

THE EESC AND THE END-OF-TERM PLENARY SESSION

The 599th Plenary Session of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which took place in Brussels on the 17th and 18th of September, began with the end-of-term ceremony, which brought together EU leaders, civil society, young people’s voices and international partners around the results achieved by the Committee during the 2023-2025 term under the Presidency of Oliver Röpkke. Meetings, policy speeches and tributes highlighted the EESC’s key role in strengthening democracy, promoting social justice, supporting enlargement and fostering dialogue with organised civil society. This was followed by discussions on the Water Resilience Strategy and the



Emergency Preparedness Strategy, as well as on the progress of the new Mediterranean Pact. Of particular relevance and interest was the debate on affordable housing, with the participation of European Commissioner for Energy and Housing Dan Jørgensen, in relation to the

adoption of the Opinion TEN/848, requested by the Danish Presidency of the EU Council, entitled “Towards a European plan for affordable housing – the contribution of civil society”. In this regard, Councillor Ulgiati pointed out that housing is a very sensitive issue affecting millions of European citizens, particularly young people, who unfortunately do not have access to this asset, which is absolutely essential. During the Plenary Session, the Resolution “Defending EU values and strengthening its future in the new geopolitical order” was also approved, which noted the emergence of a new geopolitical reality driven by nationalism and authoritarianism, with Russia’s ongoing

war in Ukraine and changes in the US government, and emphasised the decline of the era of global trade and open markets. The EESC recommends that the EU transform itself into a security union, achieve resilient strategic autonomy and strengthen its global economic competitiveness by enhancing social cohesion and distributing wealth equitably. In his speech, Mr Ulgiati also expressed the hope that «over the next five years, the EESC, a body that represents civil society as a whole in a healthy and democratic way, will continue to implement all those mechanisms that are the highest expression of democracy and at the same time ensure that no one is left behind».

EU, DRAGHI LASHES OUT AT EUROPE IN BRUSSELS

«Our growth model is fading. Inaction threatens sovereignty and economic competitiveness» said former Prime Minister and former ECB President Mario Draghi at the high-level conference held a few days ago in the Capital of Europe, exactly one year after his Report on European competitiveness. Draghi did not hide his disappointment in noting that the European Commission had not achieved most of the objectives identified in his 383 recommendations (only 11% - 43 measures - according to the think tank European Policy Innovation Council). At the same time, Eurostat data show that in the second quarter of 2025, the US economy grew eight times faster than the European economy. «The foundations of European growth have been further weakened» said the former Italian Prime Minister, pointing the finger at the trade policy adopted by the United States and its President Donald Trump and highlighting the economic competition represented by Beijing, with which there is a clear trade imbalance. On the technological front, Draghi called for a real change, calling for a radical simplification of the GDPR, which to-

day increases costs for European companies and slows down the development of artificial intelligence, and a revision of the AI Act, with the suspension of the second phase for high-risk systems until the effects are better understood. While acknowledging «some signs of change», the former ECB chief pointed out that there is «great frustration» among citizens and businesses «disappointed by the slow pace of the EU», calling for a profound transformation that will deliver results within months rather than years. In conclusion, the final call was for unity because «only unity of purpose and urgency in responding will demonstrate that Europe is ready to face extraordinary times with extraordinary actions».

