

EDITORIAL



Looking back and looking forward at the start of the new EESC half mandate 2023-2025 - by Peter Schmidt, NAT Section President

*During the half-mandate 2020-2023, the **overarching priority** for the NAT Section was to **deliver on the European Green and Social Deal as a means to achieving sustainable recovery, the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. As you will read in the [NAT report](#) published in this newsletter, we focused in particular on fostering a **fairer and more sustainable food supply chain**, a resilient and sustainable **agriculture sector**, vibrant **rural areas** and **biodiversity** protection across the various domains of section competence.*

*This period was a **challenging time**, leading to more conflicts, social injustice, cost of living crisis and climate devastation while the world was still bearing the consequences of the Covid pandemic. Yet, it was also an **opportunity to demonstrate civil society's resilience, generosity and engagement**, and the importance to face these challenges in solidarity.*

*I am particularly proud that, at times of multiple crises, we have continued and multiplied our efforts to **uphold the objectives of the European Green Deal and the UN Agenda 2030 on sustainable development**. We have had a meaningful impact and received important recognition through our various activities, also thanks to the close cooperation with the other Sections/CCMI and **with the other NAT bodies, of which you will find the end of mandate reports here: [Sustainable Development Observatory](#); [Permanent Group on Sustainable Food systems](#); [Ad-hoc group on climate](#)**.*

*Most importantly, across all of our work, we have **promoted and amplified the voices of young people**, offering them a space to engage meaningfully in climate and sustainability discussions - via dedicated Youth Round Tables, by including a youth delegate in the COP delegation and by involving young people regularly in our legislative work. **Youth is our present and our future: we must and we will continue to listen to their precious views and expertise**.*

*All of this we could only manage thanks to the **dedication and commitment of the [NAT Members](#)** and **[brilliant secretariat](#)**, jointly working together in a true team spirit.*

*As we look ahead to the next half-mandate, I am **honoured to have been re-elected as new NAT President** and look forward to continue working with NAT Members and in particular with the **new and re-newed [members of the NAT Bureau](#)**.*

*The **multiple and interlinked global crises** we are facing – the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate and biodiversity emergencies, the cost of living crisis and the impacts of the conflict in Ukraine and elsewhere – will continue to affect the work of the NAT Section. Against this background, the **following main policy areas** will remain particularly relevant and challenging in the next months and years:*

- Accelerating the implementation of the SDGs
- Promoting climate neutrality and developing the social dimension of the green transition
- Fostering circular economy – towards a circular society

- *Fostering the transformation to more sustainable and fairer agri-food systems*
- *Restoring and preserving natural capital - Healthy planet for healthy people*
- *Implementing a holistic strategy towards sustainable rural/urban development*

I am hopeful that transformative change towards a better, more sustainable and fairer future is still possible – for the current and next generations. In the next half-mandate, we should continue our efforts and commitment to demonstrate that through our work we can indeed make a difference.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peter Schmidt', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'P' and a distinct 'S' at the end.

Peter SCHMIDT,
The president of the NAT Section of the EESC