



THE EESC AND SERVICES OF GENERAL INTEREST

At the recent meeting of the Section for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels, opinion TEN/851 on “The role of services of general interest (SGI) for competitiveness, social cohesion and democracy in the European Union” was first discussed and then adopted. Services of general interest, such as health care, care for the elderly and children, education, social services, energy,

water and public transport, are part of Europe's common values and are crucial for competitiveness, the European social model and democratic participation in Europe. They are also a useful tool for citizens, businesses and governments, as was evident during the Covid crisis, as well as the energy crisis caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The EESC calls for a holistic approach to services of general interest policies, instead of the current sectoral

approach to EU policies, calling on the European Commission to follow up the Letta Report with an action plan for SGI that recognises the central role of modern services of general interest in the context of promoting sustainable prosperity and competitiveness. Indeed, the well-being of future generations is based on long-term security, on solid public services and services of general interest in all sectors of economic activity. For Councillor Ulgiati, «Services of general

interest must be inclusive, competitive, of high quality and affordable. This must be achieved by implementing financial and regulatory reforms that consider the financing of SGIs not as a consumption expense, but as an investment in the future. It is also necessary to ensure the availability of skilled labour, through the creation of productive and quality jobs, supported by effective social dialogue, fair remuneration and good working conditions».

EU AND AFRICA: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MATTEI PLAN

In the beautiful setting of Villa Pamphilj in Rome, a few days ago, the Summit on the Mattei Plan and the Global Gateway was held, which saw Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, together with African Authorities from Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania and Zambia, as well as the heads of the International Financial Institutions (IMF, the World Bank Group, the African Development Bank and the Africa Finance Corporation) reach agreements for EUR 1.2 billion to make Africa grow and with Africa Europe. This partnership aims to be based on mutual respect, with concrete actions, sustainable investments and a mutually beneficial equal relationship between the two Continents. The European Commission and Italy are committed to mobilising transformational investments along strategic economic corridors with a focus on three key issues: 1) the Lobito Corridor, not only a rail development project, but also a broader economic corridor that will connect the resource-rich, landlocked regions of Southern Africa to global markets, including Europe; 2) sustainable agriculture, with climate-resilient supply chains and a strengthening of the East African coffee sector through regional integration and the involvement of the Italian private sector; 3) the Blue Raman submarine cable, co-financed with a contribution of EUR 37 million by the EU Executive, which will improve connectivity, stimulate research and in-

novation, and support technological convergence between Europe, Africa, and India. A strategic partnership, therefore, between Europe and Africa, the progress of which will be reviewed at the Global Gateway Forum that will take place in Brussels next October and which, especially at a time of great global uncertainty, such as the current one, testifies to the real and tangible commitment of Europe as a whole, and Italy in particular, towards the African Continent, characterised by inestimable resources, a young population, and a booming market.

