MULTILATERAL COOPERATION IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD

PROGRAMME

DAY I – 30 September 2026
Meeting room: ANTALL 6Q2, European Parliament

14:30 – 15:30 | Welcome coffee

15:30 – 16:00 | Opening session

Opening addresses:

- **Sabine Verheyen,** First Vice-President, European Parliament
- **Henna Virkkunen,** Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy, European Commission
- **Séamus Boland,** President, European Economic and Social Committee
- **Joško Klisović,** Co-Chair of the Committee of the Regions Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly, Committee of the Regions

Session I: Building trust in a digital world

In an increasingly connected and fast-moving information environment, public diplomacy is evolving beyond traditional communication towards sustained engagement, dialogue and relationship-building. This session will explore how the EU and its partners can strengthen democratic engagement in the digital age, navigate an increasingly complex information environment, and connect more meaningfully with global audiences.

Attention will also be given to younger generations, whose expectations, media habits and forms of civic participation are reshaping the future of public diplomacy. The discussion will examine how institutions, elected representatives, civil society, educators, creators and digital platforms can foster trust, encourage democratic participation and communicate Europe's values in ways that resonate with the next generation around the world.

***Moderator: Sabine Verheyen**, First Vice-President, European Parliament*

16:00–17:15 | Panel 1: Democracy, public diplomacy and information integrity

Speakers:

- **Barry Andrews,** Chair of the Development Committee, European Parliament
- **Ambassador Aude Maio-Coliche,** EU Ambassador to Senegal (online)
- **Ambassador Nerijus Aleksiejūnas,** Lithuanian Permanent Representative to the EU
- **John Comer,** Rapporteur "Safeguarding Democracy Against Disinformation", Member of the European Economic and Social Committee

17:15 – 18:30 | Panel 2: The next generation: engaging global youth in Europe's story

Speakers:

- **Nela Riehl,** Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education, European Parliament
- **Adrian Băluțel,** Chair of the Committee on European Integration, Parliament of Moldova
- **Rand Jihad Fouad Al Khzouz,** Member of the Jordanian Parliament and EU Visitors Programme participant
- **Tanya Hristova,** First Vice-Chair of Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture, Committee of the Regions and Mayor of Gabrovo Municipality

DAY II – 1 October 2026
Meeting room: VMA 23, Economic and Social Committee

Session II: Civil society, health and peace – together for global solidarity

The objective of the session will be to underline the link between civil society, health and peace, and the way they interact to reinforce global solidarity. Each panel will focus on one specific contribution of civil society: civil society as a partner in health diplomacy, civil society in preventing the instrumentalisation of health and in promoting health as a driver of peace, and civil society as a bridge between poverty reduction and health improvement.

09:30 – 09:45 | Opening remarks and high-level panel

Opening: Isabelle Le Galo Flores, Secretary-General, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

09:45 – 10:45 | Keynote speeches

Moderator: **Tanja Buzek**, Vice-President of the EESC's External Relations Section

- **Professor Glenda Sluga**, European University Institute, Florence
- **Professor Ilona Kickbusch**, Global Health Centre, Graduate Institute, Geneva
- **Dr Rispah Walumbe**, Head of Strategy and Policy, Amref Health Africa

10:45 – 11:30 | Civil society as a partner in health diplomacy: how can we ensure health resilience and fight health disinformation

Moderator: **Gaja Šavelė**, EESC Member *(tbc)*

- **Florina Telea,** Head of Unit, International Multilateral Relations, DG SANTE, European Commission
- **Mariano Votta,** Director of the Active Citizenship Network and Head of European Policy at Cittadinanzattiva
- **Rhoda Boateng,** Coordinator for Climate Change & Occupational Health and Safety, ITUC-Africa
- **Douglas Carpenter,** EU Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo
- **Milena Angelova,** EESC Member

11:30 – 12:00 | Preventing the instrumentalisation of health in armed conflicts and promoting health as a driver of peace: the role of civil society

Moderator: Luca Jahier, EESC Member

- **Sergio Cecchini**, Humanitarian Representative to the European Union and NATO, Médecins sans Frontières
- **Julia Pogrebna,** Chief Executive Officer, Head of Programming, New Dawn
- **Nagwa Hasanin**, Senior Adviser in Health, UNICEF

12:00 – 12:45 | No health without equity: civil society as a bridge between poverty reduction and health improvement

Moderator: **István Komoróczki**, EESC member

- **Philippe Duneton**, Executive Director, Unitaid *(tbc)*
- **Professor Dr Ray Walley**, treasurer, CPME
- **Mette Petersen**, Director of the Red Cross EU Office
- **Anna Rosling Rönnlund**, Vice-President, Gapminder Foundation
- **Representative of the European Public Health Association** *(tbc)*
- **Representative of IOM** *(tbc)*

12:45 – 13:00 I Concluding remarks

- **Tanja Buzek,** Vice-President of the EESC's External Relations Section

DAY II – 1 October 2026
Meeting room: JDE 52, Committee of the Regions

Session III: Local women leaders, catalysts for the EU Public Diplomacy

The objective of the session will be to showcase how local female elected officials are indispensable to the EU's foreign policy and public diplomacy. Local women leaders' engagement in public diplomacy initiatives - such as city-to-city cooperation, local dialogues, and participation in EU-funded projects - ensures that gender equality is not only a policy objective but a lived reality for communities across Europe and beyond. Empowering and supporting these leaders is fundamental to the successful implementation of GAP III EU action plan on gender equality in EU external action and to the EU's global standing as a promoter of equality, peace, and prosperity.

14:30 – 15:00 | Opening remarks

Chair: **Gillian Coughlan** (IE/Renew), CoR Vice-President, Chair of the CoR Working Group on Kosovo, CoR Rapporteur on Enlargement – Western Balkans and Türkiye.

- **Marko Vešligaj** (HR/S&D), Vice-chair of the European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
- **François Decoster**, Ambassador of France to New Zealand and the Cook Islands (online)

15:00 – 16:00 | Locally elected women leaders: an asset for the EU public diplomacy

Chair: **Gillian Coughlan** (IE/Renew), CoR Vice-President, Chair of the CoR Working Group on Kosovo, CoR Rapporteur on Enlargement – Western Balkans and Türkiye.

- **Magali Altounian** (FR/Renew), CIVEX Chair & CoR rapporteur on Fragility and on the Pact for the Mediterranean
- **Lucia Yar** (SK/Renew), Member of European Parliament, Member of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, Member of the Committee on Security and Defence
- **Julia Koch-de Biolley**, head of the Equality task force at the EEAS

- **Florence Raes**, Director, UN WOMEN Brussels Office
- **Iuliia Vusenko**, Member of the Volyn Regional Council, Ukraine

16:15 – 17:30 | The role of local leaders in contributing to GAP III EU action plan on gender equality in EU external action

Chair: **Michaela Kauer**, Director of the Vienna Representation Office

- **Angèle Meyanga**, Mayor of Afanloum (Cameroon), President of REFELA (Network of African locally elected women)
- **Heike Raab** (DE, PES), Member of the European Committee of the Regions, Chair of the CoR SEDEC Commission (online).
- **Brigitte Luggin**, Team Leader for Gender equality and non-discrimination, European Commission Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA)

Closing: **Michaela Kauer,** Director of the Vienna Representation Office

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