Editorial

A message from Staffan Nilsson, President of Group III

Dear reader,

Now darkness is descending on us as the days get shorter and Autumn gives way to Winter. In this part of Europe we may be used to chilly rather than harsh winters, and to rain rather than snow. But the days are shorter and the sun’s rays are weaker. Soon, in December the earth’s axis will again begin to turn towards the sun; on 21 December my stretched-out country has its shortest day. We are already looking forward to the Spring that awaits us.

A time comes when we can reflect on what has happened during the year, and it is impossible to ignore what has swept over us in a global economy, with many people facing unemployment and shrinking resources as a result of reckless short-sightedness. It is individuals and families in civil society that are hit, and we have not yet seen the full effects.

New Year still means that we must also ask ourselves what next year will bring, what challenges we are facing and what action we can take.

I would like to thank Group III for having chosen me to continue as Group President.

It is a challenge in itself to try and steer and develop the group’s collective expertise and influence, while respecting the individual interests of each member. It is never easy, but I am very happy to be doing it. I also sense great solidarity and shared interests within the group, even though we represent all sectors. I think this is our strength: that we can meet among consumers, producers, SMEs, social stakeholders, the voluntary sector and other groupings. This is what gives Group III its dynamism in the EESC.

But we represent only one part of civil society. Within the EESC we meet both employers and employees. But without contacts and meetings with all the other groups in the European integration movement, we would be more isolated. This still means that in the EESC we must be able to develop and find models and meeting-places where our work, and our cooperation, can produce added value for everyone. This is a challenge which we must take up.

I wish all of you members, all of you that we work together with and all of us who may read our newsletter a Happy New Year 2009, with cooperation and mutual exchange, in this last newsletter of 2008.

Interview of the month

What do you know about the European Movement International? What role does it play in the context of European civil society?

The European Movement is a civil society organisation which informs and mobilises the citizens of Europe and influences decision making at all levels of European society. Its principal aim is to “contribute to the establishment of a united, federal Europe founded on the principles of peace, democracy, liberty, solidarity, and respect for basic human rights”. It is an international organisation open to all political, economic, social and cultural trends in civil society. Its 43 national councils and 21 International Member Associations work towards bringing together representatives from European associations, political parties, enterprises, trade unions and individual lobbyists.

EUROPE III – Welcome to our Group III Newsletter, can you tell our readers, in a nutshell, what does the European Movement do?

Since its foundation in 1948 the European Movement has been the driving force of European unification. The main principles of the structure of the European Union as it functions today (sharing sovereignty rights, a supranational body (the Commission), the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice) were based on the resolutions of the Congress of Europe in 1984.

Today the European Movement is continuing to lobby for a more efficient and democratic federal Union.

EUROPE III – Does the European Movement promote a (con) federal Europe?

In fine we believe that a federal Europe will be the most democratic and efficient model for the European Union.

EUROPE III – How do we make Europe ‘more real’ to the average citizen?

Europe as it works influences our daily life already in many fields; yet citizens in general are hardly aware of it. That is why we all should become more active in informing the European citizens. It can’t be the task of the European institutions alone. Information about the Union should start at school, at municipality level, regional level and last but not least, at national level with an active involvement of the different ministers who are regularly deciding EU law together with their colleagues from the other Member States.

EUROPE III – Almost all EU Member States have ratified the Lisbon Treaty. Do you have any advice for Ireland?

Ireland will certainly have to decide again on the Lisbon Treaty. A second referendum is unavoidable.

For more information on the European Movement please visit: www.europeanmovement.eu www.whataseuropeandone.eu
In the morning the Category held a presentation on working towards a legally binding principle for the Community. As a conclusion of the meeting, Group III member and spokesperson for the category, Mr. Corrado Rossitto (IT) of the Group III dimension in Baltic Civil Society development, provided information on the situation in their respective Member States. Mr. Rossitto, Group III member, presented the conclusions of the debate and mentioned the importance of cooperation between the EESC and the national bodies in the Member States. The EESC President sent a letter to the European Council outlining the works of the EESC on the Small Business Act.

More information on the work of the categories can be found on our website, by contacting the spokespersons of the categories, or the Secretariat of Group III at: g3r@eesc.europa.eu.
The draft programme for the event is available at: http://www.eesc.europa.eu/groups/3/index_en.asp?id=011GR03EN

Mr Gerd WOLF (DE) is the Rapporteur for the opinion on: “A strategic European framework for international science and technology cooperation” - INT/461. The other Group III members of the study group are: Mr Zbigniew KOTOWSKI (PL) and Mr Zenonas Rokus Rudzikas (LT).

The Group III members of the study group for the opinion on: “Banks affiliated to central institutions, certain own funds items, large exposures, supervisory arrangements, and crisis management – amendment” - INT/462 are: Mr Martin CHREN (SK), Mr Chantalambos KOKLOTORONIS (CY), Mr Francescino SILVA (PT) and Mr Dick WESTENDORP (NL).

Mr Bernardo HERNÁNDEZ BATTLE (ES) is the Rapporteur for the opinion on: “Consumer rights” - INT/464. The other Group III members of the study group are: Mr Martin CHREN (SK), Mrs Elisiberta SZADZINSKA (PL), Mr Angelo GRASSO (IT) and Mrs Pirikko RAUNEMAA (FI).

Mr Sylwian STAIKOS (ES) will chair the study group for the opinion on: “Electronic money” – INT/465. The other Group III members of the study group are: Mrs Reine Claude MADER – SAUSSAYE (FR) and Mr Rada NICIOSEVICI (RO).

Mr Panagiotis GKOFAIS (EL) will chair the study group for the opinion on: “Reancing on public III—the telephonenumber network” - TEN/360. The other Group III members of the study group are: Mr Bernardo HERNÁNDEZ BATTLE (ES) and Mr Dick WESTENDORP (NL).

Mr Benedicte FEDERSPIEL (DK), Mr Jorge PEGADO LIZ (PT) and Mrs Pirikko RAUNEMAA (FI).

Mr Alejo RE Auch i NOLASCO (ES) will chair the study group for the opinion on: “Comoridor border payments” - INT/466. The other Group III members of the study group are: Mrs Reine Claude MADER – SAUSSAYE (FR) and Mr Rada NICIOSEVICI (RO).

Mr Bernardo HERNÁNDEZ BATTLE (ES) is the Rapporteur for the opinion on: “Strategy for the internalisation of external costs” - TEN/357 are Mr Frank ALLEN (IE), Mr Martin CHREN (SK), Mr Corrado ROSSITTO (IT) and Mr Algiedas DUIPIŠNINKAS (LT).

The Group III members of the study group for the opinion on: “Strategic for the internalisation of external costs” - TEN/357 are Mr Frank ALLEN (IE), Mr Martin CHREN (SK), Mr Corrado ROSSITTO (IT) and Mr Algiedas DUIPIŠNINKAS (LT).

Mr Petroc CONFALONIERI (IT) will chair the study group for the opinion on: “A European Strategic for the Marine and Maritime Research” - TEN/362. The other Group III members of the study group are: Mr Gabriel SARRO IPARRAGUIRRE (ES) and Mr Gerd WOLF (DE).

Mr Jorge PEGADO LIZ (PT) is the Group III number of the drafting group for the opinion on: “Communication on future networks and the internet” - TEN/363.

Mr Lavinia ANDREI (RO) will chair the study group for the exploratory opinion on: “Education and training needs for the carbon-free energy society” - TEN/364. The other Group III members of the study group are: Mr Vladimir BÁLES (SK), Mr Derek OSBORNE (UK) and Mr Lara RIBBE (DE).

Mr Nikolao IOLOJOS (EL) will chair the study group for the exploratory opinion on: “The Greening of Maritime Transport and inland Waterway Transport” – TEN/365. The other Group III members of the study group are: Mr Roberto CONFALONIERI (IT), Mr Hubert PETERSEN (DE) and Mr Carlos PEREIRA MARTINS (PT).

Mr Derek OSBORNE (UK) is the Rapporteur for the exploratory opinion on: “Integrating transport and land use policies for more efficient city transport” - TEN/366. The other Group III members of the study group are: Mr Roberto CONFALONIERI (IT), Mr Hervé COUPEAU (FR) and Mrs Krasztof KAMIENIECKI (PL).

Mr Frank ALLEN (IE) is the Rapporteur for the opinion on: “Protection of animals at the time of killing” – NAT/421. The other Group III members of the study group are: Mrs Grace ATTARD (MT), Mrs Teresa COSTA MACEDO (PT), Mrs Mária HERCZOG (HU) and Mr Eugen LUCAN (RO).

Mrs Mária HERCZOG (HU) is the Rapporteur for the opinion on: “Improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding” - SOC/329. The other Group III members of the study group are: Mrs Grace ATTARD (MT), Mrs Teresa COSTA MACEDO (PT) and Mr Eugen LUCAN (RO).

Mr Luca JAHIER (IT) is the Co-Rapporteur for the opinion on: “Regional integration for development in ACP countries” - REX/266. The other Group III members of the study group are: Mrs Teresa COSTA MACEDO (PT), Mr Lutz RIBBE (DE), Mr Janos NEMEC (CZ), Mrs Inger PERSSON (SE) and Mr Yves SOMVILLE (BE).

If you have any enquiries or questions regarding the above please do not hesitate to contact the Group Secretariat at gc3@eesc.europa.eu.
In this own-initiative opinion the Committee states that issues such as, climate change, demographic changes, globalization, and commodity price uncertainty will lead to far-reaching economic and social changes in Europe. The impact on living standards and competitiveness in Europe depends largely on whether the right measures are taken in good time. The need to find innovative ways to meet new challenges stems from the success of the European catch-up process in many areas. A sustained increase in resources for the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy is therefore proposed. Increased cooperation among Member States in designing and implementing measures can also increase effectiveness. In order to support this process, a share of the additional resources should be put aside specifically for the development of cooperation programmes between the European Union and Member States. For the reasons set out above, the CAP must be further stepped up in future as an incentive for Member States to pursue complementary strategies.

The Committee also emphasises that the EU must make efforts to provide support in this way support the basic conditions for food supply. The EESC also recommends that the EU must make efforts to provide support in this way support the basic conditions for food supply. The Committee recommends a structure in the form of an observant European network, whose aim will be to develop and share knowledge about the existence, nature, content, arrangements, lessons learned, and results of the experiments conducted in the EU’s Member States. This structure should bring together a diverse range of stake- holders: research organisations, joint project partners (political, economic and social partners, etc.), It is important for the EU to be the driving force behind the implementation of such a network. This role should be placed under the auspices of the Commission. If so invited, the European Commission has the task of creating the project, given its role as a “bridge” to ‘organised civil society’, within the limits of its capabilities.

In this own-initiative opinion, the EESC highlights the fact that a following number of serious food crises, the European Union has implemented its sophisticated safety mechanism, aimed at ensuring a high level of consumer health protection and of animal and plant health. Against a background of increased global trade in farm and food produce, however, threats to health are on the rise and health crises linked to imports remain common in the EU. These crises jeopardise human, animal and plant health and entail substantial costs for society as a whole. The Committee considers that the system of traceability, which underpins the European Union’s food model and provides information on foodstuffs “from farm to table”, should also apply to products from third countries. This issue should be a priority in bilateral negotiations and in international trade relations. The Committee wishes to draw attention to the difficulties faced by producers from the least developed countries in applying European health standards. In this own-initiative opinion, the EESC calls on the Community institutions to prepare a Community initiative for an in-depth debate on the need to establish policy guidelines for services of general interest and a new European framework enabling them to be set up properly (e.g. as regards telemedicine, professional ethics and data confidentiality). A consultative forum tasked with setting up the necessary institutional arrangements to meet the objectives to be set need to be established. This could contribute to global and to Public Global Action on trade negotiations. Such a forum should take place on key aspects for the future with a view to global governance of such assets. At the Community level, a European action programme should be established, setting out the arrangements for funding these assets.

In this own-initiative opinion, the Committee calls on the Community to ensure that animal-by-products as fuel is not considered as disposal of waste under the proposal, and should therefore be excluded. In order to ensure the use of animal-by-products as fuel is not considered as disposal of waste under the proposal, and should therefore be excluded. In order to promote more innovative social innovation in the field of cohesion and social inclusion. To this end, it is essential to promote a better understanding of the reality of the situation in the EU’s 27 Member States. The Committee recommends creating a structure in the form of an observant European network, whose aim will be to develop and share knowledge about the existence, nature, content, arrangements, lessons learned, and results of the experiments conducted in the EU’s Member States. This structure should bring together a diverse range of stakeholders: research organisations, joint project partners (political, economic and social partners, etc.). It is important for the EU to be the driving force behind the implementation of such a network. This role should be placed under the auspices of the Commission. If so invited, the European Commission has the task of creating the project, given its role as a “bridge” to ‘organised civil society’, within the limits of its capabilities.

In this own-initiative opinion, the EESC supports the development and implementation of an European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF) (EESC opinion 1676/08).

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