The European Economic and Social Committee during the Cyprus Presidency

July – December 2012
Established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) consists of representatives of organisations of employers, of the employed, and of other parties representative of civil society in the Member States, notably in socioeconomic, civic, professional and cultural areas. The EESC is a consultative body of the European Union. The role that the European treaties confer on the EESC enables economic, social and civic players in the Member States to take part in the EU’s policy-framing and decision-making processes. With views occasionally being diametrically opposed, the EESC’s discussions often imply real negotiations involving not only the representatives of employers (Group I) and workers (Group II), but also – and this is the distinguishing feature of the EESC – all the other components of organised civil society represented (Group III). As a forum for dialogue and consultation, and for bringing together differing views, the EESC helps to make the European integration process more democratic and more transparent, while also bringing the European Union closer to the general public. In this way, participatory democracy enriches parliamentary democracy, the foundation of political democracy – by enabling players from civil society to make their views heard. The EESC, in other words, plays a distinct role of its own in consolidating the democratic legitimacy and effectiveness of the EU, in partnership with other European institutions. In so doing it helps to promote a genuine identification with Europe. Furthermore, the EESC contributes to the promotion and development of the dialogue with and between civil society organisations, as well as the establishment of structures for consultation beyond the borders of the European Union as part of the EU’s external policy.
The Presidency of the Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union brings together ministerial representatives of the governments of the EU Member States, meeting in various formations according to the policy area under discussion. The Council’s legislative and political decisions are prepared by a large number of specialised working parties and are fed upwards through the Permanent Representatives Committee to the Council itself. Member State governments in turn chair the Council’s various meetings and represent the Council vis-à-vis the EU’s other institutions and the European Union vis-à-vis the larger world. These presidencies of the Council of the European Union traditionally establish a set of broad political priorities and a work programme.

The Republic of Cyprus holds the Presidency for the second half of 2012. Its priorities can be found at www.cy2012eu.gov.cy/

This publication sets out some of the major activities of the European Economic and Social Committee during the period of the Cyprus Presidency from July to December 2012.
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Introduction by EESC President Staffan Nilsson

“No man is an island”: EESC during the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU

We are interdependent and stronger when we join forces and act together. That is why, as EESC President, I am looking forward to cooperating with the forthcoming Cyprus Presidency. I agree with Demetris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus, that “the recent crisis has taught us all that constant awareness and protection of vulnerable economies is required, especially with regard to the interests of ordinary European citizens.” In order to put Europe on a sustainable path, we need to focus on making Europe more competitive in the long run, and on protecting the most vulnerable.

Cyprus takes over the EU presidency at a time when Europe is not in its best shape, experiencing a financial, economic, social and confidence crisis. In dealing with the crisis, we must focus on the future, and on how we move forward. It shall be seen as a challenge to overcome all restraints while pursuing a long list of priorities set by the presidency for the 6-month mandate.

The EESC works hard to ensure maximum civic engagement in Europe’s efforts to foster environmental, economic and social sustainability. In response to the Eurocrisis, we may have to take European integration one step further, to act responsibly and to reaffirm our economic and social values. Promoting an ongoing dialogue with civil society organisations involved in economic, social, civic and cultural spheres is more than ever an absolute must in order to ensure that political decisions have the necessary leverage on European citizens’ everyday lives.

During the Cyprus Presidency we will have to continue our work on existing key topics:

- dialogue and participation;
- sustainability and growth;
- solidarity and development.

My Presidency’s political message, “Engaging people for a sustainable Europe”, will accompany a series of events during the second half of 2012.

Now that we have the new protocol with the European Commission, our work will focus on strengthening the democratic legitimacy and effectiveness of European Union institutions and policies. The EESC very much welcomes the fact that Europe 2020 and the focus on growth and employment are among the priorities of the Cyprus Presidency. Civil society’s involvement will gain particular momentum on 25 September when the EESC holds its conference: “Step up for a stronger Europe-Civil society: a full partner in Europe 2020.” We will involve all of our Committee’s sections and stakeholders at all levels and, once again, with strong and consistent proposals from civil society, we will call upon our EU and national leaders to pool their forces and intelligence and decide on policies which can ensure that Europe restores prosperity for its citizens.

Today, there is a growing need for a social cohesion policy and for investments that boost economic competitiveness and innovation. I hope the Cyprus Presidency will take forward the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the EU budget 2014-2020 by the end of 2012. The EESC will hold a conference in June on the MFF. Our message is that the European budget is an investment budget and we need a strong European budget for more European integration.

During the Cyprus Presidency, we will continue the work we began in May 2011 with the international conference on global food security organised in cooperation with the European Commission as a contribution to the G20, with the launch of the Permanent Study Group on food security. The purpose of this permanent body is to facilitate the participation of civil society organisations in the debate on food security and to produce guidelines for policy dialogue with international partners. In October 2012, a conference on the highly salient issue of food wastage will be organised within this context.

2012 has been named European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. Europe must set an example in matters of intergenerational equity and solidarity, as ageing is both a challenge and an opportunity for Europe. The EESC will launch and attend a variety of events relating to migration issues, one of the core priorities of the Cyprus Presidency. Moreover, the EESC is promoting the European Year for Development Cooperation 2015 at an early stage, in order to place even more emphasis on the work towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Finally, there are many activities scheduled in the areas of energy policy. The newly set up permanent study group on the European energy community within the TEN section will look into the issue of energy poverty. We will mark the work on transport policy with the conference: “Achieving 60% CO2 Emission Reduction in the Transport Sector”, and with an event on quality and liberalisation of rail transport.

I warmly invite the Cyprus Presidency to become actively involved in the EESC initiatives and to count on our grassroots expertise and advice. Unlike Cyprus, no man is an island. It is also true that no institution is an island. We need constructive cooperation, so that together we can and engage people in the quest for a sustainable Europe.

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The task of holding the rotating presidency goes hand-in-hand with EU membership and provides all Member States with the opportunity to contribute to achieving the Union’s visions and objectives. Taking the helm of the European Union for the first time is indeed a major challenge, given the demands of leading discussions and the skills required in order to be a successful mediator and negotiator. This challenge is all the greater given the difficult times that the Union is experiencing. Nevertheless, Cyprus will take on the Presidency of the Council of the EU with the enthusiasm of a newcomer, and we have been preparing intensely for this experience. In today’s difficult times, Cyprus’ motivation and commitment to making a long-term contribution to European integration, is, I believe, indispensable. These are just a few of the credentials that enable us to feel confident that the Cyprus Presidency will be a success.

In light of the current situation in the EU, the Cyprus Presidency will be required to deal with some of the most critical issues. Persistent recession has left policy makers less room for manoeuvre, and austerity and, in some cases, severe belt-tightening measures are causing widespread scepticism among Europeans.

In this respect, the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2014-2020 will be the driving force for steady and sustainable growth, fostering innovation and promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion. The negotiations on the MFF are the most complicated and challenging issue facing the Cyprus Presidency, and they will be one of its top priorities. The Presidency will continue the ongoing and intense negotiations on the MFF and will work hard towards a final agreement. The overall aim is to reach a fair and balanced final compromise on this important issue. It is crucial that the MFF reflects the Member States’ economic circumstances and consolidation efforts, as well as the need to create growth and achieve the Europe 2020 goals.

It is vital that Europe once again stands and works united, in order to meet the challenges caused by the worldwide financial crisis. A cooperative approach is needed in order to seek synergies and implement effective government policies at European level. Besides promoting common policies, efficiency is also important, as well as maximising results. Furthermore, the Europe 2020 strategy is aimed at resource efficiency and sustainable growth, highlighting the importance of a more competitive Union based on a low-carbon and green economy.

The Common European Asylum System is also a top priority on the Cyprus Presidency’s agenda. At the same time, the 20th anniversary of the Single Market throws the spotlight on the importance of deeper integration in the Union. Indeed, the Single Market has so far delivered growth, employment and competitiveness.

Relaunching the Integrated Maritime Policy is also essential, focusing on sustainability and prosperity, while addressing Europe’s maritime resources throughout the surrounding oceans and seas. This will, inter alia, bring the Union even closer to its neighbours and enhance the scope of the EU neighbourhood policy. This objective is another of the Presidency’s priorities, with particular emphasis on the Southern Dimension.

Restoring broken labour markets throughout Europe is by far the most urgent and complicated challenge to be addressed, especially for young people. Europe simply cannot afford ‘a lost generation’. The issue of youth unemployment is not limited to alarming ‘jobless’ figures or comparative statistics, but is also about the Union’s long-term competitiveness. The Cyprus Presidency will treat actions to promote job creation as a key priority, particularly in relation to young people.

Working towards a Better Europe, based on the principle of solidarity and on social cohesion, with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of European policies and achieving growth, will be at the core of Cyprus Presidency’s agenda. It is essential that Europe becomes more relevant to its citizens and this can be achieved by promoting policies that improve their quality of life. Achieving a Better Europe requires the active participation of all Europeans and the involvement of civil society. In this respect, I am very much counting on the EESC’s long experience of gathering the views of multiple social stakeholders and stimulating participatory democracy.

The Cyprus Presidency is fully committed to moving the European agenda forward during the second half of 2012. Achieving political consensus among the 27 Member States is a challenge that requires a strong network management approach and a pluralist modus operandi, involving all European institutions and bodies, naturally including the EESC.

The Cyprus Presidency will be returning to traditional European values, with a view to restoring Europe’s weight on the global stage and confidence and hope amongst its citizens. Resolutely and ambitiously, yet humbly and modestly, the Cyprus Presidency will work with determination to ensure that the task ahead will be a success.
At President Nilsson’s insistence, mindful of his slogan “Engaging people for a sustainable Europe”, and under the scrutiny of the EESC’s Communication Group, chaired by vice-president Anna-Maria Darmanin, the European Economic and Social Committee will continue in its role as a committed player in EU communication during the Cyprus EU Presidency.

- The EESC will pay special attention to the present economic crisis, including the challenges of growth and jobs (Europe 2020 strategy), immigration, Budget, CAP reform, climate change and energy, the key words being “dialogue and participation”, “sustainability and growth” and “solidarity and development”.

- During the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, the Committee will support the interinstitutional communication priorities when they are finally decided upon, which will probably relate to:

  - Economic recovery;
    1. Economic Governance
    2. Europe 2020 – Growth and environmental sustainability
    3. Competitiveness – Developing the internal market and the digital single market

  - Building a citizens Europe;
    1. Removing obstacles to citizens’ rights
    2. The free movement of people
    3. Empowering citizens: consumers’ rights and the citizens initiative

  - and making the most of EU policies;
    1. Maximising the added value of EU policies
    2. The cost of non-Europe
    3. The external dimension of the EU as a global actor

as well as improving relations with national Economic and Social Councils and organised civil society, improving the service to EESC Members.

- It will work to help boost the communication partnership with the other European institutions, in line with its latest opinion on “Communicating Europe in Partnership” and its “Communication Strategy for 2010–2015”. With the President’s work programme, the EESC will continue to present the proposals of civil society to the European Parliament and the European Commission. It will be using both traditional and digital means of communication.

- The EESC will continue to implement the recommendations contained in its opinion on the Commission Communication “Communicating Europe in Partnership”, and the vision set out in its 2008 opinion “Reconciling the national and European dimensions of communicating Europe”.

- Finally, the EESC will continue applying the communication part of the February 2012 European Commission-EESC Protocol of Cooperation. The communication part emphasises decentralised cooperation and synergies with the European Commission in the area of communication. Communication contact points from the EESC, together with all other members will continue to participate in local events.

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The achievements of the Lisbon Treaty represent progress towards a more democratic, cohesive, transparent, efficient and open Union that is more respectful of the values underpinning the European model of society, including its social model, and is more able to promote those values globally and to take its place on the international stage. The Committee strongly believes that, with the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union is equipped with the proper tools to implement new policies and successfully address the many challenges it faces, which are of deep concern to Europe’s citizens, namely the economic and financial crisis, employment, the fight against poverty and social exclusion, climate change and the future of the European social model.

In this context, civil society involvement in the process of framing EU policies and decisions is a key instrument not just for strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the European institutions and EU action, but also for encouraging the growth of a shared understanding of what Europe is for and where it is going, and ensuring that European citizens play their part fully in building Europe.

Through its provisions enshrining participatory democracy and introducing a citizens’ right of initiative, the Lisbon Treaty creates significant prospects for European democracy to develop. Participatory democracy and active citizenship are fundamental principles upon which the success of European Union policies – and hence the Union’s very future – depend.

Therefore, it is essential to implement a real strategy of listening and dialogue that allows Europe’s citizens, and the organisations which represent them, to say what precisely they expect from EU policies and how they envisage their common future, and to be heard. This calls for a genuine and long-term commitment from all the EU institutions, as required by the Treaty, with the aim of establishing effective and efficient civil dialogue at European level. To achieve this objective, the EU institutions and bodies must act in partnership with one another in order to make the dialogue with organised civil society more effective through the promotion of synergies, thereby ensuring the lasting involvement of organised civil society in the European processes.

For its part, and in keeping with the tasks assigned to it by the European treaties, the Committee is determined to pursue its initiatives, in close cooperation with the EU institutions and all other civil society players, with a view to contributing on the one hand to creating a genuine European public space for dialogue and debate and on the other to giving new impetus to the European project based on a forward-looking vision of Europe’s future for its citizens. The Committee intends to make its networks and infrastructure available to all the EU institutions by way of constructive support for dialogue with civil society and the organisations representing it.

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Europe 2020 – A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth

The Europe 2020 Strategy is the EU’s comprehensive reform agenda for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth over the current decade. Its proper implementation depends largely on the commitment and responsibility of all stakeholders involved. The 2011 and 2012 Spring European Councils have formally recognised the role of the Committee, the social partners and other stakeholders in the strategy. Furthermore, the Commission has asked the Committee to play an active role in its implementation, considering civil society organizations as ‘key partners’ and expressing the Commission’s appreciation for the EESC’s ‘constructive cooperation with regard to the Europe 2020 strategy’ and its wish to ‘continue and deepen the excellent collaboration’ with the EESC.

The Europe 2020 Steering Committee has a horizontal mandate to integrate the concept and the working programme of Europe 2020 into the daily activities of the EESC Sections, CCMI and Observatories.

The Steering Committee highly welcomes the fact that Europe 2020 is among the priorities of the Cyprus Presidency and totally supports the idea of working for a “Better Europe”, focusing on issues such as growth and employment (especially for young people), greater economic coordination and implementation of the “Six-Pack” legislation on economic and financial surveillance.

Building on successful past experiences and the positive responses to its reports, the Europe 2020 Steering Committee will continue its joint work with national Economic and Social Councils (ESCs) / similar organisations in order to improve the participation of organised civil society and the social partners in the practical implementation and evaluation of the strategy.

During the second half of 2012, one of the priorities will be to contribute to the organisation of the major conference ‘Step up for a stronger Europe. Civil society – a full partner in the Europe 2020 Strategy’, which will take place on 25 September 2012.

Other activities will be:
- holding joint meetings with national ESCs / similar organisations in order to debate topics such as the country-specific recommendations and to feed into the European Council’s discussions;
- in cooperation with EESC sections, organising “going local” events, for example related to the Resource efficiency flagship and roadmap;
- preparing an Integrated report, containing contributions from national ESCs / similar organisations on their involvement in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
- preparing an EESC opinion on the second European Semester;
- organising missions to national ESCs (Austria, Romania etc.) in order to establish effective dialogue and to involve them more closely in the strategy.

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1. Letter from the president of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso to the president of the EESC Staffan Nilsson, October 2011
2. Notably two Integrated reports from 2011, containing contributions drafted by the Member States’ national Economic and Social Councils (ESCs) or by similar organisations in those countries which do not have a national ESC.
Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion

Economic Crisis: Governance and policies

Following important developments concerning economic governance in the Euro area and the European Union, the Committee will continue stepping up its work for supporting policy makers in containing the sovereign debt crisis. During the Danish Presidency the Committee has adopted an opinion which makes concrete proposals for the issuance of two kinds of bonds at European level - containing sovereign debt on one hand and leveraging resources for investment in growth projects on the other. The work of the Committee in this domain has proceeded further with an opinion contributing to the discussion on stability bonds launched by the Commission in a Green Paper at the end of 2011. A high-level Conference organised in the run-up to the Cyprus Presidency has provided for an exchange of views between key stakeholders and policy makers for discussing further steps in overcoming the sovereign debt crisis. This conference will be followed up by further proposals made in upcoming opinions.

Budget: financial perspectives

The Cyprus Presidency hopes to conclude the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the EU Budget 2014-2020 by the end of 2012 as a key priority. With an opinion adopted on the EU Budget review in June 2011, an opinion adopted on the MFF proposal itself during the Danish Presidency and various hearings and conferences held, the Committee has contributed to the discussion substantively. It will continue to closely follow this dossier during the Cyprus Presidency and come back with further proposals as appropriate.

In this context, an agreement on the system of own resources is a necessary basis for the conclusion of the negotiations on the MFF. The Committee has adopted its opinion on this matter, largely supporting the Financial Transaction Tax own resource.

Taxation

Taxation is at the forefront of the debate on deepening European integration. The European Council of 2 March 2012 has indicated the line to be taken: Attention must be paid to the design and structure of tax systems in order to avoid inefficiencies and ensure fairness and effectiveness. Removing unjustified and distorting exemptions whilst addressing the underlying social issues with direct compensatory payments, broadening the tax base, shifting tax away from labour and moving taxation to areas with less distorting effects like consumption and/or taxing undesirables (pollution), improving the efficiency of tax collection and tackling tax evasion will be top of the agenda and will be transformed into concrete initiatives.

The Cyprus Presidency will have to try to conclude deliberations on a number of taxation initiatives of great importance. This concerns particularly the energy taxation directive, the common consolidated tax base for company taxation (CCCTB), the financial transaction tax (FTT), the review of the savings taxation directive and certain problems with double taxation. The EESC has thoroughly examined all of these issues and has adopted relevant opinions or is in the final phase of drawing them up. In particular, the EESC is adopting an opinion on a communication and recommendation on inheritance taxation during the Cyprus Presidency. Also, the Committee is expecting a referral on a legal proposal on the VAT treatment of public authorities and communications on car taxation and cross border withholding taxes. A Communication on good governance in the tax area is expected to be presented only at the very end of the Cyprus Presidency.

Financial markets

Stabilising the financial markets is a long-standing priority of the European Union. The Commission has recently issued communications and legislation aimed at further regulating Credit Rating Agencies and outline a mechanism to address banking resolutions issues, in the context of an enhanced international cooperation. The Committee has actively participated in the developments of the concerned legislative matters with an adoption of its opinion on the specific role of the Credit Rating Agencies (CRA). The EESC is keeping this topic high on the agenda in view of the 3rd and last phase of the regulation approach set up by the Commission. The Commission has also recently announced the intention of presenting a consultative Communication on shadow banking. The Committee will put in place appropriate actions to participate in the consultation process on this issue. The Committee has also recently endorsed an initiative to curb on insider dealing and market manipulation.

Economic, social and territorial cohesion

Under the Cyprus Presidency, negotiations will continue and probably be finalised on EU cohesion policy proposals for the programming period 2014-2020 which the Commission published on 6 October 2011. In April 2012, the Committee responded to the Commission’s proposals with a series of Opinions relating to the draft General Provisions Regulation, the draft proposals for the ERDF, the Cohesion Fund, the draft Regulation on Territorial Cooperation, and finally on the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation.
The Committee has continued to lobby strongly in favour of Multi-level governance and the full implementation of the partnership principle in cohesion policy, and has continued to disseminate copies of its highly successful brochure describing cases of best practice in partnership. The Committee will continue its efforts during the Cyprus Presidency to lobby for strengthening the involvement of partners in drawing up and implementing projects co-financed through the Structural Funds, in order to improve their effectiveness and impact.

Currently the EU has two macro-regional strategies under way: one for the Baltic Sea region and one for the Danube basin. The EESC is actively involved in bringing the voice of civil society to the discussion of these active strategies. The European Council has also asked for an Adriatic-Ionian macro-regional strategy to be drawn up in the course of 2012, though work is currently on hold. The Committee has also taken an active interest in a macro-regional strategy for the Atlantic region, and will continue to share its views on this during the Cyprus Presidency.

The crucial role of metropolitan areas has been recognised within EU cohesion policy, and their importance is also acknowledged in the overarching EU growth strategy Europe 2020. During the Cyprus Presidency, the Committee will remain active to plead for a favourable climate being maintained for metropolitan areas.

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For more information about the work of this section, please consult our website:
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Competitiveness of European enterprises and support to SME

The success of European industry is of central importance to the economic and social welfare of European citizens.

During the second semester of 2012, the EESC will certainly be following Commission initiatives on the European Union’s international procurement policy that are of major importance for EU small and medium-sized enterprises.

Following the adoption of an exploratory Opinion on Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise, the EESC will follow up the Commission’s Social Business Initiative.

Research, development and innovation

Research, development and innovation are essential to the development of EU enterprises and to respond to societal challenges. The European Union possesses an extraordinary potential for innovation and should take advantage of it.

The new framework programme for research and development, Horizon 2020, will support the European growth and innovation efforts and thereby enhance the EU’s global competitiveness.

The EESC has recently adopted its opinion on this issue and will follow it up during the Cyprus Presidency.

Financial services

A safer, sounder, more transparent and more responsible financial system, working for the economy and society as a whole and able to finance the real economy, is a precondition for sustainable growth. The EESC intends to contribute to the public debate on this area.

The EESC will therefore be responding to a number of EU initiatives in this area (bank recovery, shadow banking, securities).

Consumers’ rights

During the second semester 2012, the EESC will certainly be asked to produce opinions on anticipated Commission initiatives on the Consumer Agenda and collective redress.

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Single Market

2012 will be the 20th anniversary of the launch of the Internal Market. The Internal Market has undoubtedly been one of the EU’s most significant and valuable achievements, and has contributed greatly to growth and employment in the Member States. However, the Internal Market has to be reformed and kept up to date, and this task will be on the agenda during the Cyprus Presidency.

The EESC will continue to follow up the implementation of the Communication on the Twelve levers to boost growth and strengthen confidence (“Working together to create new growth”).

Single Market Observatory (SMO)

The Single Market Observatory (SMO) was set up by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in 1994 with the support of the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission. Its objective is to be a “pressure group” made up of representatives of EU civil society organisations to identify shortcomings in the Single Market, propose solutions and help the legislator fine-tune its proposals. The SMO has 33 Members assisted by a secretariat within the Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption (INT).

The SMO was responsible for the Committee’s work on the Single Market Act and closely follows its implementation and evolution. The Observatory has also improved its cooperation with the EFTA Consultative Committee and a joint publication on a citizens-orientated Single Market (a topic shared by both structures) is planned for the second semester 2012.

It will also maintain its focus on Smart Regulation issues. This will also include cooperation with various platforms such as the European University Institute (EUI), the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and the European Policy Centre (EPC). The SMO database on European self- and co-regulation, which involves close cooperation with the European Commission, will also feed into external activities (e.g. the Hague Institute for the Internationalisation of Law, HiiL, and the Bertelsmann Foundation).

A public hearing and meeting of the SMO is scheduled to be held in Cyprus in October 2012 during the Single Market Week.

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The SMO activities can be followed on Facebook and Twitter.
The SOC Section deals with a broad range of policy areas including employment and working conditions, social policy and integration, gender equality, disability issues, education and training, health and justice and home affairs (including immigration). During the present term-of-office the SOC section is focusing on three strategic priorities, each with three sub-headings:

**Better functioning labour markets**
1. A good and productive working life
2. The potential of young people
3. Development of the internal market and free movement of labour

**Management of the social crisis**
4. Social security systems and the social impact of the crisis
5. Giving every child the best start in life
6. Healthy and active living

**Europe for all**
7. Proactive integration and immigration
8. Enhancing rights and opportunities
9. Active citizenship and volunteering

At the very beginning of the Cyprus Presidency the Committee assembly will discuss consultative opinions originating from the SOC section on the Commission’s White Paper on Pensions, the Youth Opportunities Initiative, the “Europe for Citizens” Programme, the Justice Programme, Proceeds of crime, the Asylum and Migration Fund/Internal Security Fund and Solidarity in the field of asylum. The Committee is also working on opinions on Posting of Workers and Collective action.

Moreover, the section is preparing own-initiative opinions on issues such as the Contribution of migrant entrepreneurs to economy, Articles 11.1 and 11.2 of the Lisbon Treaty (concerning the dialogue between the EU institutions and civil society), Vulnerable groups’ rights at the workplace (with a specific view to sexual orientation), Female entrepreneurs and the Potential of young people with high intellectual abilities. Over the years, the Committee has done an extensive work on the Roma and an own-initiative opinion is scheduled for adoption during the Cyprus presidency on the involvement of Roma organisations in implementing policies to promote Roma integration. Together with the European Commission the section will co-organise the eighth meeting of the European Integration Forum, with political input from the SOC section’s Permanent Study Group on Immigration and Integration. A coordination group under the SOC section will monitor and regularly organise hearings within the framework of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012. This group will also prepare an own-initiative opinion on Participation of older people in society.

**Labour Market Observatory**

The Labour Market Observatory (LMO) carries out extensive work on a wide range of labour market issues on the basis of the SOC section’s strategic priorities. The LMO will organise several events during the Cyprus Presidency, including one in Brussels on 6 November on inclusive labour markets.

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For more information about the work of this section, please consult our website:  
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or about the observatory:  
www.eesc.europa.eu/lmo
Agriculture, Rural Development, Environment, Sustainable Development

During the Cyprus EU Presidency in the second half of 2012, the Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment will work in its usual fields of activity. Certain topics – such as the reform of the Common Agriculture Policy, the Common Fisheries Policy after 2013, the 7th Environmental Action Programme and the Water directive policy will be particularly visible.

**Agriculture**

The Cyprus Presidency will lead the negotiations on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. The adoption of the EESC opinion on the packet of legislative proposals is scheduled for April 2012, early enough to make significant contribution to the co-decision process.

The NAT Section will continue its support for the LEADER axis in the future CAP, in order to strengthen the 2nd pillar (rural development). The Section will also prepare an own-initiative opinion on the role of women as drivers of a development and innovation model in agriculture and rural areas. Throughout 2012, the NAT Section will continue providing input into the ongoing review of the EU policy for information provision and promotion measures for agricultural products, which is one of the instruments of the CAP.

Another area of particular interest is that of Agrobiotechnology in the EU, i.e. the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Agriculture. The Committee continues to follow the review of EU legislation on the cultivation of GM crops (in particular the proposal for amending Directive 2001/18/EC), as well as the discussion on new techniques.

Food security will continue to be a relevant topic and follow-up to important work already undertaken will be organised, in particular through the permanent study group on food security. In 2012 one of its main focuses will be on food wastage and the ways to counter it, including an event in October, possibly organised in cooperation with the FAO. The permanent study group will also seek to draw up opinions.

The Committee has been consulted on the Communication on “Agricultural productivity and sustainability”, which is one of the three European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs) launched by the Commission in areas that are crucial to growth and jobs (the supply of raw materials, active and healthy aging, and sustainable agriculture). The key challenge for agriculture is in bringing researchers, farmers and other players closer together so that the speed of technological transfer from science to farming practice can be accelerated.

**Forestry**

The EESC will prepare an opinion on the inclusion in the Union’s climate change commitments of the greenhouse gas emissions and removals resulting from activities related to land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF).

In response to the decision taken at the Forest Europe Ministerial Conference in Oslo in June 2011, the EESC should get involved and contribute to the negotiations on a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe. The EESC’s involvement could take the form of an event either in December 2012 or in January 2013. In addition, a new (updated) forest strategy is expected in the first quarter of 2013. It will be an opportunity to give stronger voice to the forest sector and to consider how forests and forestry can contribute to the EU2020 objectives.

**Fisheries**

The ongoing review of the Common Fisheries Policy will continue during the second half of 2012, with the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. The measures proposed by the Commission against those countries that practice a non-sustainable fishing will also be the subject of an EESC opinion.

**Environment**

Further support will be given to the promotion of the 7th Environmental Action Programme which is currently under discussion and which will follow up on the 6th EAP, expiring in June this year. The 7th Environment Action Programme (7th EAP) should be proposed during the Cyprus Presidency. The Programme is expected to define priority objectives of environmental policy, set out strategic orientations for the short to medium-term as well as a longer-term vision, and focus on better implementation. Furthermore, it should contribute to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, but also go beyond it in terms of its timeframe and scope.

Through its opinions and activities, the EESC has sought to make an active contribution to the ongoing debate on improving the EU water policy, in particular in the context of the 2012 European Year of Water, which will see the launch of the Commission Blueprint to Safeguard Europe’s Water (scheduled for November 2012): a major review of the EU water policies.
The EESC advocates an **integrated, cross-cutting approach** to environmental, economic and social issues in water policy, with a view to achieving sustainable development.

The European Commission has adopted a new strategy to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, which is in line with the 2020/2050 commitments and headline targets concluded earlier at EU and global level. The Committee will seek to strengthen and support the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity in Europe, as well as to strive for more sustainable agriculture and forestry, both through (follow-up of) its consultative work as well as through cooperation with the other institutions.

During the Cyprus Presidency, the EESC will strengthen its involvement in the implementation of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus).

The Committee will seek to contribute to events and processes on key subjects such as GMOs, access to information and promotion of the Convention principles at international fora.

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For more information about the work of this section, please consult our website:  
www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.nat-section

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The Sustainable Development Observatory (SDO) is working on several issues that will be of relevance to the Cyprus Presidency.

The EESC President’s leitmotiv “Engaging People for a Sustainable Europe” puts sustainable development at the centre of the EESC’s priorities in 2012. A major event in this context is the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio. The SDO will continue its work in the preparation of Rio+20 first by an intense analysis of the conference outcomes and second by making proposals on how these outcomes should be transposed in the EU context. In particular, the SDO will strive for an updating of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy in the light of Rio+20 outcomes.

The SDO will continue to give input into the EESC’s work on the Europe2020 strategy, in particular via its follow-up work to his opinion on the Resource Efficiency Roadmap.

Further on, the SDO will work on the social dimension of sustainable development, via an own-initiative opinion on social farming, and via its efforts to formulate on how to manage a just transition to green economy, for instance aiming at a stronger involvement of social partners in this transition process.

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The development of a core EU transport network will be one of the priorities of the Cyprus Presidency. The EESC will continue to work on the main measures proposed in the Transport White Paper and to explore the possibilities for involving European civil society in achieving a long term vision of transport policy. Maritime issues will be very topical, with an EESC opinion on legislative proposals concerning the implementation of the Maritime Labour Convention available in summer 2012. In air transport, the EESC will support the Presidency in assessing the progress on creating the Single European Sky, as 31 December 2012 will be the deadline for having in place the so-called functional air blocks (FABs).

The EESC will build on its previous activities in the energy policy field to promote further the idea of a European Energy Community (EEC). The common declaration on joint responses to energy challenges signed by EESC President Staffan Nilsson and Jacques Delors, former President of the European Commission and initiator of the EEC, will be the EESC’s roadmap for seeking common governance of energy issues at EU level. The EESC will contribute to an energy policy that is geared to the needs of energy end-users. In this context, the Committee will prepare opinions on the forthcoming EC Communications on the completion of the internal energy market, the renewable energy strategy (RES), and on carbon capture and storage. In the post-Fukushima energy context, the EESC will continue its efforts on promoting more transparency in nuclear energy debates, notably by co-organising a Round Table on Nuclear Safety in co-operation with DG Energy, ENSREG (European Nuclear Safety Regulators’ Group) and ANCLII (National Association of Local Committees for Information on nuclear activities, France) in autumn 2012. It will also prepare an opinion on the EC legislative proposal to improve the EU regulatory framework on nuclear safety on the basis of the results of the comprehensive risk and safety assessments of nuclear power plants (“stress tests”).

The EESC will focus on a few key actions for implementing the Digital Agenda for Europe, in particular regarding the improvement of the regulatory environment on the amendment of the Public Sector Information Directive, the “Connecting Europe Facility” Guidelines for Telecoms, the revision of the e-Signatures Directive, as well as the possible legislative part in the forthcoming EC Communications on Web Accessibility and Internet Security. The most important event foreseen at this stage by the Cyprus Presidency in this domain is a possible joint Telecoms and Transport Informal Ministerial Council, to be held in Cyprus on 16-17 July 2012, on a subject relevant to “transport issues under the Digital Agenda”. The Cyprus Presidency have expressed an interest in the follow-up workshop on the EESC Digital Agenda opinion that is planned for mid-September 2012 and the e-Health Symposium to be held in the EESC premises in early December 2012.

In 2012, Europe will still be in the process of resolving the economic and financial crisis, which will undoubtedly have its long-term effects on society, such as increased unemployment, insecurity, exclusion and poverty – issues that will lead to an ever greater demand for social services of general interest, especially in the area of health, housing, education, energy, transport and communication methods in Europe. In its own-initiative opinion on “Issues with defining social housing as a service of general economic interest”, the EESC will address the concept of social housing in relation to the single market rules and free competition, and organise a promotional conference in the autumn of 2012.

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For more information about the work of this section, please consult our website:
During the Cyprus Presidency the CCMI will celebrate its 10th anniversary. A book will be published to describe the work undertaken by the CCMI until now and to set out guidelines for its future development and the best way to contribute to maintain an industrial base in Europe.

The CCMI will make its expertise and experience available to the Cyprus Presidency and support it in its main spheres of interest. The CCMI will continue to discuss the proposals for realising the objectives of the EU2020 strategy and try to predict the changes involved in switching to a competitive, socially responsible and environmentally sustainable economic system, while taking the current context of economic uncertainty into account. In this framework, the CCMI will organise a workshop that will bring together relevant institutional actors, social partners and other stakeholders involved in industrial policy – one of the EU2020 “flagship initiatives”.

2012 is the United Nations’ International Year of Cooperatives and the CCMI will contribute in by concluding its opinion CCMI/93 on cooperatives and restructuring. The future Cyprus presidency has invited the CCMI to participate in organising a joint conference on the subject with the Commission, to be held in Cyprus in September. In addition the CCMI will organise a closing conference for this United Nations year to be held in October.

The Consultative Commission on Industrial Change will also focus on the trends and consequences of future developments in the area of personal social, sanitary and educational services industries in the European Union. It will also analyse the need for a European Defence Industry and its industrial, innovative and social aspects.

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For more information about the work of this commission, please consult our website: www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.ccmi
The **enlargement process**: a meeting of the EU-Turkey Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) will take place in Ankara in December 2012. A meeting of the EU-Croatia JCC will also take place in Croatia in the second half of the year, and the seventh meeting of the EU-the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Civil Society JCC will be held in the EU in the second half of 2012. At regional level, the Western Balkans Contact Group will continue to develop contacts and promote cooperation with Western Balkans civil society organisations. The contact group will focus on media freedom and on rural development and employment, in order to prepare the Western Balkans civil society forum, to be held on 29-30 November 2012 in Croatia. The Cyprus Presidency will be invited to attend these meetings. The EESC will also hold the 1st meeting of the EU-Montenegro Joint Consultative Committee in September 2012. The first meeting of the EU-Iceland JCC will take place during the second half of 2012.

Relations with the EU’s **Eastern Neighbours and Russia**: the EESC will continue developing its relations with Russian civil society through its EU-Russia Contact Group. The contact group will take part in the 3rd EU-Russia Civil Society Forum, which will take place in November 2012. The Committee will also be actively involved in the fourth civil society forum of the Eastern Partnership through the coordination of a new Working Group for social dialogue in the region. The Committee will also continue its participation in the Eastern Partnership intergovernmental platforms. The EESC Eastern Neighbours Contact group will closely monitor the negotiation of association agreements with Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova. The Committee will pursue its cooperation with the Ukrainian civil society and will host a study visit of Ukrainian civil society representatives. Two opinions will be drafted on EU-Moldova relations. What role for civil society and on Social Dialogue in the Eastern Partnership countries.

Relations with **Southern Partner Countries**: the EESC will continue to monitor civil society developments in the countries undergoing democratic transition in order to identify areas in which it can further support and build close ties with legitimate civil society organisations, including the setting up or restructuring of Economic and Social Councils. In doing so, it will continue to cooperate with the other EU institutions and with partner organisations such as the ILO. The EESC will also seek to ensure that the support which the EU provides to civil society in the region through the European Neighbourhood Policy is improved, in particular the support for employers’ and trade union organisations. It will build on the close ties that it has established with the ESC of Morocco and aims to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Moroccan ESC in the second half of 2012. On 29-31 October the EESC will be co-organising the 2012 Euromed Summit of ESCs and similar institutions in Jordan together with the ESC of Jordan. The Cyprus Presidency will be invited to attend. Finally it will continue to promote efforts to establish consultative platforms for civil society in Tunisia, Egypt, the Palestinian Territories and Lebanon which in the longer run could lead to the establishment of ESCs in those countries.

Relations between the EESC and **Asia**: the 12th China EU Round Table is due to take place in Vienna on the issues of intercultural dialogue and measuring of prosperity beyond GDP. An opinion on intercultural dialogue between civil society in China and in the EU will be drawn up by the EESC. With regard to India, the focus will be on the civil society monitoring of the EU-India Free Trade Agreement; a seminar jointly organised with the EU Delegation could take place under the Cyprus Presidency. As for Japan, a seminar on ageing societies will bring together in Tokyo a delegation of EESC members and representatives of a wide range of Japanese civil society organisations, as well as representatives of both the Japanese Government and the EU political authorities. The seminar will be complemented by bilateral meetings, in view of the preparatory works to launch negotiations of EU-Japan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and a Framework Agreement, as agreed in the 20th EU-Japan summit.

Relations with **developing countries**: the EESC maintains regular cooperation with ACP countries through its joint ACP-EU follow-up committee. The EESC will be actively involved in the implementation of the EC-CARIFORUM trade agreement and will hold a regional seminar in the Caribbean under the Cyprus Presidency. It will draft several opinions on development policy issues.
In its relations with Latin America, as a contribution to the next EU-Latin America Head of State Summit, the EESC will organise its 7th Meeting of EU-Latin America and Caribbean civil society organisations in Santiago de Chile in December 2012 on the issues of i) the social economy in Latin America, ii) investments with a social quality in order to favour growth and employment. The Cyprus Presidency will be invited to attend this meeting. It will adopt an opinion social economy in Latin America and will start the process of setting up the EU Central America Civil Society Joint Committee provided for in the recent association agreement. The 7th EU-Brazil Civil Society Round Table will be held in Europe.

Transatlantic relations: the EESC will continue the follow-up to the opinions adopted on EU-Canada and EU-USA, and will continue its contacts with Canadian civil society during negotiations for an EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement.

Trade issues: the EESC will adopt opinions on the issue of Trade, Growth and Development in July 2012. It will organise a session during the WTO Public Forum in September 2012 on the civil society monitoring of trade agreements. The EESC will continue the implementation of trade-related mandates for civil society involvement in the EC-Cariforum Economic Partnership Agreement and the EU-South Korea Free Trade Agreement during the second semester 2012.

The monitoring of ongoing negotiations at multilateral and regional level will continue.

The EESC will continue monitoring the implementation of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights through its Contact Group for the EIDHR.

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For more information about the work of this section, please consult our website:
www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.sections-commission
The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

The European Economic and Social Committee is a consultative body set up by the Rome Treaties in 1957. It consists of representatives of organisations of employers, workers and other components of organised civil society in the Member States, notably in socioeconomic, civic, professional and cultural areas. Its main task is to advise the three major EU institutions (European Parliament, Council of the European Union and European Commission).

It is mandatory for the EESC to be consulted on all those issues stipulated in the treaties and whenever the institutions deem it appropriate. It can also be consulted on an exploratory basis by these same institutions, or can itself take the initiative to issue an opinion (around 15% of its opinions are own-initiative opinions). The EESC adopts on average 200 opinions a year on a wide range of subjects concerning European integration. It therefore plays an active role in the European Union’s policy-framing and decision-making processes.

The mission of the EESC:
Committed to European integration, the EESC contributes to strengthening the democratic legitimacy and effectiveness of the European Union by enabling civil society organisations from the Member States to express their views at European level. This Committee fulfils three key missions:

- helping to ensure that European policies and legislation tie in better with economic, social and civic circumstances on the ground, by assisting the European Parliament, Council and European
Commission, making use of EESC Members’ experience and representativeness, dialogue and efforts to secure consensus serving the general interest;

• promoting the development of a more participatory European Union which is more in touch with popular opinion, by acting as an institutional forum representing, informing, expressing the views of and securing dialogue with organised civil society;

• promoting the values on which European integration is founded and advancing, in Europe and across the world, the cause of democracy and participatory democracy, as well as the role of civil society organisations.

Thanks to the EESC, building Europe is therefore the task not only of the European Union and politicians, but also of members of the public belonging to organisations involved in economic, social, civic and cultural life.

The EESC is made up of 344 Members split into three groups: the “Employers” group, the “Workers” group and the “Various Interests” group, which brings together representatives of various components of organised civil society not covered by the two other groups, that is, bodies representing craftsmen, farmers, SMEs, the professions, consumers in the social economy, family associations and associations promoting the rights of people with disabilities and combating social exclusion, the general interest, etc. The EESC’s membership is not static. It changes with each renewal so as to reflect changes in civil society in the Member States as accurately as possible.

Links between the European Economic and Social Committee and national economic and social councils and similar bodies

The EESC and economic and social councils and similar institutions have in close cooperation built an important network of cooperation and communication at EU level. In the EU’s Member States, this cooperation is based on regular meetings on specific subjects (in particular the Europe 2020 strategy), the exchange of information and the development of a joint website (http://www.eesc.europa.eu/ceslink/).

It also participates actively in the work of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (IAESCSI), which has about 60 member countries.
The Cypriot members of the European Economic and Social Committee

Michalis Antoniou

Assistant Director General, Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation (OEB)
Member of Group I – Employers
Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC)
Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society (TEN)
Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment (NAT)

The Cyprus Presidency coincides with the most turbulent time of the post-war history of Europe. Nevertheless, time of turbulence is also time of opportunity and change. During this period, the EESC should encourage and promote in close co-operation with other EU institutions, the policies necessary to restore growth, reduce unemployment and bring back to Europe a prospect of prosperity for all its citizens.

Dimitris Kittenis

Former Secretary-General of the Cyprus Workers’ Confederation (SEK)
Member of Group II – Workers
Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion (ECO)
Section for External Relations (REX)
Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment (NAT)

Situated at the crossroads between Europe, the Middle East and Africa, Cyprus assumes the EU presidency at a time when the Union itself is at a crossroads. The Cyprus Presidency is called on to help in resolving problems of inequality and solidarity and in urgent decisions to address crises, with a view to reducing unemployment, improving quality of life and furthering European integration.

Kostakis Konstantinidis

President of the Union of Cypriot Farmers (EKA)
Member of Group III – Various Interests
Section for External Relations (REX)
Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC)
Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption (INT)

Throughout the presidency, our objectives and ambitions will entail an endeavour to enhance cooperation and solidarity between the Member States, and also to step up efforts to promote peace, not just in the Mediterranean and Middle East, but also in Europe and the world more widely. We would also like to see better living standards for ordinary people and growth, not just in Europe, but also in non-EU countries.
Michalis Lytras

Secretary-General – Pancyprian Farmers Union (PEK)

Member of Group III – Various Interests
Consultative Commission on Industrial Change – CCMI (CCMI)
Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion (ECO)
Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption (INT)
Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment (NAT)

The Cyprus Presidency will contribute to achieving the objective of social and economic cohesion in the European Union and will work to promote economic growth and overcome the economic crisis, to finalise and adopt the 2014-2020 Common Agricultural Policy, to combat unemployment and to establish peace in Europe and the whole world. I believe this will be a successful and productive presidency.

Andreas Pavlikkas

Head of the Research and Studies Department of the Pancyprian Federation of Labour (PEO)

Member of Group II – Workers
Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC)
Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption (INT)

I would like to think that the presidency of the Republic of Cyprus will be marked by success at every level – both political and organisational. As far as possible our country must contribute to decision-making relating to issues of solidarity between the large and small countries, to strengthening and widening the Community agenda, and to strengthening EU relations with the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries. In addition, Cyprus will have the opportunity to present itself as a country, its strong points and assets, both in Europe and globally, so as to attract investment and tourists.

The procedure for appointing a new Cypriot member was ongoing when this document went to print. The complete list of EESC members can be consulted on our website: http://memberspage.eesc.europa.eu
Focus area of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council July – December 2012 as perceived by the European Economic and Social Committee

1 July 2012 is a landmark date in the modern European history of Cyprus, when for the first time it takes up the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, at a challenging time for the Union. In the light of the sovereign debt crisis and social turmoil in Europe, the Cyprus Presidency will be working “Towards a Better Europe”, highlighting the fundamental principle of solidarity, promoting social cohesion and the underlying objectives of effectiveness and growth in the Union. It is also important for the Union to become more relevant to its citizens and to the world. Bearing in mind the issues inherited from previous presidencies and all the recent developments on the European and international scene, the Cyprus Presidency has set the following priorities.

The Cyprus Presidency will place the emphasis on promoting a more efficient and sustainable Europe, through integrated policies and sustainable development, seeking to achieve more effective governance and addressing the instability and uncertainty caused by the current crisis. During the Cyprus Presidency, the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 will be a priority, seeking to reach a final agreement. The Presidency will also seek to achieve the greatest possible progress on the legislative framework concerning policies such as the Common Agricultural Policy, the Cohesion Policy and Research and Innovation. In pursuit of sustainable development, emphasis will be placed on boosting competitiveness through the development of transport, telecommunications and energy networks, further promoting research and innovation and green growth and re-launching the integrated maritime policy.

Achieving a better performing economy and governance in Europe will also be a great priority for the Cyprus Presidency. In the midst of the most acute financial crisis of recent decades, the Cyprus Presidency will continue the efforts towards enhancing economic governance across the EU and the adoption of the model of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. To this end, the Presidency will aim to focus on the implementation of the new enhanced framework of economic governance, through which the EU and the Member States are expected to deliver high levels of employment, financial stability and growth. Concrete measures will be endorsed to strengthen the financial services framework aiming at greater protection for consumers and investors and preventing excessive risk taking, while enhancing surveillance of the markets and the efficient allocation of resources. The deepening of the internal market, by promoting initiatives of the Single Market Act, will be pursued.

Europe needs to become more relevant to its citizens, by promoting policies which will improve their living conditions and quality of life. Boosting growth and providing job opportunities, especially for young people, as well as ensuring a more secure future for European citizens will be core objectives of the Cyprus Presidency. Youth employment will be at the forefront, with the focus on the need for urgent actions to decrease the rising youth unemployment rates throughout the Union. In this respect, Cyprus will endeavour to promote the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy. Youth employment will be at the forefront, with the focus on the need for urgent actions to decrease the rising youth unemployment rates throughout the Union. In this respect, Cyprus will endeavour to promote the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Following the recent uprisings in neighbouring countries, the Cyprus Presidency will seek to exploit its geographic position and become a geopolitical bridge. By revitalising cooperation with its neighbours, Europe will further enhance its role in the world stage. The Cyprus Presidency will work towards promoting all processes related to enlargement and will also highlight the significance of the EU development goals.
### Some basic facts about Cyprus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official name</th>
<th>Republic of Cyprus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>Lefkosia (Nicosia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface area</td>
<td>9.251 km²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other major cities</td>
<td>Larnaca, Paphos, Limassol, Famagusta,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrenia (the last two are occupied)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official languages</td>
<td>Greek, Turkish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currency</td>
<td>Euro (€)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population, total in 2010</td>
<td>838 897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita in Purchasing Power Standards (EU-27 = 100) in 2010</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP at market prices in millions of euro, forecast for 2012</td>
<td>18 409.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP at market prices per capita in 2010</td>
<td>€24 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate in August 2012</td>
<td>9.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Christian Orthodox, Muslims, Religious Groups: Armenian, Latin and Maronite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Expectancy in 2011</td>
<td>Males 75.04, Females 80.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important Exports</td>
<td>Tourism, textiles, metal products, stone and clay products, cement, citrus fruits, vegetables, potatoes, grapes, halloumi cheese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important Imports</td>
<td>Petroleum, transport equipment and spare parts, raw materials, machinery.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The House of Representatives / Parliament: [http://www.parliament.cy](http://www.parliament.cy)  
Tourism, i.e.:  
Cyprus Tourist Board: [http://www.visitcyprus.com](http://www.visitcyprus.com)  
President

Mr Demetris Christofias

President of the House of Representatives

Mr Yiannakis Omirou

Foreign Affairs Minister

Mrs Erato Kozakou-Markoullis

Deputy Minister to the President for European Affairs

Mr Andreas D. Mavroyiannis

Government:

Since 17 February 2008, the President of the Republic has been Demetris Christofias, who represents the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL), a member party of the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left.

Opposition (in order of number of representatives):

– Democratic Rally (DISY)
– Democratic Party (DIKO)
– Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK)
– European Party (EURO.KO)
– Ecological and Environmental Movement (KOP)

The state

Form: Presidential Republic

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and has long been a crossing point between Europe, Asia and Africa. It is an advanced, high-income economy with a high quality of life. It was a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement until it joined the European Union on 1 May 2004. The Republic of Cyprus joined the Union as a whole, including the 37% of its territory which remains occupied, following the Turkish military intervention in 1974. According to Protocol 10 of the Treaty of Accession of the Republic of Cyprus, the implementation of the acquis communautaire is suspended in those areas of the Republic of Cyprus in which the government of the Republic of Cyprus does not exercise effective control.

The President

The Republic of Cyprus is an independent sovereign Republic with a presidential system. The strict separation of the 3 powers is a clearly visible characteristic of the Cyprus Constitution. The powers, jurisdictions and duties of the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary are specifically defined in separate parts and provisions of the Constitution, leaving no room for overlap.

The President of the Republic is the Head of the State and of the government and is directly elected by universal suffrage and secret ballot for a five-year term. He forms the government by appointing the Ministers and has overall control over their appointment and its termination. The President ratifies and adopts the laws passed by the parliament and the decisions of the Cabinet. He is responsible for the defence and security of the country and also defines the country’s foreign policy.

Under the Constitution, he has the right of return of decisions of the Council of Ministers and the right of return of laws or decisions of the House of Representatives on the Budget. He also has the right of final veto on decisions of the Council of Ministers concerning foreign affairs, defence and security. Furthermore, he has the right of referral and of recourse to the Supreme Court. As the Head of State, he represents the Republic in all its official functions, signs the credentials of diplomatic envoys and of delegations sent to negotiate international treaties, conventions or other agreements.

The House of Representatives (Parliament)

The House of Representatives is made up of 18 parliamentary committees and has 59 members elected for a five-year term, 56 members by proportional representation and 3 observer members representing the Armenian, Latin and Maronite minorities. 24 seats are allocated to the Turkish-Cypriot community but have remained vacant since 1964. In the last elections, on 22 May 2011, the Democratic Rally won the majority of seats in the Parliament.

A general election must be held on the second Sunday of the month immediately preceding the month in which the term of office of the outgoing House expires. The House may dissolve itself by its own decision before its term of office expires. In this event, it must specify the date of the general elections and also the date for the first meeting of the newly elected House.

The President of the House of Representatives is the second highest ranking State official and substitutes the President of the Republic in the event of his temporary absence. The President of the House is elected by the Representatives at the first session of the legislature and is elected for the entire term. He represents the Parliament at various official events and, most importantly, directs and coordinates the discussions during the parliamentary sessions. In the event of absence, the duties of the latter are performed by the eldest Representative, unless the body decides otherwise. Since 2 June 2011, the President of the House has been Yiannakis Omirou, from the Movement of Social Democracy (EDEK).
The Courts

The 1960 Constitution, which established the Republic of Cyprus, largely preserved the English legal system and provided for the existence of both a High Court and a Supreme Constitutional Court. These Courts were made up of Greek, Turkish and neutral judges. This arrangement only lasted until the beginning of 1964 when the neutral presidents vacated their posts without being replaced. In order to resolve this situation, the two highest courts were merged into one, the Supreme Court of Cyprus, which is currently made up of 13 judges and to which the jurisdiction and powers of the two pre-existing courts were transferred. The Turkish Cypriot members of the previous Courts were members of the Supreme Court for a few years, but withdrew later.

The independence of the judiciary in Cyprus is fully respected, both institutionally and operationally. The manner of judicial appointments and the terms of service of its members, the unfettered exercise of their duties and the exercise of disciplinary control over them, are all safeguarded in such a way as to ensure the independence of judges and to exclude the possibility of external influence. The parameters of the exercise of its powers are expressly stated as resolving all disputes between citizens, or between citizens and public bodies or between public bodies themselves.

Following the accession of Cyprus to the European Union in 2004, the Constitution was amended to give European law supremacy over the Constitution and national legislation.

Administrative Divisions

From an administrative point of view, Cyprus is a unique case. The country is divided into 6 regions and has a total of 39 municipalities with their own local administration and reporting to the central government. However, under the Treaty of Establishment of the Republic in 1959-1960, sovereign British base areas were created, which are under a different regime. The United Kingdom wanted to retain sovereignty over two areas, Akrotiri and Dhekelia, because of the strategic location of Cyprus close to the Suez Canal and the Middle East. These bases have their own Court, police and legal system. They are administered by the Commander of British Forces in Cyprus, who is officially appointed by the British monarch.
Programme of events 2012
Conferences, seminars, hearings and extraordinary meetings
2nd half of the year

1. COMMITTEE EVENTS

CROSS-CUTTING INITIATIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conference “Step up for a stronger Europe. Civil society – a full partner in the Europe 2020 Strategy”</td>
<td>Brussels, EESC</td>
<td>25 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraordinary Bureau meeting &amp; Conference</td>
<td>Lefkosia, Cyprus</td>
<td>16 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Society Media Seminar</td>
<td>Cyprus, Cyprus</td>
<td>11-12 October</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GROUP ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extraordinary meeting of the Group II</td>
<td>Cyprus, Cyprus</td>
<td>28 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group II – Presentation study on the economic and social situation in the Baltic countries: Latvia</td>
<td>Date and place to be decided</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group II – Presentation study on the economic and social situation in the Baltic countries: Estonia</td>
<td>Date and place to be decided</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group II – Presentation study on the economic and social situation in the Baltic countries: Lithuania</td>
<td>Date and place to be decided</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraordinary meeting of the Bureau of Group III “Political priorities of the Group and an update on the Work Programme of the Categories”</td>
<td>Tbc, 18 July</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraordinary meeting of Group III “Social Enterprises”</td>
<td>Brussels, Cyprus</td>
<td>8 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraordinary meeting of the Bureau of Group III</td>
<td>Cyprus, Cyprus</td>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraordinary meeting of the Bureau of Group III “Anticipating the mid-term renewal in 2013”</td>
<td>Brussels, Cyprus</td>
<td>17 December</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SECTION ACTIVITIES

SINGLE MARKET, PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extraordinary meeting of the Single Market, Production And Consumption Section Bureau</td>
<td>Nicosia, Cyprus</td>
<td>18 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public hearing and meeting of the Single Market Observatory</td>
<td>Nicosia, Cyprus</td>
<td>19 October</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TRANSPORT, ENERGY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

Conference of the ELISAN Network on energy poverty (partnership)  
Brussels, 27 November

Annual conference of GDF-Suez observatory on energy and water poverty (partnership)  
Brussels, 28 November

Conference on Social Housing – follow-up of the own-initiative opinion on  
“Issues with defining social housing as a service of general economic interest”  
Brussels, October

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND CITIZENSHIP

Hearing organised by the EESC Coordination Group  
“European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between generations 2012”  
Brussels, 11 September

Conference jointly organised by the Labour Market Observatory and the Portuguese Commerce and Services Confederation on labour market reforms in response to the crisis  
Lisbon, October (to be decided)

8th meeting of European Integration Forum (in cooperation with the European Commission)  
Brussels, November-December (to be decided)

Conference organised by the Labour Market Observatory on inclusive labour markets  
Brussels, 6 November

Hearing organised by the EESC Coordination Group  
“European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between generations 2012”  
Brussels, 3 December

CONSULTATIVE COMMISSION FOR INDUSTRIAL CHANGES

Conference on Cooperatives  
Brussels, October

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

ACP-EU Regional Seminar  
Dominican Republic, 4-6 July

Meeting with the Mercosur Economic and Social consultative Forum  
Buenos Aires, 10-11 September

EESC Session during the WTO Public Forum  
24-26 September (tbc)

1st meeting of the EU-Montenegro civil society Joint Consultative Committee  
Brussels, 27 September (tbc)

EU-Japan Symposium on ageing societies  
Tokyo, 18 October

7th meeting of the EU-The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia civil society Joint Consultative Committee  
Brussels, 23 October (tbc)

Support in the organisation of the Communication Group’s Media Seminar on “Freedom of the Media in the Euromed Region”  
Cyprus, 11-12 October 2012

Euromed Summit  
Jordan, 29-31 October

4th Western Balkans Civil Society Forum  
Croatia, 29-30 November
Study visit of the Ukrainian civil society

EU-China Round Table Vienna, 22-23 October

2nd meeting of the Domestic Advisory Group under the EU-Korea FTA Brussels, November (tbc)

7th Meeting of EU-Latin America civil society organisations Santiago de Chile, 4-6 December

31st meeting of the EU-Turkey Joint Consultative Committee Ankara, 17-18 December (tbc)

Meeting of the EU-Cariforum Consultative Committee Brussels, December (tbc)

Meeting of the Bureau of the EEA Consultative Committee Brussels, December (tbc)

7th meeting of the EU-Brazil Round Table Brussels, Date to be confirmed

12th meeting of the EU-Croatia civil society Joint Consultative Committee, co-organised by the EESC and Croatia Croatia, Date to be confirmed

Meeting of the EU – Iceland Joint Consultative Committee To be confirmed

Meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Committee of the EEA To be confirmed

2. COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION IN OTHER EVENTS

SECTION ACTIVITIES

ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COHESION

Open Days 2012 of the Committee of the Regions “Europe’s region as and cities: Making a difference” Brussels, 8-11 October

Informal Council of Ministers meeting for Cohesion policy and Territorial Cooperation Cyprus, date to be determined

TRANSPORT, ENERGY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

e-Health Symposium (in collaboration with EHTEL) – possible interest by the Cyprus Presidency Brussels, early December

CONSULTATIVE COMMISSION FOR INDUSTRIAL CHANGES

Round Table of the EP, EC and EESC:
“Defining guidelines for a European sustainable and competitive wood industry” Brussels, 4 October

Conference on Land defence industry co-organised with EMF Brussels, 8 November

European Coal Days co-organised with Euracoal Brussels, 14 November
AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT

EUROSOIL 2012: Workshop 13.1
Raising awareness of soils – The objectives and the work of the European Soil Bureau Network  Bari, 2-6 July

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Participation of a delegation of the ACP-EU Follow-up Committee to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly  Surinam (tbc), 24-28 November

EuroLat Joint Parliamentary Assembly  Santiago de Chile, 19-21 December

Meeting of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) Platform on Democracy and Good Governance  Brussels, 7 July

Meeting of the EaP Working Group on Economic Convergence  Brussels, 9 July

4th Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum  Stockholm, 29-30 November (tbc)

Tresmed 4 Closing Conference  Brussels, 22-23 November

For more information on the work of the Committee’s sections, please consult our website:

www.eesc.europa.eu
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The website of the Council of the European Union (www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/index.htm) provides a great deal of information about the Council and its ongoing activities.

The website of the European Parliament (www.europarl.europa.eu/) similarly provides a large amount of information about the Parliament and its ongoing activities.

The Europa website of the European Union (http://europa.eu/), which is managed by the European Commission, provides a vast amount of information about the European Union’s activities. It contains a number of interactive pages specifically designed to provide a more interactive service for the European Union citizen.

If you have any questions about the European Union or its activities, please send an email to the Europe Direct service on www.europa.eu/europedirect/ or call the following free number: 00 800 67 89 10 11.