



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

N. 187 21st of September 2026

EESC: CIVIL SOCIETY AS A KEY PLAYER IN THE SINGLE MARKET

Making civil society a driving force in understanding and implementing the Single Market Strategy: this is the central theme of EESC Opinion INT/1131, adopted during the Section Meeting (Single Market, Production and Consumption) held in Brussels at the headquarters of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 8th of September, attended by Member Luigi Ulgiati. The EESC welcomes the European Commission's Single Market Strategy, presented in May 2025, as well as the establishment of the "Single Market Roadmap towards 2028" in line with the guiding principle "One Europe, One Market". The Strategy represents an important response to the concerns raised in the Draghi and Letta Reports and provides a timely basis for revitalising Europe's competitiveness, resilience and socio-economic development. The scale of internal barriers is clearly highlighted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Central Bank (ECB), which estimate them to be equivalent to tariffs of 45–65 per cent on goods and 100–110 per cent on services. The EESC therefore emphasises the key role that civil

society plays in translating this renewed momentum into concrete improvements for businesses and citizens, by helping to remove barriers to the Single Market, ensuring high levels of consumer protection and respect for workers' rights, and strengthening inclusive governance and the implementation of the Single Market, in the belief that a well-functioning European market requires the effective implementation not only of market rules, but also of workers' and consumers' rights. In this regard, Councillor Ulgiati believes that «cooperation between labour inspectors, social partners and the European Labour Authority should be stepped up to combat fraud, undeclared work and abusive subcontracting practices, whilst collaboration between national consumer protection authorities should be strengthened to ensure trust, legal certainty and effective redress across borders. Furthermore - added Ulgiati - the Single Market should be seen not only as a means of overcoming fragmentation, but also as a strategic tool for enhancing Europe's resilience and capacity to respond to future crises».

THE EUROPEAN UNION: BETWEEN STRENGTH AND VULNERABILITY

The «pace of change is incredible. The challenges are extraordinary. When I look at Europe today, my conclusion is this: the state of our Union is stronger than ever. And yet, the state of our Union may also appear more precarious than ever». With these words, spoken a few days ago by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, in her traditional State of the Union address before the European Parliament gathered in Strasbourg for its Plenary Session, she highlighted the contradiction in terms that characterises the Old Continent today. The European Union exists, plans and acts, but its "precariousness" is also evident, the struggle to move towards greater economic and political integration on a Continent riven by strong nationalist tendencies. The address covered a range of topics, all highly topical, in an attempt to respond to the current challenges with decisions that are more EU-centred than national. On the subject of artificial intelligence, the President emphasised that the AI Act is a key element in putting safeguards in place, expressing her conviction that, if used properly, AI can benefit humanity. As for the protection of children online, she announced the Commission's forthcoming adoption of the "Kids Act", a piece of legislation that will prohibit children under 13 from using social media and those under 15 from having personal accounts. Looking ahead to 2027, ten years on from the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights, von der Leyen announced plans to or-

ganise a European Summit with the President of the European Council, Antonio Costa, to maintain a strong commitment to ensuring that, in Europe, despite changing times and technologies, «people will always come first». On the climate front, following a scorching summer across much of the

Continent, the President of the European Commission proposed the creation of an alliance dedicated to climate risk insurance, whilst also emphasising the need for a European plan to combat heatwaves. Furthermore, highlighting the urgent need to rethink partnerships and build global coalitions for resilience and democracy in Europe, the President announced a proposal to welcome Canada as the EU's first associate member, with the aim of creating a common area of prosperity and economic security. Finally, in her concluding remarks, recalling that 2027 will mark the historic 70th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, Ursula von der Leyen announced that a new Congress of Europe would be convened for the occasion, with a view to shaping a vision capable of inspiring the new generation of Europeans.

