Edited by Luigi Ulgiati, UGL Deputy Secretary, member of the EESC N. 165 13rd of March 2026

EESC: TWO SPEECHES BY COMMITTEE MEMBER ULGIATI TO THE TEN SECTION

"Tackling the housing shortage through family-oriented housing policies for sustainable and affordable housing" (TEN/866) and "Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2028–2032)" (TEN/864): these are the two highly topical issues addressed in two separate Opinions adopted during the meeting of the EESC's TEN Section (Transport, Energy and Infrastructure), held a few days ago (9th of March) in Brussels, on which Councillor Ulgiati spoke. «The housing crisis affects all EU Countries, albeit with substantial differences - stated Ulgiati - compounded by energy costs and energy poverty, both of which are directly linked to housing hardship. We can no longer postpone solutions to the housing emergency and must urge the Commission to increase the funds allocated in the next MFF, so that there are tools to ensure affordable prices, especially for young people and families, thereby also seeking to address the demographic crisis. Opinion TEN/866 discusses social housing at length – added the EESC member – and it is right to focus on how to support those on the lowest incomes, but I believe we should also consider the possibility of providing access to housing through schemes that facilitate the purchase of a first home, using public guarantees and the option of obtaining loans to cover the full cost of the property. Finally, it is necessary to provide for investment in student accommodation, which is all too often the exclusive preserve of wealthy families, to the detriment of young people from low-income households, who, without adequate support, will not have the same opportunities for education and, above all, for social advancement».

With regard to the European Atomic Energy Research and Training Programme, it was emphasised that this initiative requires substantial investment, to be secured not only through adequate funding for the 2028–2032 Programme, but also through the involvement of private companies and major industrial groups active in the energy sector. «This must be done - said Ulgiati - both for fission projects, developing new technologies such as SMRs (Small Modular Reactors) or AMRs (Advanced Modular Reactors), and for programmes working on fusion projects. The current geopolitical context, which is increasingly complex and worrying, requires energy sources that guarantee competitiveness, energy security and sustainability, not only environmental, but also economic, and the Nuclear Energy Development Programme is moving precisely in this direction. The world's major powers are already gearing up - concluded Ulgiati - and Europe cannot afford to fall behind, particularly in light of the new energy requirements brought about by the expansion of data centres».

EU COMMISSION: U-TURN ON NUCLEAR ENERGY

The EU has changed tack on nuclear energy. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, reversed course on nuclear energy during the "Nuclear Energy Summit", recently organised in Paris by Emmanuel Macron, describing the move away from nuclear power as a «strategic mistake» and emphasising that it is a «reliable, cost-effective and low-emission» source. This statement came at a critical moment for European energy, marked by dependence on fossil fuel imports and geopolitical crises such as that in the Middle East. Europe's vulnerability is particularly evident today: when it comes to fossil fuels, the EU is completely dependent on costly and volatile imports, and renewables alone, despite the progress made, are not enough. Nuclear and renewable energy must therefore play a key role in a stable European energy mix that can withstand climate volatility and import fluctuations. Furthermore, to revitalise nuclear power, the President of the European Commission unveiled a «€200 million guarantee to support investment in innovative nuclear technologies», funded by the ETS (Emissions Trading System). The aim is small modular reactors (SMRs), with development taking 3–4 years and the first plants operational by 2030. «The race for nuclear technology has begun, and Europe - she added - could become a world leader by focusing on half a million highly skilled workers in the nuclear sector».