

**Speech by EESC Vice-President Angelova
at the 2018 IFFM Annual Meeting Cocktail & Dinner
Brussels, 6 November 2018**

Dear Mr Mijs, Dear organisers, Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is an honour for me to speak to you in this lovely setting, and I promise I will not be in the way between you and the well-deserved dinner for too long.

I speak to you as Vice-President of the **European Economic and Social Committee**, the EU body that represents organised civil society, and that is a **consultative body** for the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission.

In our Committee, representatives **of employers, of workers, and of other interest groups that represent the diversity of Europe**, come together to draw up policy proposals in relation to EU economic and social policy.

With the opinions our committee adopts, we want to influence the EU legislative process and **bring the EU closer to the needs of the citizens**.

When I received the invitation to your event, I was very happy to learn that there is further progress in a field that is **very dear to the EESC's heart: Financial education**.

The EESC has since long called for **better promotion of financial education initiatives**, stressing their importance.

For our Committee, it is of utmost importance to **pass on knowledge** and skills to the people of Europe in order to empower them to take the right decisions when **managing their personal finances**.

Throughout a person's lifetime, there are plenty of decisions involving a financial element.

This can be using payment cards, financing university studies, taking a loan, buying a car in fractioned payments, or investing money in the financial markets, ideally in a sustainable manner.

What we can unfortunately observe is that even basic financial concepts such as interest rates, inflation or risk diversification **are not clearly understood** by many people.

This **lack of knowledge** makes people **vulnerable**, and can ultimately lead to problems of over-indebtedness and financial exclusion.

That's why we need to promote financial **education for the benefit of our society as a whole**.

Let me briefly outline **what the EESC has done** in the field of financial education:

Under the initiative of our member **Carlos Trias Pintó**, who is among us tonight and who will intervene tomorrow at the conference, the EESC has drawn up an [own initiative opinion in 2011](#).

In this opinion, the EESC calls for financial education to become a compulsory subject on the school curriculum.

This financial education should be followed up in training and retraining programmes for workers.

For a more robust, safe and transparent financial system we need informed and responsible consumers!

These need to be actively involved in improving their financial awareness.

To make this possible, a **dedicated dialogue** needs to be encouraged between governments, the financial industry and civil society on regulation, self-regulation, **financial education** and access to transparent financial products and services.

I will not get more into all the details here:

Carlos Trias Pintó will tomorrow inform you about further policy recommendations brought forward by the EESC.

I would however like to draw your attention to the fact that the EESC published [a brochure](#) on best practice examples of financial education strategies.

The aim of the brochure is to help disseminate best practice in financial education.

The organisers have kindly agreed to put this brochure on display at the event tomorrow. Please take a copy for yourself.

The brochure builds on the **policy recommendations** adopted by the EESC in its opinion, and reflects the findings of a research work looking for **examples of financial education initiatives** in EU countries.

The brochure contains for example the cases of financial museums in Austria and Slovenia.

But that's not the only context in which the EESC has firmly made the case for financial education.

The topic of financial education is recurring in the EESC's work.

I have myself been rapporteur for the EESC Opinion on the [Green Paper on retail financial services](#) – **Better products, more choice, and greater opportunities for consumers and businesses**

Also here the EESC concluded, with a view for more cross-border demand of products, that:

Financial education is clearly key to **maintaining confidence** in the financial system and **ensuring the responsible consumption of financial products**.

Financial advice is to be **well regulated** at EU level and the distinction between advising and marketing to be made clear. To that end the services offered by independent brokers also merit attention.

In the opinion on the [EU Regulatory Framework for Financial Services](#), for which I equally did the work as rapporteur, the EESC points to the need for **swift implementation at EU level of initiatives promoting more and better financial education**.

These should take into account the specific needs of each Member State.

And most recently, in the context of the **Commission's Action plan on Financing sustainable Growth**, for which again my colleague Carlos Trias signs responsible as rapporteur, the [EESC concluded](#) that:

Communication about these actions promoting sustainable growth is extremely important if citizens are to be aware of what the EU is doing for them.

A shared responsibility between all public and private actors is needed.

In this context, **financial education should be compulsory** to ensure that people understand this new approach and thereby encourage both socially responsible retail investment and sustainable production of goods and services.

Ladies and gentlemen, to conclude, just a few more words on the importance of financial education in the striving for **sustainable growth**:

There is ample evidence that European citizens would like their **savings and investments to be related to social and environmental objectives**.

To this end, they must be **empowered and connected with sustainable finance issues**.

The financial system should ultimately lean more towards being transparent, factual and **readily understandable** for EU citizens.

Improving access to information on sustainability and promoting financial literacy (a deeper understanding of how finance works) are essential elements in this respect.

Your museums can clearly play an important role in this. I would hope that the **issue of sustainable finance** and the inclusion of **ecologic, social and governance (ESG) criteria** in investment decisions will be

progressively picked up in your initiatives in the finance museums.

Once again, thank you very much for inviting the European Economic and Social Committee to participate in your event.

I wish you all success for the initiatives you are setting in your cooperation of finance museums.