

CAMPAIGN FOR A BETTER REPRESENTATION OF THE DIVERSITY OF ORGANIZED CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE (EESC)

The undersigned European civil society organisations and networks strongly believe that the current make up of the Various Interests Group (Group III) of the European Economic and Social Committee does not adequately reflect the diversity and the developments of organised civil society. Not only its members make up less than a third of EESC members - currently 109 members - but also many of them actually should be sitting in one of the two other Groups, employers and employees. This includes, for instance, representatives from the craft sector, small businesses and farming or representatives of trade union-type organisations. Currently, only about 35% of the Various Interests Group members are representatives of civil society organizations - associations, foundations, mutual societies, cooperatives and NGOs - other than employers and employees' organisations.

This is why, in the run up to the renewal of the European Economic and Social Committee in September 2010, we call on the governments of the Member States to ensure that its composition reflects more the diversity of organised civil society in the Member States and, therefore, that the significance of the contribution of those organisations with interests other than those pursued by business and trade unions to the well-being of European citizens and the strengthening of the social and societal cohesion of the EU, be fully recognized.

In so doing, Members States would contribute, not only to guaranteeing a broader participation by organised civil society players in the democratic life of the Union, but also to increasing the credibility and effectiveness of the European Economic and Social Committee, giving it greater authority in its role as the institutional representative of organized civil society and relay of its concerns, expectations and demands. This is all the more important in the light of the new provisions of the Lisbon Treaty on participatory democracy and of the need to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of public institutions.

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