



European Economic and Social Committee

Brussels, 14 March 2007

RESOLUTION

of the

European Economic and Social Committee

to commemorate

The 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome

At the meeting of its Bureau on 21 November 2006, the European Economic and Social Committee decided to present a resolution on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome (by the representatives of the six founding Member States on 25 March 1957). Under these Treaties, the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) were established.

At its plenary session on 14 and 15 March 2006 (meeting of 14 March), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted this resolution by 136 votes in favour, with 12 abstentions.

The Economic and Social Committee (ESC), which was set up under the Treaties of Rome, has assumed, from the outset, a task which is of vital importance for ensuring solidarity, cohesion and consensus between the Member States, namely the task of bringing together representatives of employers, workers and many other organised social interest groups for joint consultations and for setting out their joint views. The EESC is also prepared to fulfil this vital task in future, too, under changing conditions.

As early as 1952, just a few years after the end of a devastating war, the revival of Europe led to the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which successfully promoted the rebuilding of Europe and reconciliation between nations which had formerly been enemies. The revival of Europe created the requisite conditions for the adoption of the Treaties of Rome and all the subsequent stages in the process of European unification, leading to the creation of today's European Union and its forward-looking project of drawing up a Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe.

The social, economic, cultural, political and civic representatives of the nations of Europe, which have, for decades, been espousing the cause of European unification, have therefore impressively demonstrated that they have learned the right lessons from the war, destruction and loss of freedom brought about by nationalism and racism.

By virtue of their initiatives and their commitment in the course of the constructive and critical dialogue with the parliaments, governments and administrations of the Member States and with the European Institutions, the civil society players have made a key contribution towards shaping a successful process of European unification.

Looking back at these historical events, the establishment of the EEC and Euratom has proved to be a decisive stage in charting the course towards an ever closer union of an ever increasing number of states and peoples which ultimately, in the final decade of the twentieth century, made it possible to overcome the division of Europe.

By signing and ratifying the Treaties of Rome and the subsequent European agreements, all of the Member States have voluntarily opted to pursue the process of unification and integration. This decision obliges the Member States to deal with the earlier achievements with care, whilst not jeopardising future development through selfishness, considerations relating to prestige or by focussing on short-term, one-sided benefits.

The common policies, freedom of movement for individuals, the establishment of a large internal market without frontiers and the introduction of a single currency represent some of the key stages on the road towards the achievement of a hitherto unknown level of general prosperity in Europe, even though difficulties remain in the field of economic, social and territorial cohesion. The success which has been achieved, and the values which underlie this success, have been contributory factors in the development and realisation of a European social model which appeals to many other states in the world.

Looking to the future, the European Union will have to draw upon its favourable experience with these joint endeavours in order to meet new challenges, by reaching agreement on new policies, using the Community method, which has a proven track record and which ensures that all Member States receive equal treatment; new policies are required, above all, in respect of:

- the development of the European social model;
- tackling the negative effects which have been brought about by the globalisation of all economic, social and cultural relations;
- tackling climate change;
- ensuring energy supply;
- dealing with problems relating to immigration, whilst respecting the values which underlie the European project;
- and combating poverty and social exclusion.

Now, in March 2007, Europe once again has to decide on a number of key courses of action. Since:

- the level of integration which has been achieved and the unremitting momentum to achieve ever higher levels of integration;
- the attendant intensification of the political and institutional system of the EU;
- the tremendous increase in the number of Member States and the resultant differences in experience, motives and interests;
- together with the increased expectations of the people vis-à-vis the European Union

all make it urgently necessary to issue a forceful reaffirmation by providing the unification project with a new foundation, in order to equip the European Union with the wherewithal to face the future.

Giving the European Union a new foundation implies providing it - on the basis of a clear vision and fundamental agreement - with a stronger and broader treaty-based foundation. Our ambition in this respect must not be confined solely to revising the European Union's rules of operation; we should also define its future mission and outline the requisite constitution.

The European Union is both a union of states and a union of citizens. If it is to operate in a way which successfully represents the interests of its people and if it is to be attractive to the new Member States and new generations, which have not themselves experienced the developments which have taken place over the previous decades, the European Union of the future must focus on the two dimensions

set out below which are laid down in the draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe drawn up by the European Convention:

- the values and principles which have underpinned the process of European unification since the earliest days and which remain essential also for the future, in particular, in view of the revival of nationalistic, racist and xenophobic or selfish national trends. These values and principles are as follows:
 - reconciliation and tolerance,
 - solidarity and subsidiarity,
 - law and justice,
 - peace and freedom

- the political, economic, social and cultural interests of the people of the European Union, which have been repeatedly articulated by representatives of European civil society for many years, namely:
 - protection of fundamental civil rights and the fulfilment of these rights,
 - democratic, transparent and citizen-oriented opinion-forming and decision-making processes,
 - the involvement of active citizens and civil society,
 - the achievement of results which are both timely and sound and which help people in their daily lives, by making full use of the Community method.

The EESC is resolved to make its contribution towards giving the necessary impetus to a new momentum for advancing the process of European integration. This impetus will be based on systematic consideration of the concerns and expectations of the people and, in particular, on the enhancement of the democratic legitimacy of the Union and its Institutions, as a prerequisite for the rational and emotional re-adoption of the European project by Europeans. Participatory democracy, i.e. the involvement of civil society organisations and their participation in opinion-forming, decision-making and policy-implementation, is one of the keys to the modernisation and improvement of government and administration. By pursuing this approach, the European Union will ultimately be able to become the European Community in which the people of Europe are genuine players in the integration process.

Brussels, 14 March 2007.

The President
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

The Secretary-General
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