



**European Economic and Social Committee**  
**GROUP III**

## **Note on Group III 2012 programme**

This note and the table in annex aim to present the meetings already scheduled for next year and to outline the main areas of activity to be carried out.

This exercise is done taking into account the achievements of the Group presented in the note on the review of the activities of Group III in 2011. The programme was submitted on 14 December 2011 to the Presidency and the members of the Bureau of the Group who were asked to provide inputs. The programme was revised accordingly and submitted to the Presidency of the Group that endorsed it in its meeting on 17 January 2012.

### 1. Group III ordinary meetings

As reported in the review, Group III had the occasion to hold thematic debates with high representatives of the European Commission and the European Parliament. Given the appreciation and the success of these initiatives it is proposed to:

- Continue in 2012 and hold thematic debates with representatives of other institutions or civil society organisations (CSO) during three or four out of the 9 ordinary Group III meetings.
- Make proposals of themes to be debated and persons to be invited.

### 2. Group III extraordinary meetings

In 2011 Group III held four extraordinary meetings, two of which were high level conferences, one took place in Poland.

As shown in the table, one meeting is already scheduled to take place in Brussels on 2 May on "Sustainable Development and the Green Economy".

Another one could take place in the autumn around the theme of the social business initiative and the 2012 UN Year of Cooperatives building on the work realised by Group III Rapporteurs and in cooperation with the "Social Economy" Category.

In 2012 Group III should hold:

- Three extraordinary meetings (including the above ones) taking the form of high level conferences
- One of these could take place outside Brussels, not necessarily in the country holding the EU Presidency.

To be taken into account for the third meeting and for other thematic activities of the Group: 2012 European Year of Active Ageing, the negotiations on the 2013 review of CAP, Fair Trade, review of the Cohesion Policy and Structural Funds, new financial perspectives, forthcoming "Almunia package" on SGI, creation of a sustainable European market for skilled personnel for SMEs and Liberal Professions.

### 3. Bureau of Group III extraordinary meetings

Traditionally the Bureau of Group III meets twice a year in the country holding the EU Presidency. Furthermore, last year the Bureau met twice in Brussels to discuss internal relevant strategic issues. The Bureau/Group meeting initially foreseen in Denmark will not take place; instead the entire Group III should meet in Brussels on 2 May for the conference mentioned above.

Preparatory work is being launched on the possibility of holding a meeting in Cyprus.

On the basis of the experience in 2011 two extraordinary meetings on internal issues in July and December should be envisaged.

- Namely, in July on internal governance of the Group with the participation of Group III members who are members of the Bureaus of the Sections and the CCMI. This meeting could be combined with the organisation of a thematic seminar the day before or after.
- In December, the Bureau should evaluate the system of appointment of members to study groups, it could review the Group III activities in 2012 and plan 2013, also in view of the mid-term renewal.

### 4. Group III "external relations"

Last year Group III supported the organisation of 17 meetings of external CSOs at the EESC in 2011 in several cases dealing with themes of strategic importance for Group III. In addition, some high level events are already foreseen for 2012, e.g. the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BEUC. It is envisaged to increase Group III visibility and expertise via the participation of Group III speakers in these events.

Besides, Group III organised for the very first time two thematic seminars involving the active participation of CSO representatives. Within this framework, in order to strengthen the relations with external CSOs and increase the visibility of Group III it would be useful to:

- Create synergies providing more input from Group III that could "sponsor" these events via, e.g., the active involvement of Rapporteurs on relevant opinions, the participation of a Group III delegation, the input and participation of members of the Categories eventually concerned.

## 5. Categories

The work of Categories in 2012 needs to be improved and strengthened.

In general terms, it is worth mentioning that, in coherence with point 4., it is envisaged to create links and synergies between activities of Group III on particular subjects and the work of the Categories concerned. In particular, Categories:

- Should have the possibility of organising one major event per year with external guest speakers under the auspices of Group III and two internal meetings possibly close to Section meetings to reduce budgetary impact.
- In order to increase the impact and valorise their work, they should hold joint meetings, elaborate joint and more detailed annual reports, present their annual programme and activities in the Group meeting and hold informal meetings with the President of Group III.

Within this framework, it is envisaged to organise meetings of the Spokespersons with the Vice-President Pavel Trantina, in charge of monitoring the work of Categories, on the programming of their work.

## 6. Follow-up of activities carried out in 2011

As mentioned above, Group III organised two thematic seminars on the ECI and Universities leading to relevant outcomes and conclusions that should be followed-up in 2012:

- Some ideas are already on the table and members of the Bureau are invited to provide ideas on possible actions to be undertaken.
- Concerning the ECI, support could be provided to national/local events organised by Group III members on the ECI in the period around the entry into force of the regulation on 1 April (i.e. in the week of 19-23 March or 16-20 April) in close cooperation with the EESC President Cabinet and under the coordination of Vice-President Maureen O'Neill.
- Regarding the seminar on Universities, follow-up could include an Own-initiative Opinion and/or eventually a second event on the subject.

## 7. Communication

In 2011 Group carried out a significant number of activities in the Communication field and it is foreseen to continue in this direction under the supervision of Vice-President Arno Metzler. Most of these were communicated internally and externally but in order to maximise the impact, it is envisaged to systematically communicate the activities of the Group and its President, via the Intranet and in case of major events also externally.

Brussels, 17 January 2012