



Edited by Luigi Ulgiati, UGL Deputy Secretary, member of the EESC

N. 164 6th of March 2026

THE EESC AND THE 2026 EUROPEAN SEMESTER AUTUMN PACKAGE

The 2026 European Semester Autumn Package, presented by the European Commission at the end of November, was the subject of the Opinion ECO/688 of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which adopted it at its February Plenary Session. This package, which launches the 2026 European Semester cycle, sets out the economic and employment policy priorities for strengthening the European Union's competitiveness. In an increasingly difficult geopolitical context, the EU Executive is calling

for coordinated action to consolidate productivity, innovation and investment, in line with the Competitiveness Compass. The 2026 Semester represents a turning point for the European Union, as its economic strategy must be completely redefined to respond to challenges never seen before since the EU was created: new geopolitical upheavals, ecological and environmental changes, technological and digital acceleration towards artificial intelligence in all fields, as well as the demographic challenge. The Package is based on the Autumn 2025

economic forecasts, which show that the EU economy remains resilient, with moderate growth driven mainly by robust domestic demand and investment, a strong labour market and falling inflation. At the same time, the EU faces a number of strategic vulnerabilities and continues to grapple with structural challenges, including low productivity, demographic pressures and growing demands on public finances linked to defence and the transition to a decarbonised and digital economy. According to Councillor Ulgiati «there is a need to involve Social

Partners and civil society organisations at European, national and local level in a more effective, structured and meaningful way in the implementation of the European Semester cycle. In fact, systemic reforms, such as those urgently needed by the EU - added Ulgiati - as well as fundamental decisions on investment priorities, must be based not only on broader legitimacy, but also on a particularly detailed understanding and more active participation if they are to achieve the goal of a fair and sustainable transformation».

EU: "MADE IN EUROPE" LAUNCHED

After weeks of discussions, amendments and revisions, the European Commission presented the long-awaited "Industrial Accelerator Act" on the 4th of March, a Regulation with which Brussels aims to accelerate and protect the decarbonisation of European industry. This is a «change of doctrine», whereby "made in Europe" «enters European law» said Stéphane Séjourné, European Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship, defending its protectionist nature. The move comes after 200,000 European jobs have been lost in energy-intensive industries and the automotive sector since 2024, with 600,000 losses expected in the next decade in the automotive sector alone, while China floods Europe with exports and builds plants that create little local employment. Faced with unprecedented global uncertainty and fierce unfair competition, European industry will be able to rely on the provisions of a binding legal Act, with general scope and directly applicable in all Member States, to stimulate demand and ensure resilient supply chains in strategic sectors such as clean technologies, car manufacturers and energy-intensive industries, particularly those related to aluminium, steel, cement and chemicals. The Industry Strategy introduces specific "Made in Europe" thresholds, including a 70% EU content

requirement for electric vehicles, with notable exceptions for most battery components. The definition of the geographical boundaries of what is considered "European" has been a hotly debated issue, and in the end, the Commission proposed extending EU origin status to products from trading partners with free trade agreements that apply reciprocity, particularly in public procurement contracts. However, this is a proposal from the Commission, which will have to be approved by the EU co-legislators, namely the European Parliament and the EU Council. But it is above all in the Council (which represents the Member States) that a battle is looming and where the Regulation risks being completely overturned.

