out Russian energy imports to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. In this way, the European Union is moving towards a historic turning point that envisages the coordinated phasing out of gas and oil imports from Russia by the end of 2027, with the aim of strengthening Europe's energy security and independence. The principle for reducing Europe's energy dependency will be "less is more": less energy from Russia, more security in Europe, less funding for fossil fuels, more investment in green energy. New Russian gas import contracts will be phased out from 2026, while existing ones will be phased out until total termination by 2027 at the latest. An appropriate monitoring system will track the

origin, supplier and delivery method of the gas, allowing the EU Executive to use effective control tools to prevent the ban from being circumvented. Moreover, in order not to lead to price increases or supply problems, the transition will be managed in a coordinated manner with Member States, through national diversification plans and measures to limit risks and burdens on European companies. In addition, the three landlocked Countries - Austria, Hungary and Slovakia - which currently represent the opposition front to the Brussels roadmap, a waiver could be granted until 2027 to withdraw from short-term contracts with Russian suppliers. A qualified majority in the Council will be required to approve the Regulation, so with the expiration of the Polish EU Presidency, the "energy package" dossier will pass to Denmark, which will take over the role of six-month EU Council President from 1 July, leading the work to obtain the green light for the legislative proposal presented by the Commission. Copenhagen's goal is in fact to reach a political agreement and start negotiations with the European Parliament before passing the baton to the Cypriot Presidency.