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EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCILS AND THE EXPECTATIONS OF EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY

French ESC, Palais d'Iéna, 9 Place d'Iéna, Paris
Register online: www.cesetcitoyens.lecese.fr



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FONDATION ROBERT SCHUMAN



Friday 14 novembre 2014, Palais d'Iéna - seat of the French ESC

8.00 am WELCOME COFFEE

> 9.00 am OPENING REMARKS

JEAN-PAUL DELEVOYE, President of the French ESC
HENRI MALOSSE, President of the EESC

> 9.15 am INTRODUCTION

JEAN-DOMINIQUE GIULIANI, Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation:
Presentation of a summary of recent polling on Europe

> 9.30 am 1st ROUND TABLE: **The democratic deficit in Europe, lack of representation, populist movements and social issues**

Moderator: **YVES VEYRIER**, President of the Section for European and International Affairs of the French ESC: Presentation of the results of the survey of 22 national ESCs and the EESC.

PASCAL PERRINEAU, Professor at Sciences Po

CHRISTOPHE QUAREZ, French ESC, Rapporteur for the opinion on «The EU at a crossroads»

ANTONIO MARZANO, President of the Italian CNEL (*To be confirmed*)

RADOSLAW MARKOWSKI, Professor at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw and Member of the Polish Academy of Science

This first round table will provide the opportunity to discuss the various forms of democratic divide in Europe. The crisis of political legitimacy of the Union, the rise of populism and extremism in the context of current economic and social crisis and the broader disenchantment of European citizens with the elite, as many components of the political divide will be discussed

11.00 am. COFFEE BREAK

> 11.15am 2nd ROUND TABLE: **How can we respond collectively to the democratic deficit in Europe?**

Moderator: **GABRIELE BISCHOFF**, Member of the EESC Workers' Group (Group II)

DANIELA SCHWARZER, Director of the German Marshall Fund, Berlin

DIOGO PINTO, Representative of the EESC Liaison Group

JEAN-MARC ROIRANT, French ESC, Associations, French Education League

STEFANO PALMIERI, President of the EESC Europe 2020 Steering Committee

As an extension of the overview discussed during the first round table, concrete proposals aiming at diminishing the democratic divide in Europe will be presented. What concrete levers do we have today to achieve greater proximity between political elites and the general public

12.45 am BUFFET LUNCH



EESC and the expectations of European civil society

> 2.00 pm

3rd ROUND TABLE: **How can national economic and social councils and the EESC help to restore trust in Europe?**

Moderator: **JOSÉ ISAIAS RODRIGUEZ GARCIA-CARO**, Vice-president of the EESC Employers' Group (Group I)

MARCOS PEÑA PINTO, President of the Spanish ESC

LALKO DULEVSKI, President of the Bulgarian ESC

PAUL WINDEY, President of the Belgian ESC (CNT)

EVELYNE PICHENOT, Member of the French ESC and of the EESC

The Economic and Social Councils, as places of dialogue between different socio-occupational categories but also citizen representation, would benefit from a greater claim as a key player of the resolution of this crisis of confidence. This crisis, like the weakness of social dialogue in many European countries, calls today for policies to renovate methods of participatory democracy. It is precisely in the current context of the lack of proximity between the general public and the institutions that the issue of civil dialogue and of partnership strengthening should guide European governance, amid increased consultation and participation. By what means can the national ESCs and the European ESC contribute to reducing the democratic divide?

3.30 – 3.45 pm COFFEE BREAK

> 3.45 pm

4th ROUND TABLE: **How could public participation in the European institutions be better organised?**

Moderator : **LUCA JAHIER**, President of the EESC Various Interests Group (Group III)

MARIA JOAO RODRIGUES, Member of the European Parliament, S&D, *to be confirmed*

SYLVIE GOULARD, Member of the European Parliament, ALDE

PASCAL DURAND, Member of the European Parliament, Greens/EFA

CRISTIAN DAN PREDA, Member of the European Parliament, EPP

The current period is characterised by a decline in the confidence of European citizens in the EU institutions. The rise of euroscepticism, even europhobia in some Member States, is a symptom of the gap between the people and the places where European decisions are taken. The day after the renewal of the EU institutions (Parliament, Commission and the European Council president), what can be done to encourage everyone to understand the political stakes in Brussels and Strasbourg?

5.15 – 5.30 pm BREAK

> 5.30 pm

CLOSING REMARKS

HARLEM DESIR, French Secretary of State for European affairs, European Commissioner

JEAN-PAUL DELEVOYE, President of the French ESC

The European Union is undergoing a profound crisis of legitimacy. While two-thirds of Europeans living in the euro area still support the common currency and economic and monetary union, only a third say they have faith in the EU's institutions, which is the lowest level ever recorded. Moreover, a growing majority believe that their voice is not heard loudly enough.

We are witnessing a growing and paradoxical gulf between a lack of trust in the institutions responsible for European policy and acceptance of the need for European integration (for example, 80% of Europeans believe there should be closer economic integration).

The EU is thus facing a number of difficulties.

Economic and social difficulties first of all: rampant unemployment in several countries and the attendant social consequences; a crisis of confidence in the «European model» and its capacity to sustain a high level of social protection in an open economy and a market exposed to international competition; etc.

But political difficulties as well: a lack of understanding of the workings of the EU; challenges to the democratic legitimacy of decisions seen as being «imposed by» Brussels; ponderous decision-making; etc.

In many Member States, the prevailing trend is one of growing scepticism on the part of civil society towards the political and technocratic elites who were unable to prevent the crisis and are powerless to stop it. This dissatisfaction with elites is not uniquely European; it affects national authorities in the same way and is fuelled by the scandals that occupy the press in the Member States: tax avoidance, corruption, conflicts of interest and others.

This situation poses a considerable challenge to democracy in Europe and to all the institutions responsible for giving voice to the expectations of what is often called «civil society.» The latter include the economic and social councils, consultative bodies that most of the European Union's Member States have put in place (22 out of 28 – Germany and the United Kingdom are among those that do not have an ESC). Against this background, what role(s) can the ESCs play in representing and giving voice to the expectations of national and European civil society in order to help reduce the democratic deficit in Europe?

The symposium organised on 14 November at the Palais d'Iéna, seat of the French Council, will be an opportunity for veterans and those with an alternative vision of the European project to come together and turn their minds to a single key question: how do we secure for this project the popular support that it so obviously lacks, impeding its progress and calling into question its most important achievements? It will also consider, in the presence of most of the chairs of these institutions, whether the ESCs still have a role to play in the current context as a means of expressing the expectations of national and European civil society, so as to help reduce the democratic deficit in Europe.

The symposium is thus linked to the annual meeting of European ESC chairs and secretaries-general that will take place this year in Paris on 13 November. This meeting has been preceded by a survey of the 22 national ESCs and the EESC on the importance of European issues in their overall work, how they imagine their role in Europe, and their expectations for the new European term of office. The results of this survey will be made public at the symposium on 14 November.