**Editorial**

Mr János TÓTH  
President of the TEN Section  
President of the Hungarian National Economic and Social Council - NESC

"Wearing two hats! How to balance and combine national & European roles and responsibilities"

Building of a common Europe, subsidiarity: fostering peaceful collaboration in the interest of a better future by leaving the dead-end streets of history behind. These features characterize the European Union from the very first initiation of the common market up to the present preparation of the Reform Treaty. Every player of organised civil society and the organisations established by them: have outstanding significance in the realization of these goals. On the 23rd November 2007 the European National Economic and Social Councils (ESCs) and the Presidents and Secretaries-General of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) will hold a meeting in Budapest, Hungary, at the invitation of the Hungarian ESC. Decisions will be adopted on two highly important issues. The first one is the structured cooperation and networking of the national ESCs. The second one is the statement of the Presidents and Secretaries-General on the human aspects of the innovation. Both topics have priority in the work of the EESC. That is why I deem it a great honour to play an active role, as President of the Hungarian national ESC, in the preparation and implementation of these objectives. This co-operation has a strong history and we share common results. These results comprise among others the common organisation of the international conference presenting the synthesis report of the mid-term evaluation of the Lisbon Strategy in March 2005, as well as the launching of the series of regional civil society stakeholder forums. It is intended that the Hungarian ESC will also have the honour to be the host of the satellite meeting of Group III in June 2008 and the forum series will continue. The TEN Section of the EESC – of which I am currently President - offers with the scope of its remit an optimal framework for the joint management and assessment of policy areas such as energy, public transport, infrastructure, information society and services of general interest. I am convinced that the synergies given here with the actual valid sphere of activity is giving and will assure maximum added value to the benefit of the EESC members and our institution. There is also good opportunity to cooperate with national ESCs. The good example is the high level conference which will take place in Paris on the 10th of December 2007 on the Commission proposal on "Urban Mobility", jointly organised by the French ESC, the EESC TEN section and the Commission, with the support of Vice-President Jacques Barrot, in charge for transport and transport infrastructure. The TEN section also offers a particularly good opportunity to monitor and reinforce key aspects of consumers’ and environmental policy as well as sustainable development. I always keep in mind these issues in connection with the work of the section. In this field, I consider it a significant achievement that following my proposal the EESC Bureau adopted a decision to initiate an EU interinstitutional energy and climate change platform. This will contribute on an ongoing basis high level to the activity of the organised civil society. As a citizen of the EU, President of the TEN Section and President of the Hungarian ESC I expect currently that the Reform Treaty will reinforce the role of the EESC and we will continue to develop participative democracy in cooperation with the national ESCs and all the other relevant stakeholders of the organised civil society, even more efficiently.

**EUROPE III – This year is very significant in the history of EDF: its 10 year anniversary. Could you outline the most important EDF achievements during these 10 years?**

"Apart from the establishment of a strong and united disability movement, definitely a key result has been the inclusion of disability in the Treaties in 1997 with article 13 on non discrimination. In order to achieve that we had to bring disabled people from all over Europe in the streets of Amsterdam and Rotterdam! This was followed by articles on non discrimination and right to measures to achieve social inclusion for disabled people in the Charter of fundamental rights, and a first directive fighting discrimination in access to employment including for disabled people. Urban buses are now gradually been made accessible thanks to provisions that EDF managed to obtain in a EU directive, and accessibility requirements are included in main public funding rules: the public procurement directives, and the regulations for structural funds. EDF also managed to obtain a European year of people with disabilities in 2003 following a campaign initiated in 1999. That year has brought much changes also at national level in a majority of EU countries. Last but not least we obtained last year the first EU specific legislation for disabled people when travelling by air, fighting discrimination and providing rules for assistance. Finally EDF and its members were actively involved in the drafting of the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, and in obtaining its signing (and soon ratification) by member States and the European Commission."

**EUROPE III – The slogan of EDF is "Nothing about us without us"! How is this slogan implemented in the work of your organisation – by involving people with disabilities both – in governing bodies and also in everyday work of secretariat – to show good practice to other employers in EU?**

"In EDF disabled people and parents of disabled people unable to represent themselves constitute a two third majority of our elected bodies, and also must be a majority in our full member associations. The President and Executive Committee members must be either disabled or parents. Within our own staff we have a pro-active approach in the employment of persons with disabilities. Our staff is in addition at the service of our members and implements decisions taken by the leaders from the disability movement."
EUROPE III – Gender inequality in the social area and the labour market is a serious problem for European society as a whole, for both women and men, male and female workers, governments, the social partners and civil society. The EESC believes that the time has come to give a boost to equality policies and important part of this policy development should be women with disabilities. What is involvement of EDF in development of such kind of policy?

“IT is a key issue also for EDF, as disabled women and girls face greater exclusion and discrimination than men with disabilities. We are also looking at the situation of mothers with disabled children. EDF has a very active committee of women with disabilities and we are a member of the European Women’s Lobby. Through our committee EDF is trying to influence the statements of the European institutions to take into account the perspective of women with disabilities included in a Manifesto which was published a few years ago. We welcome the approach which has been taken by the EESC.”

EUROPE III – EDF is one of the EESC Liaison Group members. This group is intermediary between the EU institutions and image of the disability movement, fighting for their civil rights, and for political change. Through the campaign EDF has also reached individual citizens, who until now had felt isolated in their struggle. Through this campaign we have managed to show that citizens across Europe are behind a legislative action of the European Union to fight discrimination of disabled people in all areas of life.

EUROPE III – In some recent EESC opinions the Committee indicated that firmly believes that a proposal for a disability directive must be submitted with all possible speed. What is your position regarding this new directive? Do you think it could make significant changes in lives of people with disabilities in EU countries?

“This legislation is really at the same time a dream and a key objective of the disability movement. It will bring a new perception of disabled people in Europe at all levels, and will contribute to dismantle barriers that people disabled in their daily life on solving problems to simply shop, use transport, get a job, or to the cinema or restaurant like everyone else. However the way the legislation will be drafted and sanctions attached will be key for its implementation.”

Mr Mauro CAMPI (IT) is the Rapporteur for the opinion on: “Geographical indications and designations” – NAT/372. The other Group III members are: Mr Horst COUPEAU (FR), Mrs Armanda KRAUZE (LV) and Mr Nikolas LIOULOS (EL).

Mr Gábor SÁBO SÁRAHÁRRAGURUS is the Rapporteur for the own-initiative opinion on: “Right-based management tools in fisheries” – NAT/173. The other Group III members are: Mr Seppo KALLIO (FI), Mr Konstanci CONSTANTINIDES (CY) and Mr Francesco SILVA (IT).

Mr Gilbert BROS (FR) is the Rapporteur, working alone, for the additional own-initiative opinion on: “Future agriculture in areas with specific natural landscapes (upland, island and coastal areas)” – NAT/174.

Mr Leif NILSSON (DK) is the Rapporteur for the opinions on: “Community Animal Health Policy (2007-2013)” – NAT/176. The other Group III members are: Mr Herko COUPEAU (FR) and Mr Nikolas LIOULOS (EL).

Ms Susa GRÁFIN at EULENburg (DE), Mr Krzysztof PATER (PL) and Mrs Ingrid KÖSSLER (SE) will chair the study group for the own-initiative opinion on: “Natural disasters”.

Mr Corrado ROSSETTO (IT) will chair the study group for the own-initiative opinion of the Consultative Committee on Industrial Change (CCMI) on: “The European semiconductor industry: current situation and prospects.” The other Group III members are: Mr Stylianos STAIKOS (EL).

Mr Claudia CAPPELLINI (IT) will chair the study group for the own-initiative opinion of the Consultative Committee on Industrial Change (CCMI) on: “Developments in the retail industry and impact on suppliers and consumers.” The other Group III member is: Mrs Christine FAES (BE).

Mr Zbigniew KOTYCHOWSKI (PL) will sit on the drafting group for the opinion on: “Enhancement of quality in higher education” – SOC/286. The other Group III members are: Mr Marek CIETYNSKI (PL), Mr Janusz SZAJKO (PL), Mr Franek KUSZCZYK (PL) and Mr Vitali GORBUNOV (BY).

Mr Pavel TRANTINA (CZ) is the Rapporteur for the own-initiative opinion on: “Elements for the structure, organisation and functioning of a platform for the greater involvement of civil society in the promotion of integration policies of third country nationals in the EU level” – SOC/287. The other Group III members are: Mrs Soscha GRÄFIN zu EULENburg (DE), Mrs María HerCZOG (HU) and Mr Jaroslav NÉMEC (CZ).

Mr Jan OLSINOV (SV) will chair the study group for the opinion on: “Ponising of workers in the framework of the provisions of services” – SOC/288. The other Group III members are: Mr Grez ATTARD (MT), Mr Eugen LUCAN (RO), Mrs Marzina MENDIZÁBA dROZDZ (PL) and Mr Márius RAUNEMAA (FI).

Mr Mario CAMPLI (IT) will chair the study group for the own-initiative opinion on: “Involvement of disabled people by being the ambassador of the principle ‘Everyone is equal’” – SOC/289. The other Group III members are: Mrs Ingrid KÖSSLER (SE), Mrs Mária HERCZOG (HU) and Mrs Zdenka ZEHELOVA (SK).

Mr Luca JAHIER (IT) will chair the study group for the explanatory opinion on: “Elements for the structure, organisation and functioning of a platform for the greater involvement of civil society in the promotion of integration policies of third country nationals in the EU level” – SOC/287. The other Group III members are: Mrs Soscha GRÄFIN zu EULENburg (DE), Mrs María HerCZOG (HU), Mr Eugen LUCAN (RO), Mrs Marzina MENDIZÁBA dROZDZ (PL) and Mr Yurius STÖHR (DE).

Mr Eystein PICHENOT (FR) will chair the study group for the opinion on: “More and better jobs through flexibility and security” – SOC/288. The other Group III members are: Mr Grez ATTARD (MT), Mr Eugen LUCAN (RO), Mrs Marzina MENDIZÁBA dROZDZ (PL), Mr Corrado ROSSETTO (IT) and Mrs Petko RAUNEMAA (FI).

Mr Media JOOST (EE) will chair the study group for the opinion on: “Enhancement of quality in higher education” – SOC/286. The other Group III members are: Mr Marek CIETYNSKI (PL), Mr Janusz SZAJKO (PL), Mr Franek KUSZCZYK (PL) and Mr Vitali GORBUNOV (BY).

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Mr Jan OLSSON (SV)  
Report on: 'Social Sweden and Social Europe: complimentary or contradictory?'  
Stockholm – 3 September 2007

Dorte Sorensen has labour and welfare minister in Denmark but is in the process of being kicked out. It is not clear what EESC's role in Finland is. Are they helping each other?

For more information please see EESC Press Release N° 07/2007

Ref: For more information please see EESC Press Release N° 07/2007

Mr Paolo GROGNI (IT)  
News from the:  

Mr Roberto CONFINANELLI (IT)  
President of the follow-up Committee 'Employed' and member of Group III, headed a delegation of the European Economic and Social Committee and that visited Jordan on 5-6 September and Egypt from 7 to 11 September. During his visit to Jordan, Mr. Confinaelli said he was pleased to meet with representatives of business and industry for their important role in economic life. He added that the aim of the delegation's visit to Jordan is to get acquainted with Jordan's experience in the establishment of the Economic and Social Council, to know the role of the social partners in Jordan, especially the unions. He witnessed a great economic boom, to learn about the role of chambers of commerce and industry and the level of their cooperation with the EU programmes and to learn about what the chambers are doing in the process of developing the local plans and the role of civil society organisations in developing these plans for the development of the community. He pointed out that what is important to the EU is that there should be a role for civil society organisations in activating any agreements with the EU so that the people are involved in those agreements, stressing the importance of the role of chambers of commerce and industry in achieving the Barcelona Declaration agreements. "We know that the importance of the role of the chambers as the Jordanian government is keen on listening to their views and proposals." It is important, however, that the have a role in engaging in the plans and projects and in implementing, administration and follow-up of the plans and development of the projects." He invited the Jordanian side to visit Brussels for cooperation and view all the important elements that could benefit the Jordanian side in the social and economic area and indicating that the annual EuroMed Summit of Economic and Social Councils will be held in Athens 14-16 October next year, stressing the importance of Jordania's participation in this important summit. He said: "we are here to offer you our assistance and stress the importance of the role of the chambers in the social fabric and opening dialogue between the chambers and the smaller civil society organisations that do not have the same leverage and weight as the chambers of commerce and industry. Therefore, the Economic and Social Council must be the umbrella for all other institutions, and we will provide all the support required of it." He said that the European delegation met during its visit to the Kingdom with His Majesty King Abdullah II, who committed all the support and assistance offered by the EU to Jordan in support of the establishment of the Economic and Social Council in Jordan.

On the Egyptian leg of the visit, the delegation met with senior government and parliamentary officials, leading Egyptian civil society representatives, the business community, the trade union federation, NGOs and academia. The purpose of the visit was to explore and encourage the creation of a dialogue between employers, chambers of commerce, trade unions, and civil society (farmers, consumer groups, other NGOs), similar to the model which has proved effective in the European Union, committees are being gradually developed among Euro-Mediterranean partners. Professor Confinaelli stated: "Egypt is a closed and valued partner of the European Union. The response from our contacts in Alexandria and Cairo, assisted by the Alexandria Library and other organisations, has been tremendous. I believe employers, workers and civil society groups in Egypt will work to create a dialogue according to their own needs, and the Economic and Social Committee and migrant workers, as well as the development of contacts and co-operation between Egyptian and European civil society organisations.

Mr Nikos ARABAS (EL)  
"Our Europe–Our Debate–Our Contribution" a 5-country international World Assembly  
"European Union to the interested citizens and handing over certificates of participation in political life.”

It is indicated that the annual EuroMed Summit of Economic and Social Councils must be the umbrella for all other institutions, and similar institutions to be held in Athens on 15 and 16 October. This will pave the way for the further involvement of Egyptian civil society in Euro-Mediterranean activities, and to the development of contacts and co-operation between Egyptian and European civil society organisations.

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This proposal falls under the programme “better regulation” and aims to ensure consistency with the new rules of public services in road and rail transport. The Commission envisages proposing an optional regulation that would define the legal system for a range of services provided in the form of a network across several Member States, ensuring their transparency and respect for users’ rights. The current proposal is intended to ensure that undertakings which operate in several Member States are subject to the same legal rules and, as a result, that the measures taken by the Member States to ensure the proper functioning of the market are harmonised.

In this context, the Committee welcomes the proposal for a detailed set of technical and legal recommendations for defining the objectives and scope of the measure, as well as the collection of comparative data in order to ensure that the measure is accompanied by an initiative on the transparency of bank accounts, on the obligations to provide information and on data protection rules.

The Committee agrees with the Commission that, should the introduction of such a measure be deemed absolutely necessary, the appropriate instrument would be an optional regulation for freezing a debtor’s bank accounts in Member States other than the one in which the creditor lives or where his business is based.

Lastly, in order fully to comply with the Commission’s request for an opinion, the Committee puts forward a detailed set of technical and legal recommendations for defining the objective and subjective scope of the measure, and that the translations of the Commission document into some languages are particularly unreliable.

At its plenary session on 26-27 September 2007 the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted the following opinions for which Group III was responsible:

Mr Jorge PEDEGA (ES) – PT/74 “Green Paper on Improving the efficiency of the enforcement of anti-trust law and the attachment of bank accounts” (EESC opinions 1257/07)

The Committee begins by stating that some important conceptual issues need to be clarified in the interpretation of the measure and that the translations of the Commission document into some languages are particularly unreliable.

The proposal falls under the programme “better regulation” and is in conformity with the commitment taken by the Commission to simplify and update the acquis. A particular attention was given to simplification and to greater coherence of the rules on public services and the other rules on road transport, in particular under the programme “better regulation” and safety by a stricter monitoring of undertakings which operate in several Member States and ensure consistency with the new rules of public services in road and rail transport.

In this opinion, the EESC broadly welcomes the proposal for a regulation. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned to avoid any form of regulation which is discordant with the principles of public services and which, by starting from a restrictive approach, would lead to the introduction of administrative burdens on both Member States and the parties concerned.

The EESC believes that the European Commission’s definition of “third-country” is too vague, because it could potentially apply to any individual. The Committee therefore suggests that the definition contain two parts, namely that it also needs to be expanded, because it does not consider the need for such a measure to be sufficiently proven in terms of subsidiarity and proportionality: an equivalent measure could perhaps be satisfactorily achieved simply by altering two provisions of the Brussels Regulation. If the envisaged measure is adopted, the Committee suggests that its scope should be limited to a definite list of undertakings and, with any necessary change, attachment of an enforcement order should be limited to those cases which can be achieved, except in certain exceptional cases, with the powers already existing under the law and relevant to the case, and the measures should be accompanied by an initiative on the transparency of bank accounts, on the obligations to provide information and on data protection rules.

The EESC believes that the proposed measures are necessary and that a strict approach is necessary. The Committee is concerned to avoid any form of regulation which is discordant with the principles of public services and which, by starting from a restrictive approach, would lead to the introduction of administrative burdens on both Member States and the parties concerned.

In conclusion, the EESC is pleased to note that the proposal concerned is an important step in the environmental policy activities and that it could provide the needed data to apply an environmental approach to fisheries management.

Mr Frank ALLEN (IE) – TIN/162 “Opinion on access for the market to coach and bus services” (EESC opinions 1287/07)

The directive introduces minimum quality standards which must be met in order to enter the profession, while the two regulations liberalised international/long distance passenger services and established other special conditions for international and intermodal passenger transport services by road.

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Mr Gabriel SARRO (IT/47) “PARRAGUERE (ES) – NET/964 “Proposal for a directive on the use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the monitoring of the state of the fishery” (EESC opinions 1253/07)

Mr Druker [BONEC (CZ)] – N7/565 “The prohibition on the use of smoking devises containing certain substances having a toxic or malignant effect is not an interference with personal rights” (EESC opinions 1251/07)

Mr Vladimir KOSECKI (HR) – JNA/74 “Protection of animals under the EU animal protection law” (EESC opinions 1253/07)

Mr Horst COUPPEAUX (FR) – NAT/163 “Pharmacologically active substances in foodstuffs of animal origin” (EESC opinions 1287/07)

Mr Andrej PETERLAK (SK) – JST/150 “Monitoring and control of help given to the fishery, direct aids and public support” (EESC opinions 1287/07)

Mr Luc Lescouer ROUS (FR) – SOC/221 “Patients’ Rights” (EESC opinion 1251/07)

Mr Horst COUPPEAUX (FR) – NAT/163 “Pharmacologically active substances in foodstuffs of animal origin” (EESC opinions 1287/07)

Mr Srihadi SOEDispersi – JST/149 “Monitoring and control of help given to the fishery, direct aids and public support” (EESC opinions 1287/07)