



## THE EESC AND YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The message put forward by the EESC (European Economic and Social Committee), with the adoption of the Opinion SOC/852 during the April Plenary Session, is as follows: youth entrepreneurship is not only a response to the challenges of the labour market, but also a strategic tool for strengthening Europe's long-term competitiveness and prosperity. Requested by the Cypriot Presidency of the Council of the EU, the approved Opinion illustrates how support for young entrepreneurs can consolidate innovation, promote sustainable growth and help secure the future of European SMEs. For the Committee, youth entrepreneurship is not simply a solution to unemployment, but constitutes a decisive lever for boosting the European Union's competitiveness and capacity for innovation at a time when slowing productivity, demographic challenges and increased global competition are putting the goal of stable European prosperity under severe strain. Furthermore, youth entrepreneurship can also prove useful in supporting generational renewal in many small and medium-sized European enterprises, provided that, alongside self-employment, it represents a free and informed choice and not a constraint due to a lack of decent employment alternatives. Difficulty in accessing capital remains one of the most significant obstacles for young entrepreneurs who often lack the collateral or creditworthiness required to secure loans from the

banking system or specific forms of public funding. For this reason, the EESC therefore calls for greater support for alternative financing instruments as well as financial instruments tailored to the specific circumstances of youth-led enterprises, whilst recognising, however, that financial support alone is not sufficient. The Opinion emphasises the importance of combining funding with mentoring, coaching, business incubation programmes and strategic assessment tools that help young entrepreneurs identify risks and strengthen the sustainability of their projects from the outset. An entrepreneurial mindset must also be developed through dual education and training pathways that allow for a balance between school and work experience. For Councillor Ulgiati «entrepreneurship education does not mean that everyone must become an entrepreneur, but that everyone should have access to the skills and knowledge resources needed to be enterprising, so as to actively participate in forms of active economic engagement, such as in the case of cooperative enterprises, which involve worker participation in the business».



## EU: 9 MAY, EUROPE DAY

In a rapidly changing world, torn by conflict and marked by a crisis of multilateralism, there is an ever-greater need to celebrate Europe and the process of continental integration which, with the "Schuman Declaration" of 9th of May 1950, in the dramatic post-war period, laid the foundations for the path towards a peaceful and united Europe. Faced with today's changes and challenges, the European Union must be ready to remain strong and independent: this means joining forces in the name of security and prosperity and protecting our freedom to decide what kind of society and democracy we wish to live in. Europe Day, established forty years ago,

is celebrated every 9 May and is an opportunity to celebrate the community of values we represent and which we are committed to protecting and nurturing together. This anniversary is also a time to engage with citizens and show how the European Union is working to protect them, create opportunities for people and promote partnerships worldwide. The traditional open day at all the European Institutions in Brussels thus saw the European Parliament, invite citizens to discover how European legislation shapes daily life and how they can influence the future of Europe; the Council of the European Union, offer a rare opportunity to take a close look at the place where

key decisions at European level are taken, alongside the European Commission; the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), welcoming the public for guided tours in various EU languages, to discover how civil society influences European policies. The anniversary of 9 May is therefore more relevant than ever, a reminder of a dream born to safeguard peace, solidarity and fraternity among peoples.

