



## Interview



**Diogo Pinto**  
Secretary General  
European Movement International

# Facilitating the active participation of citizens and civil society organisations in building a better Europe

*The European Movement International (EMI) is one of the largest pan and pro-European civil society organisations with currently more than 70 Member Organisations, bringing together representatives from European associations, political parties, enterprises and trade unions. The EMI aims to influence the reform process of the EU and to gain citizens' support for it in line with its objectives to "contribute to the establishment of a united, federal Europe founded on the principles of peace, democracy, liberty, solidarity, and respect for basic human rights. It seeks to provide a structure to encourage and facilitate the active participation of citizens and civil society organisations in the development of a united Europe". Europe III interviewed EMI Secretary General Diogo Pinto on the upcoming European Year of Citizens – 2013.*

The EESC in its draft opinion which will be voted on 28/29 March criticizes the EC proposal on the EU Year of Citizens (2013), stating, that the main focus should be on active and participatory citizenship, rather than on mobility, as it is at this moment. What do you feel should be the principal priorities of the year?

I would like to start by stating that I fully agree with the views expressed by the EESC in its draft opinion. I think that if 2013 will look at Citizenship as an individual rights-based approach only, it will be a missed opportunity. 2013 could and should also be the opportunity to look at how to promote and improve citizens' access to full participation, on a permanent and structured way, in the political, social and cultural aspects of their lives as Europeans.

What are your main suggestions for managing the year? The EESC suggests focussing primarily on non-state actor activities rather than campaigns. Do you agree?

I totally agree. The EU Year of Citizens should focus primarily on activities and actions developed with and by civil society organisations, and serve the purpose of the recognition of their crucial role as mediating structures between the citizens and the institutions, and fundamental spaces for the expression of citizenship and for the process of European construction.

In the case where no significant changes are made to the current proposal, where do you see the biggest risks and potential?

I don't even want to consider the possibility of the EC actually ignoring the almost consensual opinion that has been expressed by so many civil society organisations, the EESC and the European Parliament too. That would be a message in itself, and a very negative one too, that the EC would send to the citizens; one that would certainly be used and abused by the enemies of the EU and the European construction process. And I find that too big a risk to take on the eve of the upcoming 2014 European elections.

What would be your main comments on the EESC's opinion and the Rapporteur's innovative and participatory process (involvement of Liaison group, web stream, online information and questionnaire)?

I can't but commend the Rapporteur for the innovative and participatory process he led, and for the opinion itself. Mr Gobins took his responsibilities as Rapporteur very seriously and went the extra mile to consult with all the stakeholders, listening and taking the time to understand their points of view, and taking them into account. By doing so, he proved

that dialogue, inclusiveness, openness and transparency aren't incompatible with efficiency.

Where do you see the role of the EESC in the implementation of the year and the main cooperation needs with your organisation?

First and foremost, I expect that the EESC doesn't see the vote on this draft opinion as the end of the process; we need the EESC to continue to build alliances with the EP, civil society organisations and others, to keep the pressure on the EC and obtain significant changes to the current proposal. Once that is achieved, I hope that the EESC will remain open to involving civil society organisations in the implementation of the Year, and making sure that it will be an opportunity to improving the structures and the tools for civil dialogue at the EU level, and to bridging the gap between the EU institutions and its citizens. The European Movement International will be looking forward to cooperating further with the EESC in achieving these and other mutual objectives, for the sake of a more democratic and citizen-centred Europe.

**To find out more about this organisation, please visit:**  
<http://www.europeanmovement.eu/>



**European Movement  
Mouvement Européen**

## Accomplishing the internal market for workers is a difficult task

### Editorial



**Arno METZLER (DE)**

Vice-President of Group III

*Establishing an internal market for goods in Europe was the project of the century. Abolishing customs duties and agreeing on European-wide labels and quality standards was not and is not easy. However, the free movement of people poses an even bigger challenge than the movement of goods such as cassis or Parma ham. Persuading people to work and provide services in another European country involves a number of issues, including regional ties, families and friends, as well as language skills and different occupational traditions. Differences in social systems and standards also play a role.*

*A British solicitor is part of a different tradition to an Italian avvocato. There are also differences in education. The same is true for tax consultants. A German tax consultant has to learn*

*a lot before he can advise a client in Lithuania. However, the free movement of workers and the cross-border provision of services are essential for the common market. The EU has risen to this challenge with the current amendment of the directive on the recognition of professional qualifications, putting forward proposals on how to facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications and improve mobility between Member States.*

*However, this cannot be achieved simply by pursuing the legislative path. Proof of professional qualifications is a highly sensitive issue. Especially in jobs with a high level of responsibility, it goes without saying that effective professional oversight is essential. A patient with toothache must be sure that the dentist knows exactly what he is doing and provides*

*treatment only when he knows how to do so. People who go over a bridge must be able to trust the civil engineer who designed it. He must also be familiar with local construction regulations. The contractor building the bridge can hardly be expected to check whether the engineer has the right skills – he too must be able to rely on effective oversight. "Passes", as already used in certain industries, may simplify things here, but there must be protection against falsification and abuse.*

*These numerous challenges, where the difficulty lies in the detail, can be overcome only if all stakeholders in Europe work together. Once again it is clear that involving civil society through the EESC's Employers', Workers' and Various Interests Groups, supports good legislation in Europe.*

## Group III members in the spotlight playing a key role

### Report from the Civil Society Forum at the UN in New York



Group III member, Renate Heinisch, signing the Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPFI)

The Social Protection Floor Initiative is built on a coalition led by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) and is part of larger social protection system. Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of UN Women pointed out that more than 5 billion people are not covered by adequate social security and 1.4 billion live on less than \$1.25 a day. "The Global Social Crisis: Report on the World Social Situation 2011" UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs' Publication 2011 notes, "The Social Protection Floor Initiative is affordable; its benefits need to be weighed against the potentially high human, social and economic costs of not investing in social protection." The New York based NGO Committee for

Social Development at the United Nations initiated an online campaign 'Support the Social Protection Floor Initiative to create awareness and build momentum'.

In my capacity as representing the German NGO BAGSO (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Senioren-Organisation) in the EESC, I was invited to speak at the Civil Society Forum about the dramatic situation in Europe of the growing unemployed, as a result of austerity measures and the situation of young and elderly people. The Civil Society Forum was organised in preparation of the Commission on Social Development (1–10 February 2012 at the United Nations HQ, NY and the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, (4–6, June 2012). This interactive session at the Civil Society Forum offered attendees an opportunity to discuss relevant UN plans and programs of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: persons with disabilities, youth, the elderly and the family as one anticipates maximizing the impact of the SPFI in their own organisations. Universal access to basic social protection and social services is necessary to break the cycle of poverty and reduce inequality and social exclusion. The priority themes were poverty eradication, the review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, the World Programme of Action of youth and preparation for the International year of the Family 2014.



German Minister for Economics Dr. Philipp Rösler (left) with the co-chair and Group III Vice-President Arno Metzler

In preparation for the next ministerial level meeting of the EU-Turkey JCC, Group III Vice-President, Arno Metzler, co-chair of the EU-Turkey JCC met with the German Minister for Economics Dr. Philipp Rösler and arranged that the German Ministry for Economics will host the next JCC meeting on 26-27 June 2012. Both the German Minister Rösler and the Turkish Minister responsible for the accession process, Egemen Bağış, will participate in the meeting that is part of the ongoing contacts and cooperation between Turkish and EU civil society organisations.

### NCW Malta EU Flagship Project European Year for Volunteering 2011 Final Conference - Encouraging and Strengthening Volunteering – The Way Forward



Group III President, Luca Jahier (left), flanked on his left by Group III member Grace Attard

Following a year of activities promoting and studying volunteering in Malta, the final conference of the NCW EU Flagship Project on the European Year for Volunteering was held at the Westin Dragonara Resort St. Julians on the 9 March 2012. The lead organisation was the National Council of Women of Malta, supported by the European Commission. Partner organisations in this project were Nature Trust Malta, the Commission for Domestic Violence and the National Youth Council. The objectives of this project were to encourage and support – notably through the exchange of experience and good

practice – the efforts of all Maltese voluntary organisations and individuals to create the conditions for civil society conducive to volunteering in Malta and to increase the visibility of voluntary activities in Malta, in conjunction with the Commission and Council for the Voluntary Sector of Malta.

Hon Dr Chris Said Minister for Justice, Dialogue and the Family opened the Conference, highlighting the tradition of volunteering in Malta. The Conference was also addressed by Mr Martin Bugelli, Head of EU Commission representation, Dr Vanni Xuereb, Head of MEUSAC Mr Robert Farrugia, Chairperson Council for the Voluntary Sector, Mr Joe Gerada, CEO FHRD

Key speaker, EESC Various Interests Group III, President, Mr Luca Jahier highlighted the role of the EESC in promoting volunteering since the Committee's establishment in 1957. He also gave a description of the initiatives carried out by the EESC during the EU Year for Volunteering 2011, which indeed was a success. He outlined key aspects in addressing the needs of volunteers, such as sharing of good practices, the importance of funding and the socio-economic contribution of the voluntary sector. Referring to the Poland Declaration, Mr Jahier spoke about the importance of disseminating information on the economic impact of volunteering. The President also spoke about the link between volunteering and active citizenship, social inclusion, empowerment skills building, non-discrimination and networking. He also referred to the 'European Skills Passport' that will take into consideration the aspirations of the voluntary sector, particularly useful for young people seeking employment.

The second part of the conference included a comprehensive research study on volunteering in Malta, incorporating EU statistics and research studies, followed by workshops on the themes of the speakers gave the participants the opportunity to raise their concerns and come up with ideas and solutions. The last phase of the project will be the preparation of a toolkit aimed at 13-18 year olds and the elderly to raise awareness within these particular age groups of the important role they can play and their valid contribution as well as promoting intergenerational volunteering.

Grace Attard

NCW Vice-President, Project Leader

## Highlights of the February 2012 EESC Plenary Session

### Group III members co-ordinating the work on new opinions

**Mr Ronny LANN00 (BE)** is the Co-Rapporteur for the opinion on: "An action plan to improve access to finance for SMEs" – INT/632.

**Prof. Gerd WOLF (DE)** is the Rapporteur working alone for the opinion on: "Supplementary Research Programme for the ITER project (2014-2018)" – INT/633.

**Mr Bernardo HERNÁNDEZ BATALLER (ES)** is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "Towards an integrated European market for card, internet and mobile payments" – INT/634.

**Mr Edouard DE LAMAZE (FR)** is the Rapporteur for the opinion on: "The Justice Programme (2014-2020)" – SOC/454.

**Mr Ákos TOPOLÁNSZKI (HU)** is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "Establishing the Asylum and Migration Fund / Establishing the instrument for financial support for police

cooperation, preventing and combating crime / general provisions on the Asylum and Migration Fund and on the instrument for financial support for police cooperation, preventing and combating crime, and crisis management / Establishing, as part of the Internal Security Fund, the instrument for financial support for external borders and visa" – SOC/456.

**Mr Séamus BOLAND (IE)** is the General Rapporteur for the opinion on: "The Rights and Citizenship Programme for the period 2012 to 2020" – SOC/453.

**Mr Jorge PEGADO LIZ (PT)** is the Rapporteur for the opinion on: "The protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data" – SOC/455.

**Mr Krzysztof PATER (PL)** is the Co-Rapporteur for the opinion on: "An Agenda for Adequate, Safe and Sustainable Pensions" – SOC/457.

**Mr Andris GOBIŅŠ (LV)** is the Rapporteur for the opinion on: "Europe for citizens Programme" – SOC/458.

**Mr Viliam PÁLENÍK (SK)** is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "Green Paper - Restructuring and anticipation of change: what lessons from recent experience?" – CCMI/102.

**Mrs Évelyne PICHENOT (FR)** is the Rapporteur for the opinion on: "Trade, growth and development" – REX/359.

The full listing of membership of the study groups for the new work may be consulted here: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.group-3-new-study-groups>



## News from Group III



On 2 May 2012, Group III will organise a conference at the EESC in Brussels entitled 'Think Green! The Opportunities of Sustainable Development and the Green Economy'. Within the general context of the forthcoming Rio + 20 UN conference on sustainable development in June 2012, the objective of the Group III event is twofold. Firstly, to provide a historical overview of the debate on sustainable development, to analyse current challenges, future opportunities and possible solutions. Secondly, to exchange views on best practices among existing civil society projects promoting the green economy.

The conference will clearly also provide the opportunity to raise the visibility of the EESC opinions and work of the Committee at large, on the topic of sustainable development. The conference will bring together approximately 140 participants, including Group III members and wider civil society representatives. Moreover, a number of guest speakers will be invited to intervene.

**Watch this space for more news and developments on this important event.**

## News from civil society organisations close to Group III

### BEUC COMMENTS ON ANTI-COUNTERFEITING



On 5 March 2012 BEUC posted up a position paper on its website on: 'Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA).'

To read the full text, click here: <http://www.beuc.org/BEUCNoFrame/Common/GetFile.asp?PortalSource=534&DocID=23938&mfd=off&pdoc=1>

### HAPPY 50TH BIRTHDAY TO BEUC!

This year, 2012, BEUC is celebrating 50 years as the watchdog and champion of Europe Consumers' rights. The celebrations will culminate with a large conference organised, in collaboration with the EESC, at its headquarters in Brussels on 15-16 May 2012.

To read more about this occasion, please see these special pages on their website: <http://beuc50years.eu/>



### IMPORTANT GROUND-BREAKING EVENT IN BULGARIA

On 10 February CECOP published details of an upcoming event in Bulgaria entitled: 'First European Fair of Social Enterprises and Cooperatives of Persons with Disabilities.'

To read more about this event, please click here: <http://www.cecop.coop/First-European-Fair-of-Social>

### A RESPONSE TO THE ISSUE OF FAMILY REUNIFICATION



On 1st March 2012, COFACE, responded to the Green Paper on the right to family reunification of third country nationals living in the European Union

To consult the relevant press release, please go to: <http://www.coface-eu.org/en/Press-Media/Press-Releases//>

### TRANSITION AT THE TOP

On 1st February 2012, COFACE Director, William Lay, welcomed his new incoming Director, Agnes Uhreczky.

To read more about the change-over at the helm, please go to: <http://www.coface-eu.org/en/News/e-Newsletter-02-Feb-2012-en/>

### WARNING: EXCESSIVE RED TAPE WILL THREATEN COMPETITIVITY



On 9 March 2012, COPA COGECA issued a press release in which it outlined details of a high-level debate on the future CAP held recently at the European Parliament, where it warned of excessive red-tape governing the EU Commission proposals on the CAP post-2013, stressing they will hinder competitiveness and threaten farmers, cooperatives, small businesses economic viability.

To consult the full press release, please go to: <http://www.copa-cogeca.eu/Main.aspx?page=HomePage>

### SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS WILL HAMPER EUROPE'S CLIMATE



In a press release issued on 12 March 2012, the EEB expressed disappointment at the outcome of the last Environment Council, where it states that the European Climate action is being forestalled to protect the narrow interests of the Polish coal industry

The full text of the press release can be read here: <http://www.eeb.org/EEB/index.cfm/news-events/news/short-sighted-poland-hampers-europee28099s-climate-ambitions/>

### NEW DATABASE OF NATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE LEGISLATION



On 1st March 2012, EUROCOOP announced the creation of a database

regrouping the legislation governing consumer co-operatives in seventeen European countries.

To read more about this innovation, please surf to: [http://www.eurocoop.coop/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=463&catid=50&Itemid=182&lang=en](http://www.eurocoop.coop/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=463&catid=50&Itemid=182&lang=en)



### SMES DEMAND GROWTH-FOCUSED MEASURES

On 1st March 2012, UEAPME issued a press release on the Tripartite Social Summit where it considers that fiscal consolidation is necessary but not sufficient. During the summit the Social Partners presented their new work programme where youth unemployment was a top concern.

The full text of the press release can be read here: [http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/120301\\_pr\\_tripartite.pdf](http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/120301_pr_tripartite.pdf)

### DANISH PRESIDENCY CONFERENCE ON ACCESSIBILITY



On 5 March 2012, Group III member and EDF President, Yannis Vardakastanis (EL), opened a conference organised jointly by the Danish Presidency and the European Commission in Copenhagen.

To read more about this event, please go to: [http://www.edf-feph.org/Page\\_Generale.asp?DocID=13855&thebloc=29491](http://www.edf-feph.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=13855&thebloc=29491)

### TRAINING WORKSHOP IN BRUSSELS ON NON-FORMAL EDUCATION



On Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 March, representatives from six of the European Youth Forum's member met in Brussels to kick off the third training workshop on Non-Formal Education Quality Assurance (NFEQA).

To read more on the workshop, please go to: <http://www.youthforum.org/>

## OUR GROUP'S STRENGTH

The "Consumers and Environment Category" held a meeting on 28 February 2012, which was chaired by the category spokesperson and Group III member, **Reine-Claude Mader (FR)**. Members were briefed, by a member of the INT Section secretariat, on the current state of play in the run-up to the **European Consumers' Day (ECD)**, which was held in Copenhagen on 15 March 2012 (see link below). Following that, two guest speakers made presentations: Carina Törnblom and Olivier Micol, representatives of DG Sanco, who gave an overview of the **EU consumers' agenda** underlining the horizontal dimension of the strategy aiming at setting coherent initiatives for the coming years. Two representatives of the European Environment Bureau (EEB) also intervened: Mrs Regina Schneider, who spoke about **the EEB and the 2012 work programme** and Mr Stéphane Arditi on **Waste and Products**.

To consult the full agenda please visit our website at: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.consumers-and-environment-category-documents.22148>

To read more about the ECD 2012, please visit: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-european-consumer-day-2012>

The "SMEs, Crafts and Professions Category" held a meeting on 7 March 2012. Following some words of introduction from the President of Group III, **Luca Jahier (IT)**, **Othmar Karas**, Vice-President of the European Parliament and President of SME Intergroup on the agenda for 2012 addressed the

subject of: "**Ways to intensify the cooperation between the EESC and the European Parliament**". As a first follow-up, the spokesperson of the Category will be invited to attend the steering group and EESC members will be invited to the invitations to thematic breakfasts and thematic weeks on SMEs organised by the Intergroup.

Then **Luc Hendrickx**, of UEAPME's Competitiveness of Enterprises, External Relations, Legal Affairs unit, presented the main dossiers relevant for SMEs in the European Commission's work programme for 2012. Among the many issues, he singled out the review of State aid rules, the disclosure of non financial information in the framework of CSR, the so-called "**employment package**" and the 7th environmental action programme. He also highlighted some missing files, such as the revision of the insolvency regulation and the review of the EU SME definition. The category spokespersons, Group III members, **Thomas Palmgren (FI)** and **Carlos Pereira Martins (PT)**, gave an overview of current themes on the EESC agenda that are of concern to the



From right to left, Luca Jahier, President of Group III, Othmar Karas, Vice-President of the European Parliament, Thomas Palmgren (on microphone) and Carlos Pereira Martins, category spokespersons

SMEs, Crafts and Professions sector, which included a look at ongoing opinions, where **Ronny Lannoo (BE)**, Member of Group III and Rapporteur presented his opinion (INT/619) entitled "**Programme for the Competitiveness of SMEs (2014-2020)**".

During the afternoon, **Krzysztof Ostrowski (PL)**, member of Group I and Rapporteur on the own-initiative opinion "**Self-employment – Direct Sellers: the specific case of economically independent self-employed workers**" (INT-628) provided an outline of the ongoing opinion aimed at requesting to the Commission the harmonisation of the definition of direct sellers, the simplification of the regimes, the creation of a special dedicated body/unit and the increase of information and promotion on this notion. Group I member, **Madi Sharma (UK)**, then presented, as an example of best practice, the "**Entrepreneur Envoy: Turing Ideas into Action – Promoting Sustainability – Celebrating Success**" ([www.entrepreneurenvoy.org](http://www.entrepreneurenvoy.org)). This was followed by a round table discussion with members for input and then the spokespersons addressed their closing remarks to the participants.

To consult the full agenda, please visit our website: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.smes-professions-and-crafts-category-documents.22283>

A "**Farmers' Category**" met on 15 March 2012. The guest speaker, Bart Soldaat, Secretary-General of the Bruges Group, gave a presentation on the **E-Learning course on the CAP (ELCAP)**, after which, members posed questions and had a general

debate. Then, the category spokesperson, **Yves Somville (BE)**, presented the new working methods for the categories that were adopted by the Bureau of Group III in December 2011, which was followed by an open discussion on the future role of the Farmers' category and the 2012 programme of the category.

To consult the full agenda, please visit our website: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.farmers-category-documents.22214>

The "**Social Economy Category**" met on 16 March 2012. Klaus Niederlander, the new director of Cooperatives Europe, made a presentation to the members outlining the priorities and activities of the organisation for 2012, notably in view of the UN's International Year of Cooperatives. Other agenda items included an update on the progress of the study on "**The Social Economy in the EU**" and an exchange of views with the authors of the study (CIRIEC) took place. Lastly, a presentation was made on the social economy in the Czech Republic, by both Mr Haken, Group III member and Ms Maršíková, representing the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

To consult the full agenda, please visit our website: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.social-economy-category-documents.22294>

More information on the work of the categories can be found on our website, by contacting the spokespersons of the categories, or the Secretariat of Group III at: [gr3@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:gr3@eesc.europa.eu).



# Overview of our Members' Work in the EESC

**At its plenary session on 22-23 February 2012 the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted the following opinions for which Group III members were Rapporteurs or Co-Rapporteurs.**



**Jorge PEGADO LIZ (PT) – INT/563**  
"Developing a people-orientated, grassroots approach to internal market policy" (EESC opinion 466/2012)

In this own-initiative opinion, the EESC underlines that we should now be approaching the point where, according to Jacques Delors, the European single market should have been completed, free of barriers or any kind of obstacle, for two decades. Therefore, this is the right time for organised civil society, represented by the EESC, to ask how far we have come and where we are headed. Thinking about the internal market today, however, entails thinking again about the entire model of the European venture. As Europe struggles with a stubborn crisis that is systemic rather than cyclical, and is not only economic and financial, but primarily a crisis of social and cultural values, from which the broad swathe of interests represented at the EESC sees no obvious way out. Consequently, a significant portion of organised civil society quite legitimately has questions regarding the ability of the present EU institutional model as shaped by the Lisbon Treaty to handle this crisis. Given the complex set of circumstances and their consequences, the EESC fears that the deep-rooted symptoms of the crisis, given the imminent danger of world recession, suggest that the European model in its current form may collapse and it has no confidence in the ability of Europe's current leaders to successfully regenerate the European economic and social model in keeping with the values and principles enshrined in the Treaty.



**Miguel Ángel CABRA DE LUNA (ES) – SOC/433**  
"European Social Fund" (EESC opinion 477/2012)

In this opinion, the EESC reiterates that the ESF should be the preferred instrument for implementing the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy, particularly with regard to employment, education, social inclusion and combating poverty. It must underpin the policies pursued by the Member States under the Integrated Guidelines and National Reform Programmes (NRPs). The NRPs should include objectives for social inclusion of the most vulnerable population groups together with targets to reduce the number of people living in poverty by 20 million by 2020. Promoting employment and social inclusion (particularly through employment) – especially among the most vulnerable groups – is, and should remain, the ESF's priority, in all regions of the EU. In every Member State, at least 40% of all ESF resources should be earmarked for the thematic objective "promoting employment and supporting labour mobility". The EESC endorses the emphasis on social innovation and ways of supporting projects relating to the social economy, social entrepreneurship and social enterprises and that the proposal that at least 20% of all ESF resources be earmarked for "promoting social inclusion and combating poverty". However, the Committee completely rejects the Commission's proposal to apply Structural Fund financial penalties and incentives on the basis of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact.

The budget allocated to the European Social Fund must at least be maintained at the same level as for the last planning period. The ESF must also support involvement of citizens, civil society and a greater awareness of the common values of Europe.

**Miguel Ángel CABRA DE LUNA (ES) – REX/325** "Social Economy in Latin America" (EESC opinion 496/2012)

This own-initiative opinion is intended to serve as the basis for the work of the EESC in preparing its 7th Meeting of EU-Latin America civil society organisations, to be held in Santiago de Chile in 2012. It will contribute to the support of economic and social organisations and promote their reinforcement and involvement in policy making processes. Moreover, this opinion will inform EU policy makers on the potential contribution of the social economy to the development of Latin American countries and encourage European policy-makers and the EC Delegations to systematically consult and involve social economy actors in development cooperation at the national, regional and continental levels. One of its main objectives is to encourage the creation or consolidation of social economy networks in Latin America and strengthen their cooperation with their European counterparts.



**Ludvík JÍROVEC (CZ) – TEN/462** "Community system for registration of carriers of radioactive materials" (EESC opinion 487/2012)

The Committee recommends adoption of the proposed regulation as it agrees with the need to assess the regulation's impact two years after its implementation. It will also be useful to revisit the issue in five years to monitor what barriers may still exist to the smooth and safe operation of the transport of radioactive materials in the European Union. The EESC favours the second option proposed in the Impact Assessment Report, namely: Regulation with harmonised rules and a more efficient role for the Competent Authorities. Member States should ensure that the criteria for granting registration are harmonised.



**Richard ADAMS (UK) – TEN/466** "Ionising radiation: safety standards" (EESC opinion 488/2012)

The Committee welcomes this proposal, which uses the most recent scientific analysis on the dangers of ionising radiation. In particular the presentation of a consistent, coherent and unified approach to safety through the merging of five existing directives will have a practical and positive operational impact. The EESC notes that, possibly, additional requirements will be requested of Member States following transposition into national law. We feel it particularly important that, to meet both the spirit and substance of the legislation, adequate resources are consequently made available to the competent authorities with responsibility for national implementation. This particularly applies in terms of building a quality approach, through comprehensive education and training. It fully supports the approach which extends protection requirements to the environment and recommends adoption of Chapter IX provisions (with due acknowledgement to the reference to pending ICRP (International Commission on Radiological Protection) criteria (application guidance) as soon as these

criteria have been formalised. In conclusion, the Committee appreciates the very thorough work on the proposal carried out by all the bodies involved and recommends proceeding with its adoption as soon as possible.



**Antonio LONGO (IT) – TEN/469** "Guidelines for trans-European telecommunication network" - (EESC opinion 490/2012)

The EESC firmly believes that widespread access to broadband is a key condition for the development of modern economies and, therefore, welcomes the launch of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and, in particular, the Commission's Guidelines for trans-European telecommunication networks as a tangible response to the problem of insufficient investment in broadband networks. The EESC points out, however, that financial resources should be optimally used, by achieving specific targets and by preventing the dispersal of funding. However, the Committee is perplexed by the rather vague nature of Article 5, which gives the Commission extensive powers to adopt delegated acts "modifying the description of projects of common interest included in the Annex", and stresses that the delegated acts must be subject to clear limitations in terms of time and content. Projects to be funded should comply with the technological neutrality principle, which is fundamental for a truly open Internet. Furthermore, funds should be used for network solutions which are open and accessible in a non-discriminatory manner, thus allowing the entry to market of new operators, with more efficient and affordable technologies.



**Francisco SILVA (PT) – REX/324** "EU-Chile relations" (EESC opinion 495/2012)

This opinion is expected to strengthen the links between Chilean civil society organisations and the EESC, enhance the profile of the EESC in connection with the external action of the EU, and strengthen various civil society networks in Chile. The EESC acknowledges that important innovations have also occurred in relations with the EU, ranging from an Association Agreement to the sharp upturn in European investment in the country. The European Parliament has shown an interest in the implementation of art. 10 of the Agreement, which foresees a joint EESC-Chile civil society consultative committee. The EESC, with the support of the European Parliament, wishes to establish such body with a reduced but representative number of Chilean economic and social organisations. Whilst the Chilean government has stated its intention to establish an ESC or equivalent body in Chile, the "Advisory Council for Social Equity" which has been set up does not claim to perform the functions of an ESC and, moreover, does not meet with the agreement of all the social partners: some trade unions and employers' organisations do not take part in its work. The EESC wishes to support activities to reinforce the Chilean civil society organisations, and facilitate the establishment of a body representing civil society and thereby secure progress towards outlining a Chilean institutional counterpart for setting up the Joint Consultative Committee referred to in the Association Agreement.

NOTE: The complete texts of all EESC opinions are available in various language versions on the Committee's website: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.opinions-search>

## Other news that matters



**Andris GOBIŅŠ (LV)**

*Congratulations are in order, twice, for our Group III member Andris Gobinš!*

*On 17 January the Prime Minister of Latvia nominated him as member of the Steering Committee of the Latvian Development Plan*

*2014-2020 who's task it is to design the mid term strategic framework document for EU funding, State Budget and priorities and, on 6 February 2012, the President of Latvia appointed him as one of the 12 Members of the Committee of Strategic Development under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Latvia.*



*On 28 February 2012, Group III member Carlos Pereira MARTINS (PT), was nominated for a new mandate at the Portuguese CES (Conselho Económico e Social). The signing ceremony took place at the Portuguese CES main office in Lisbon*

## Quote of the month...



**"It may make your blood boil and your mind may not be changed, but the practice of listening to opposing views is essential for effective citizenship: it is essential for our democracy."**

**Barack Obama (1961 - )**  
Incumbent President of the United States of America

