



*European Economic and Social Committee*

## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP WITH A HUMAN FACE**

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**SPEECH**

given by

**Mr Dimitriadis**

President of the European Economic and Social Committee

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Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank you most warmly for the great honour of entrusting me with the presidency of our Committee.

I am absolutely convinced that with your practical support and assistance I will be able to help identify and promote the institutional and social role of the Committee in the citizens' Europe.

I deeply believe that an office is not intended to give prestige to the person who holds it, but to establish responsibilities and duties without the expectation of glory or recompense.

In addition, we all know that the office of EESC president is one that simply involves providing a service and that, like the Roman leader Augustus, the president is "primus inter pares".

Ladies and gentlemen,

**Our time is precious and we must use it as efficiently as possible.**

While Europe is still assessing the damage caused by the French and Dutch "no" votes, and surveys showed that 30% of Europeans knew nothing about the European constitution in 2005, a few thousand miles away the emerging economies, which for decades were "in hibernation", are surging forward en masse at an intense pace, adapting to the international environment, acquiring skills, and thus threatening to undermine the achievements of the West.

I am referring to the so-called BRIC economies - Brazil, Russia, India and China – which will be the new superpowers in the year 2050.

By way of an example, 45% of the world's industrial products are now made in developing countries, compared with 10% in 1970.

71% of executives of international companies surveyed plan to set up business in one of these countries.

It has been calculated that if China continues to grow at an annual rate of 8%, with a population of 1.45 billion its per capita income will by 2031 be equivalent to that recorded for the United States in 2004.

**What does this mean?**

With this level of GDP, China will be consuming two thirds of the planet's total grain reserves, it will need 99 million barrels of oil daily, and 1.1 billion vehicles will be in circulation (based on current US statistics).

**We are all very aware of this.**

**We are all very aware that PRACTICE without THEORY is heedless and that THEORY without PRACTICE is pointless.**

Perhaps the time has come to stop planning scenarios and move on to "effective" solutions.

Perhaps the time has come to break with our uncompromising economic conservatism and copy – yes, I am not afraid to use the word - copy the good examples and good practices that have been established throughout the rapidly developing world but not in the European Union.

**Others talk about globalisation, while we are gripped by the inertia of our national or European identity.**

**Others look to society, while we look to the state.**

**Others promote the private sphere, while we promote the public sphere.**

**Others focus on the economic structure of society, while we focus on policy.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

My ambition during my term-in-office is not to file away yet more decisions or opinions in the Community archives.

My ambition is to transform words, meetings, decisions, policies and national debates into progress, which is essential for promoting Europe's strengths.

A Euroscience study brought together scientists from European industry in order to determine the two main factors influencing the motivation and employment practice of researchers working in the EU.

The first factor identified was reducing red tape.

I can give you my country as here as a prime example of the current European economic introspection and public uncertainty, where bureaucracy and an unwelcoming investment environment mean that EUR 1 billion in capital left the country in 2005. And unfortunately this happened not only in Greece.

The second factor is the creation of attractive jobs.

**Are we able to create new jobs and how can we do this?**

**Are we able to create the right environment for competitiveness and entrepreneurship?**

**I am talking about entrepreneurship with a human face not just a facade.**

**I am talking about small companies, about people-centred business as a mind-set, and not about economic wealth. I firmly believe in the saying of the Greek philosopher Protagoras: "Man is the measure of all things".**

**I am talking about society, not about the economy.**

**I am talking about ambitious entrepreneurship based on innovation and not just on profit.**

*I am talking about the European workforce developing an awareness and new attitude, striving to improve their standard of living, while also contributing to the creation of a competitive and constantly evolving professional environment.*

**I am talking about "people", not the type of person who has or is seeking material wealth, but the type who is more able than others in that he or she can foresee changes and innovate.**

**I am talking about entrepreneurship that has "corporate social responsibility", or if you like "responsible entrepreneurship" as a vital component, which maximises the benefits and minimises the potential harm that can be caused to the natural and man-made environment.**

**Entrepreneurship that serves competition, the interests of the broader social environment and greater social awareness.**

**I am talking about the small businesses that are and will always be the foundation, the backbone, of the European economy, the potential source of most jobs and better jobs and of new business ideas.**

These companies are based above all on innovation.

Although there is an initial risk of failure, such innovation is a source of employment and can raise a country's standard of living, making it into a competitive, knowledge-based area, able to attract and accommodate all sorts of investment and foreign investment.

This leads to more entrepreneurship, more European entrepreneurs, more entrepreneurial risk-taking, innovative products and, as a result, greater productivity.

**My question is a rhetorical one:**

Is Europe sufficiently competitive and entrepreneurial to host foreign researchers and investment?

And if so, why have the Americans yet again run away with the Nobel prizes for physics, chemistry, medicine and economics?

Ladies and gentlemen,

I chose "Entrepreneurship with a human face" as my theme. So what is this modern "face" for European citizens and what is their perspective on Europe?

**Where is Europe going?**

**Is it taking its people with it or not?**

In the mind of every European, the EU is a mechanism that defends their economic and political interests.

Europeans consider current EU institutions and procedures to be inaccessible, abstruse and hampered by red tape.

We may unfortunately have realised this too late. But the main thing is that we have finally realised the problem, have legislated accordingly and taken immediate action.

For better or for worse, there was no "Plan B" following the French and Dutch "no" votes on the European constitution. What we do have is a "Plan D" that aims to involve citizens in a broad discussion on the future of the EU. It relates to the three basic values of our society (Democracy, Dialogue and Debate), through which we can bridge the gap between Europe and its people.

We have not reached an impasse.

In Chinese, the word "crisis" has two ideograms: the first signifies "danger" and the other "opportunity".

**I am all for OPPORTUNITY.**

And one of my key ambitions is to make the most of this opportunity by making every effort to build bridges between the European public and "Europe".

**Now more than ever, we are morally obliged to persuade our fellow European citizens, using ACTIONS not words, that ALL THIS IS DONE BY THEM AND FOR THEM.**

**The Committee has been morally and institutionally obliged, at the request of the European Council, to take initiatives and be actively involved in:**

- **bridging the gap between the European public and the Community bodies;**
- **shaping a renewed strategy for sustainable development;**

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- **developing an active network of civil society initiatives aimed at promoting the implementation of the Lisbon strategy.**

**Now more than ever we must persuade citizens to be involved in European decisions and activities.**

**Now more than ever European civil society is particularly welcome and necessary in the continuing construction of what we call Europe.**

**Now more than ever we must bring Europe into the homes of every European citizen so that they can assess, understand, discover and transform it, giving Europe's institutions and political bodies their particular character with the help of our national Economic and Social Councils.**

**It is time to use the resources that we have always known existed. We must finally realise their potential.**

Just a couple more points.

Entrepreneurship and people.

In Greek, the word "person" literally means "he who looks upwards".

"Enterprise" means "endeavour".

**I am convinced that through endeavour and by always looking towards goals that are beyond our limits, we will be "programmed" to succeed.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Everything has its price.

In order to succeed, we must be patient and work together.

I would like to conclude by assuring you that I will carry out my duties as president with complete transparency, with the help of my Bureau, and I recommend that every one of us should respect and dedicate ourselves to the responsibilities and duties that have been entrusted to us.

The detailed presidency programme, which will be drawn up and discussed at the Bureau meeting in November, will be presented at the plenary session in December.

Thank you for your attention.

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