

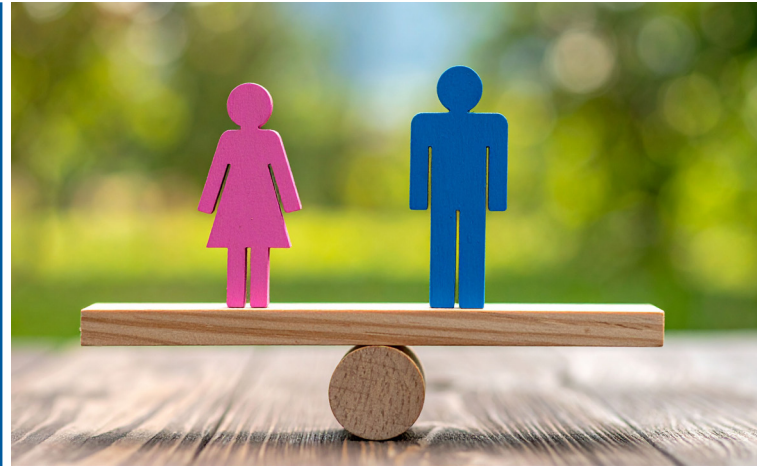


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THE EESC AND THE STRATEGY FOR INVESTMENTS IN CLEAN ENERGY

The current geopolitical context highlights the risks associated with Europe's dependence on fossil fuel imports. Citizens and industries are rightly concerned about high energy prices. Investing in clean energy is therefore the most accessible and economically reliable medium-term solution. It was precisely these issues that were discussed during the meeting of the TEN (Transport, Energy, Infrastructure) Section of the EESC (European Economic and Social Committee), held in Brussels last week (26th of May). Councillor Ulgiati took part in the debate on the "Clean Energy Investment Strategy", stating that «those who manage energy also manage democracy», emphasising that energy serves not only citizens, households, businesses and energy-intensive industries, but also data centres. In the energy transition between now and 2040, the EU Commission is planning significant investments through various channels. «But - Ulgiati asks - are these investments sufficient, or do we need to work to reduce bureaucracy across the entire supply chain and cut down on authorisation times?». With regard to training, it was highlighted that it is essential to have the right skills to make the new technologies of the future work. «Furthermore - continued the EESC member - there needs to be greater worker involvement in companies' objectives, just as it is important to involve consumers, who are not merely users of the services and energy produced, but also, indirectly, investors. And in addition - Ulgiati clarified - we must not look solely and exclusively to renewables as a panacea that solves all problems; instead, all new technologies must be put into operation, from CO2 capture and storage to nuclear power with SMRs, to hydrogen, and in the future also to nuclear fusion, in which many major Countries are investing». Finally, as regards securing resources for investment, this is perhaps the biggest problem for Ulgiati, who believes that «we must make sacrifices to face the future; otherwise, we will always be dependent on some rogue State and never free».



EU: GENDER EQUALITY STILL A LONG WAY OFF

Gender equality is one of the core values on which the European Union is founded. Although significant progress has been made in recent decades regarding women's participation in economic, social and political life, major inequalities between women and men still persist, particularly in care work. This is according to Eurostat (the EU's Statistical Office) in a report published a few days ago, which documents a boom in female workers in the scientific sector but highlights a stark disparity in the use of part-time work to balance family and professional life. Of the more than 81.6 million people employed in the scientific or technological sector, women now account for over half the workforce, representing 52.5% of the total (42.8 million female workers). However, regional disparities remain, with Latvia recording a female presence of 62.4%, whilst Central Italy stands at 47.2%, among the lowest figures in the entire Union. Regardless of the differences between the various European regions, there is certainly professional growth among women, which must, however, contend with a domestic care burden that remains heavily skewed and is reflected in career choices. According to Eurostat, 31.7% of women with children work part-time, compared with just 5.1% of men, and the situation does not change even in the absence of children. Against the backdrop of a changing European landscape, the European Parliament, at its May Plenary Session, adopted a Resolution on care work and a European Statute for Caregivers. The aim is to transition towards a "care society" that recognises care work as a fundamental pillar of the economy and human rights, and which guarantees minimum standards of protection, as well as the recognition of acquired skills, for those who care for a sick family member. Investing in gender equality, therefore, is no longer merely an ethical choice, but a strategic lever for the future of society as a whole.

