



OPINION

European Economic and Social Committee

New European Bauhaus

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – New European Bauhaus: Beautiful, Sustainable, Together
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TEN/757

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1. **Conclusions and recommendations**

- 1.1 The EESC welcomes the adoption by the European Commission of the communication introducing the concept of a New European Bauhaus (NEB) with the aim of "creating beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive places [...] and ways of living" that are accessible and affordable for all, in particular in response to the climate crisis.
- 1.2 The EESC fully supports the Commission's recommended holistic and interdisciplinary approach that entails building a greener and fairer future for Europe together. It also supports the promotion of this "new lifestyle" combining "sustainability and style", while accelerating the green transition in several areas of Europeans' daily lives, their regions, places of living, work, mobility and environments. This is a participatory project in the spirit of the historical Bauhaus created in 1919, and of the global cultural movement it gave rise to.
- 1.3 The EESC welcomes in particular the cultural dimension of the New European Bauhaus, "a project of hope and perspectives", and its creative dimension at the heart of the European Green Deal and its building renovation wave, which provides a crucial basis for the green transition. The aim of this cultural movement is to provide all citizens with access to goods that are circular and less carbon-intensive in their places of living, work, public buildings and housing through practical experiences that should be promoted as close to citizens as possible, at the level of the urban and rural areas and neighbourhoods where they live.
- 1.4 The EESC shares the Commission's analysis with regard to the key dimension of the issue of innovative, nature-based, sustainably produced and low carbon materials, as well as the "three core inseparable values": sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion in the sense of "equality for all, accessibility and affordability"¹.
- 1.5 The EESC welcomes the Commission's innovative approach of having launched a preliminary "co-design" phase by mobilising a "community" of individuals and organisations acting as "official partners", and civil society organisations and stakeholders from very different backgrounds and sectors; this is a new, participatory co-design phase which has allowed for the co-definition of the draft concept for the New European Bauhaus, and proposals on the next steps for its implementation. It welcomes in particular the Commission's intention to maintain and deepen this participatory approach through methods such as the New European Bauhaus Lab (NEB Lab) to prepare policy actions. The EESC believes that the sustainability of the process needs to be ensured beyond the institutional cycle.
- 1.6 The EESC welcomes especially the global dimension acquired by the New European Bauhaus since the launch of its co-design phase and the success of the global discussion held in April 2021, bringing together some 8 000 participants by videoconference, as well as the success of the first edition of the New European Bauhaus prize and the distribution of the dedicated newsletter.

¹ [OJ C 429, 11.12.2020, p. 93.](#)

- 1.7 The EESC supports the Commission's proposal to link existing EU initiatives to a series of new actions and funding for the NEB, in order to test the policies and tools for "building a better everyday life" as close as possible to local areas, European citizens and their homes. It stresses that for wide access to financing, it would be important to also provide easy to access, small-scale crowdfunding-style funding opportunities and special support measures for those who do not have the means to apply for funding themselves, in particular small businesses, craftspeople and associations, which must be involved in the process.
- 1.8 The EESC intends to get actively involved in the participatory approach promoted by the Commission and in the implementation of a New European Bauhaus movement, in order to maintain dialogue with citizens and civil society, so as to provide solutions for their daily problems and improve their quality of life. The EESC will engage with this participatory project by organising a conference on the New European Bauhaus as part of the annual festival proposed by the Commission, and by setting up a civil society platform to provide proposals and support.
- 1.9 The EESC considers, above all, that this concept of a New European Bauhaus should help to bring the EU closer to citizens and local urban and rural areas through appropriate communication, local initiatives and actions to be implemented, and through experiments in daily living and work places.
- 1.10 The EESC shares the three fundamental principles that emerged during the co-design process: combining the global and local dimensions, participation and transdisciplinarity. These principles require a place-based approach to projects and initiatives in neighbourhoods, villages and towns, connecting towns and cities and their outskirts and rethinking the city from a global and territorial perspective, while taking into account the global dimension of climate change and the green transition.
- 1.11 The EESC calls for genuine synergies between the New European Bauhaus movement and future legislative developments concerning the implementation of the European Green Deal through a "favourable framework", which would be a prerequisite for any legislative proposal on the European Green Deal and its implementation.
- 1.12 The EESC underlines that the search for sustainable, inclusive and ethical solutions for the built environment will largely depend on ensuring a legal framework for public procurement that is based on quality, and calls on the Commission to take this into account in the upcoming revision of directives on public procurement. An "NEB label" will need to be defined, established and implemented, both for public procurement and for State aid.
- 1.13 The EESC stresses the need for the New European Bauhaus to actively contribute to the promotion of long-term investments in local and social infrastructure, particularly in the context of the new European Semester and of the effective implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

1.14 The EESC recommends that interdisciplinary vocational training for new jobs on offer in the local area should also be promoted and funded under the New European Bauhaus, so that the concept of decent work can be properly implemented.

2. **Summary**

2.1 The New European Bauhaus expresses the EU's ambition of creating beautiful, sustainable and inclusive places, products and ways of living. It highlights a new way of living where sustainability matches lifestyle, thus accelerating the green transition, not only in various sectors of our economy such as construction, furniture and fashion, but also in our societies and in other areas of our daily life. The aim is to provide everyone with access to goods that are circular and less carbon-intensive, that support the regeneration of nature and protect biodiversity.

2.1.1 The NEB is a project of hope and perspectives; it brings a cultural and creative dimension to the European Green Deal with a view to enhancing sustainable innovation, technology and economy. It highlights the strengths of the environmental transition through tangible experiences at the local level, and improves our everyday life.

2.1.2 For its implementation, the Commission combines relevant EU initiatives and proposes a set of new actions and funding possibilities. These cover, for example:

- the creation of the "NEB Lab" to grow the community and prepare policy actions;
- seed funding for transformative NEB projects;
- funding for social housing projects that follow the New European Bauhaus values;
- a new approach to the Commission's own building strategy;
- the co-creation of green transition pathways for the construction and the textiles ecosystems;
- calls for Start Ups and citizen initiatives;
- a yearly New European Bauhaus Festival and Prize;
- eTwinning and DiscoverEU 2022 on the topic of the New European Bauhaus.

2.1.3 The New European Bauhaus will create the space to explore and test policy, funding and other tools for designing and building a better everyday life for all generations.

2.2 **Based on co-design: a transformational project by all of us for all of us**

2.2.1 The co-design process relied on individuals, organisations, political institutions and companies to organise events, conversations and workshops. The first New European Bauhaus prize was launched as part of the co-design phase to put the spotlight on inspirational examples and ideas by young talents.

2.3 **The shape of the New European Bauhaus**

2.3.1 From the historical movement to the New European Bauhaus: three core values:

- sustainability, from climate goals to circularity, zero pollution, and biodiversity;
- aesthetics, quality of experience and style, beyond functionality;
- inclusion, valorising diversity, equality for all, accessibility and affordability.

2.3.2 Three key principles emerging from the co-creation process were taken up by the Commission and should guide the New European Bauhaus:

- a multilevel approach – from global to local;
- a participatory approach;
- a transdisciplinary approach.

2.3.3 Thematic axes of the transformative path:

- reconnecting with nature;
- regaining a sense of belonging;
- prioritising the places and people that need it the most;
- the need for life-cycle thinking in the industrial ecosystem.

2.4 **Delivering the New European Bauhaus**

Creating an enabling framework for the New European Bauhaus:

2.4.1 Working with the New European Bauhaus community: the NEB Lab

- labelling strategy;
- innovative funding;
- regulatory analysis and experimentation;
- key performance indicators.

2.4.2 A threefold transformation – three levers of support and financing instruments:

- making change happen in specific places on the ground;
- the need for doing things differently in making innovation happen, including by improving our skills and methods;
- the need for adapting the intentions and the way of thinking that is behind our actions.

2.4.3 The Commission will convene a "**New European Bauhaus Festival**" for the first time in spring 2022:

- transformation of places on the ground;
- transformation of the enabling environment for innovation;
- diffusion of new meanings.

2.5 **Next steps**

- mobilisation of European actors and beyond;
- cooperation between the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) to raise awareness and promote the debate in their constituencies in order to mobilise citizens;
- the cooperation of Member States and of the public authorities at international, national, regional and local levels, including participation of civil society;
- as a starting point, Member States will be invited to entrust an entity as a contact point for the New European Bauhaus initiative to connect and coordinate efforts in their respective country and participate in an EU wide informal network for exchange of information;

- the European Commission will report on the progress of the initiative in 2022.

3. **General comments**

- 3.1 The EESC stresses that in working with the New European Bauhaus community, the NEB Lab is a very important approach that continues and deepens the participatory approach of the NEB initiative.
- 3.2 The EESC welcomes the fact that regulatory analysis and experimentation are a priority of the NEB and highlights that adjustments to the regulatory system are essential for improving the implementation of the NEB objectives.
- 3.3 The EESC points out that sustainable, inclusive and aesthetic solutions for the built environment will largely depend on ensuring a suitable legal framework for public procurement that is based on quality. The reform of the public procurement framework should therefore be at the core of the Lab. In this context, the role of incentives in the development of climate-friendly architecture and the role of "Baukultur" in a new culture of renovation through open competitions and the awarding of prizes and subsidies should be discussed, for the private sector as well.
- 3.4 The EESC believes that the regulatory analysis should also focus on the standardisation system. Innovation in all areas (technical and scientific) requires a capacity to respond to latest developments, not merely by using a standard that in any case is often outdated due to rapid technological development, but also through "alternative equivalent solutions". The use of alternative equivalent solutions, and therefore failing to comply with a standard, may lead to serious liability issues in legal proceedings; it is still very difficult to prove in court that "alternative solutions" are equivalent (or often better). In addition, for harmonised standards, particularly for construction materials, it is very important to consider ways to better support innovative alternative solutions.
- 3.5 The EESC considers new funding opportunities to be of crucial importance in supporting the implementation of the Bauhaus objectives and in keeping the momentum of the initiative and the enthusiasm of the different stakeholders. Given that access to the EU's funding system is extremely difficult – due to complicated funding and award criteria, and numerous other requirements (including pre-financing) – and that the funding rate reached is relatively low, there is a risk that these actions will only reach the "usual suspects" who have experience in submitting European projects, and not the much wider target groups. This problem not only affects the New European Bauhaus but, in this context, it is extremely important to go further and also provide small-scale, easy to access funding opportunities and special financing measures to those without the means to apply for funding. Reaching this target requires close cooperation between the EU Member States, the European Commission, chambers of commerce and of professions, education institutions and other relevant interest groups. It must be ensured that the funding options for the New European Bauhaus at national level are also based on the above principles and that they are available in all Member States.

3.6 The EESC underlines that it is important to implement a dedicated interdisciplinary training programme, with initial and continuing training, for sustainable and inclusive planning in universities and other tertiary education institutions, and to put in place regular training modules in professional organisations. In particular, it must be possible to put the concept of decent work into practice by means of reskilling and upskilling.

3.7 **Observations on the thematic axes of the transformative path:**

3.7.1 The EESC welcomes the focus placed on sustainable, inclusive and aesthetic urban and rural development, and on urban planning in the broadest sense, since it is an important tool for meeting the priorities of the New European Bauhaus. It stresses the need to focus on:

- reinforced commitment to spatial planning, land management and associated policy to reduce soil sealing, land use and land use change, in full transparency through stakeholder involvement;
- consistent promotion, at EU and national level, of the internal development (re-use of abandoned areas depending on quality) of cities, small towns and villages to develop a comprehensive campaign for development planning;
- the sustainable modernisation of urban and village structures, in response to rising climate change, the post-oil society and the information era;
- the preservation and revitalisation of building stock as a crucial contribution to the circular economy and the conservation of cultural heritage, with priority given in particular to social housing, workers' neighbourhoods and public buildings, and improving understanding of the various interactions between buildings and social spaces, as well as technical and green infrastructures, as a planning task that can be achieved through equal cooperation between the different specialised branches.

3.7.2 The EESC welcomes the emphasis placed on the co-creation of a green transition pathway for the construction sector and its high CO₂ emissions. The development of new construction products and processes in cooperation with planners, manufacturers of construction products and the construction industry by developing new models of cooperation (lifespan, recyclability, reduced environmental impact, renewable energies, etc.) will be an important factor for the success of this transition, and it needs to be supported by rethinking the current standardisation system. The renovation wave is a crucial part of the Green Deal, since a focus on building maintenance will be required. It will even be the most important measure for saving resources and avoiding construction waste. New techniques and processes must be developed in order to recycle construction waste, but also to re-use these items or introduce new, better quality materials (upcycling).

3.7.3 The EESC welcomes the adoption by the Commission of the communication introducing the concept of the New European Bauhaus, with the aim of "creating beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive places, products and ways of living" for all European citizens, in response to the climate crisis.

3.7.4 The EESC supports the approach proposed by the Commission to build a greener and fairer future for Europe together, to promote this new lifestyle combining sustainability and style, while accelerating the green transition in several areas of Europeans' daily lives, their places of

living, work, mobility and environments. This is a participatory project in the spirit of the historical Bauhaus created in 1919, and of the global cultural movement it gave rise to.

- 3.7.5 The EESC welcomes in particular the cultural dimension of the New European Bauhaus, "a project of hope and perspectives", and its creative dimension at the heart of the European Green Deal and its building renovation wave². This cultural movement should aim to provide all citizens with access to goods that are circular and less carbon-intensive in their places of living, work, public buildings and housing, thanks to practical experiences that should be promoted as close to citizens as possible, at the level of the area and neighbourhood where they live.
- 3.7.6 The EESC shares the Commission's analysis with regard to the key dimension of the issue of innovative, nature-based, sustainably produced and low carbon materials, as well as the "three core inseparable values": sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion in the sense of "equality for all, accessibility and affordability".
- 3.7.7 The EESC welcomes the Commission's innovative approach of having launched a preliminary "co-design" phase by mobilising a "community" of individuals and organisations acting as "official partners", and civil society organisations and stakeholders from very different backgrounds and sectors; this is a new, participatory co-design phase which has allowed for the co-definition of the draft concept for the New European Bauhaus, and proposals on the next steps for its implementation.
- 3.7.8 The EESC welcomes especially the global dimension acquired by the New European Bauhaus since the launch of its co-design phase and the success of the global discussion held in April 2021, bringing together some 8 000 participants by videoconference, as well as the success of the first edition of the New European Bauhaus prize and the distribution of the dedicated newsletter³.
- 3.7.9 The EESC considers that this concept of a New European Bauhaus should help to bring the EU closer to its citizens and their territories, through appropriate communication, local initiatives and actions to be implemented and through experiments in daily living and work places.
- 3.7.10 The EESC notes with interest the launch of a call for proposals on social, affordable and sustainable housing district demonstrators as a first stage, then as part of the European Urban Initiative under the 2021-2027 cohesion policy and the introduction of an urban development financial instrument.

4. **Specific observations**

- 4.1 The EESC supports the Commission's proposal to link existing EU initiatives to a series of new actions and funding for the New European Bauhaus, in order to test the policies and tools for "building a better everyday life" as close as possible to local areas, European citizens, the places

² [OJ C 155, 30.4.2021, p. 73.](#)

³ [https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/neb/newsletter-archives/view/service/2137.](https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/neb/newsletter-archives/view/service/2137)

they live and accessible, affordable homes for all. Mobility issues should be taken into account on an ongoing basis.

- 4.2 These measures and new EU funding measures earmarked for the New European Bauhaus must be simplified in terms of how they are explained and how they work, so that they can be used in the same spirit of co-design and as close as possible to European citizens and the area where they live by local associations and communities. NEB crowdfunding must be developed, and it must be ensured that local stakeholders can access this funding, by means of an NEB one-stop shop in each Member State.
- 4.3 An active role should be played in the Commission's participatory approach and in the implementation of a New European Bauhaus movement in order to maintain dialogue with citizens and civil society, with the aim of solving their daily problems and improving their quality of life.
- 4.4 It is important to be actively involved in this participatory project and movement by organising an annual EESC conference on the New European Bauhaus and civil society – a civil society that it represents as part of the "annual festival" of the New European Bauhaus proposed by the Commission – and by establishing a civil society NEB platform.
- 4.5 The EESC recommends sharing the three fundamental principles that emerged during the co-design process, combining the global and local dimensions, including disadvantaged groups and transdisciplinarity, through a place-based approach for projects and initiatives in neighbourhoods, villages and towns, while taking into account the global dimension of climate change and the green transition.
- 4.6 The EESC believes that the thematic axes that emerged during the co-design phase should also be shared, namely, reconnecting to nature, bringing back a feeling of belonging, giving priority to those most in need through affordable and accessible solutions, particularly in relation to housing, and long-term thinking on the lifecycle of the industrial ecosystem and on the lifespan of buildings and housing.
- 4.7 The EESC intends to call for genuine synergies between the New European Bauhaus movement and future legislative developments concerning the implementation of the European Green Deal, to ensure that this movement takes place and to meet the requirement of having a "favourable framework", in particular as regards public procurement and State aid. The EESC suggests creating an "NEB label".
- 4.8 The EESC believes that long-term investment in the local and social infrastructure needed for the proper implementation of the New European Bauhaus should be given dedicated attention in the context of the European Semester and of the effective implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

4.9 The EESC also considers that interdisciplinary initial and continuing training for the new professions to be developed in local areas must be promoted by the New European Bauhaus within the framework of European actions and programmes.

Brussels, 23 February 2022

Christa SCHWENG

The President of the European Economic and Social Committee
