EDITORIAL BY JOOST VAN IERSEL

Slowly forward on the right track

Since the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008 an impressive range of Council meetings has taken place. Undoubtedly, important steps have been made in improving macro-economic governance at EU-level. The Six-Pack and the European Fiscal Compact are to be mentioned as milestones. The European Parliament has been a successful broker in the process which the EESC also supported in successive opinions.

Joost van Iersel, Member of the Employers’ Group

In spite of this progress the financial markets are not convinced of the tenability of various arrangements nor of their concrete application. Trust is still lacking. Against this backdrop, the Council on June 28th can be qualified as a partial success as it forebodes a banking union which will also be a lever for cross-border financial transactions between banks which are severely under pressure. The concerted action by Spain and Italy was surprising. This, again, resulted in a small step forward in encircling the Eurozone Member States to more effective cooperation. Given the deep reluctance of Member States to embrace a fiscal union, discipline and trust-worthy cooperation is the best we can hope for.

Confusion and limited steps forward which, moreover, depend on detailed scrutiny in the coming months, do not promote stability. It is stability and predictability that counts! Whatever talk about any growth pact, the best contribution to investments and jobs, is a predictable environment. A fiscal union would provide such an environment. Often it is overlooked that a leap forward to a Political Union would also greatly facilitate the Europe 2020 strategy aiming at competitive, sustainable, and inclusive growth in bringing Member States and the Union closer together in decisive areas that are not strictly covered by the European Treaty, such as national industrial policies, innovation policies, and higher education.

Everybody is aware of the precarious situation Europe is in. Besides measures to calm down financial markets, creating the best possible conditions for economic growth is top priority. To that end a persuasive and visible set of actions to complete the Internal market – a never ending process, including serious implementation of EU regulation, as well as a more systematic execution of the NRPs is needed. The need for focused efforts in these fields tends to be overlooked. All ingredients for a growth pact are available. Council and Member States have just to carry out their own agreed decisions more accurately instead of walking away from them.

Joost P. van Iersel
President, EESC Steering Committee Europe 2020
MEMBERS' VOICES

Dr. Ferdinand Maier is secretary general of the Austrian Raiffeisen Association - the platform of all Raiffeisen cooperatives in Austria. Raiffeisen cooperatives are involved in banking, in the warehouse business, as well as in the production sectors including dairy, meat, wine and many others.

Ferdinand Maier was already a Member of the EESC from 1995 to 1999. The reason for his resignation was the change in the Austrian Parliament.

“ I was already a Member of the EESC from 1995 until 1999. My priorities now are the promotion of SMEs and questions concerning transport and infrastructure policies. ”

Following this, he served as Member of the Austrian People’s Party, where he was involved in the work of business, finance and budget committees. He was also Deputy Chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and spokesman for transport and infrastructure policy.

In his work in the EESC, Dr. Maier has put an emphasis in the promotion of SMEs as well as questions concerning transport and infrastructure policies.

GROUP I OPINIONS

We feature some of the opinions with rapporteurs from Group I, adopted during the 482nd Plenary session on July 11th and 12th:

Statutory audits of annual accounts, consolidated accounts and public-interest entities”, INT/612-613

The EESC opinion entitled “Statutory audits of annual accounts, consolidated accounts and public-interest entities”, INT/612-613 by Peter Morgan dealt with a Directive and a Regulation relating to the conduct of audits in the EU.

The Directive, which was not controversial, was supported; the Regulation, which was controversial, was opposed on two main points: the mandatory rotation of audit firms, and the inclusion of SMEs within the scope of the Regulation.

Mandatory rotation of auditors on a six year cycle is impractical for larger multinational companies with complex organisation and accounting structures and which would employ hundreds of audit staff. On a six year cycle, a replacement audit firm would be hardly familiar with the complexities of the assignment before it itself would be replaced.

Large employers share this concern. This was also the view expressed in the EESC opinion on the Audit Policy Green Paper. As the Regulation was designed to ensure that, post-crisis, banks were properly audited, it created obligations for both auditors and companies which were utterly unrealistic and bureaucratically overwhelming for listed SMEs. We will seek to seek to advance our arguments with the EP rapporteur on the topic.

You can find the whole text here: http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.int-opinions.21062
Maritime Labour Convention/Flag State and Port State Responsibilities, TEN/488

Dr. Anna Bredima is rapporteur on the European Economic and Social Committee’s opinion entitled “Maritime Labour Convention / Flag State and Port State Responsibilities”, TEN/488.

She shared: “it is very important for the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) to enter into force since the human element on board ships is identified as the leading cause of maritime accidents. Application of the MLC by the EU will be one more step towards ‘quality shipping’.”

The MLC - Maritime Labour Convention of the International Labour Organization (ILO) is the first Maritime Labour Code and codifies 68 Conventions and affects 40,000 ships and 1.2 million seafarers worldwide. The EU Member States, controlling 40% of the world fleet and having an extensive coastline / port network, are directly interested in this issue both as flag states and port states.

With the MLC’s international entry into force expected in 2013, the EU is preparing to inspect ships of all flags calling at its ports for compliance with it. This will be a far reaching exercise. EU flag ships should also be properly documented for similar inspections worldwide.

Defence Industry: Industrial, Innovative and Social Aspects, CCMI/100

The EESC’s Own-initiative Opinion by Joost van Iersel on European Defence, CCMI/100 discussed badly needed concrete steps forward in shaping European defence. Rapid geopolitical changes, substantial cuts in defence budgets across Europe, and upward trends in defense spending in China, India, Brazil and Russia make a convincing update of European defence policies indispensable.

Obsolete approaches lead to increasing fragmentation, gaps, overcapacity and a lack of interoperability in European capabilities. In addition to actions of the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the Defence Package of 2007 the EESC calls for a well-designed industrial policy for the defence sector.

According to Mr. van Iersel, “EU policies and funding should link EU level and national investments. State-of-the-art R&D is crucial for the development of ‘new generation’ armaments. Council and stakeholders should urgently identify research programmes and promote cross-border R&D cooperation. ‘Dual use’ technologies are a necessity. The EESC strongly endorses the recent initiative of the EC Task Force on Defence.”

You can find the whole text here: [link]
Group I Debate with Mr Enrique Baron Crespo and Prof. Holland Stuart "Resolving the Eurozone Crisis and Enhancing Global Governance", 23 May

23 March 2012 witnessed a debate hosted by Henri Malosse, President of the Employers’ Group of the EESC with Mr. Enrique Baron Crespo, MEP and former President of the European Parliament (1989 - 1992) and Prof. Holland Stuart, former British Labour MP, cabinet minister and economic advisor to Jacques Delors. The debate entitled “Resolving the Eurozone Crisis and Enhancing Global Governance”.

The highlights of the debate included:

- the European Investment Bank's money lending capacity has quadrupled since 1997 and it has three times more money than the World Bank. The question is in its priorities and ability to utilize them.

- the existing debate between Germany and Greece is not at all a European debate. But since the problems from the last several years pose a problem to all of Europe, there is a clear demand for this to change.

- when the crisis started there was a statement from a chief economist in the Netherlands - “they created their European currency and now they should create a European government”. If there is no political framework which responds to the common problems and further federalization, Europe will always be confronted with an problem which cannot be solved.
Workshop on the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014-2020 and EU-12 Member States, 24 May

The workshop organised by the Employers’ Group of the EESC on 24 May 2012 discussed some of the key principles and options proposed in the field of the Common agricultural policy and the cohesion policy, including all structural funds, research and innovation, and evaluated their potential impact on the EU-12. The workshop also aimed at facilitating a constructive and open exchange on the MFF proposals between the Employers' Group members from the EU-12 and European Commission representatives: Pascal Steller, DG BUDGET, Pascal Boijmans, DG REGIO, and Frank Bollen, DG AGRI.

The workshop was opened by Henri Malosse, President of the Employers’ Group and chaired by Jacek Krawczyk, EESC Vice-President in charge of the Budget.

In the context of budget austerity and severe economic crisis, the current negotiations on the European Commission’s proposal on the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2014-2020 which will define the EU budget expenditures, resources, structure and strategic orientations for the forthcoming years are proving to be particularly complex and difficult.

The discussion highlighted the main features of the "negotiating box" to be endorsed at the European Council on 28 and 29 June. While identifying the main options available, this 'negotiating box' will not provide any specific figures because of the very controversial nature of the ongoing discussions within the Council, between the Council and the European Parliament (not to mention the controversy among Member States vis-à-vis the Commission’s initial proposals on MFF 2014-2020).

The discussion included the following sensitive issues:

- **ex-ante conditionality and macro-economic conditionality for accessing EU funding**
- the simplification of the correction and rebate system by capping Member States’ contributions in relation to their prosperity. With this capping system, EU-12 countries which have particularly suffered from the 2008 crisis with a real drop in GDP, such as Latvia, would be penalised twice;
- the priorities of the MFF 2014-2020 must be built around investments in industry, SMEs, productive activities, innovation and education, thereby meeting the expectations of business and employers in the EU.

The chairman closed the meeting by reminding of Tony Blair’s statement at the end of the negotiations of the previous MFF 2007-2013 “next time, we’re going to kill each other”. He underlined one of the funding principles of the EU, solidarity, which is not to be seen as an emotional component but a realistic one. He deplored the lack of funds allocated to culture and identity, the insufficient mobilisation of private funds to finance European projects.
GROUP I EVENTS

Group I thematic meeting "The Baltic Sea Region and Business, a Model for European Macro Regions?" 14-15 June

In order to stimulate business cooperation and internationalisation through exchange of best practices and to identify practical and applicable proposals, the Employers' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) organised a thematic meeting on cooperation in the Baltic Sea region entitled "The Baltic Sea Region and Business, a Model for European Macro Regions?". The event took place in Helsinki on 14th and in Stockholm on 15th June 2012 and was organized with business federations from Sweden, Finland and Estonia.

"Regional strategies are a means of promoting integration in the European Union. By pooling together resources, the Baltic Sea Region countries have been contributing to advancing European integration", said Henri Malosse, President of the Employers' Group.

The Baltic Sea Region Strategy (BSRS) was hailed as an example for future cooperation on macro-regional strategies in the EU; it has given momentum for a similar strategy for the Danube Region. However, participants argued that the Strategy has yet to deliver on its ambitions. Although well designed, its ideas are yet to be implemented and goals achieved, especially when it comes to export and cross-border cooperation among businesses.

The meeting's conclusions were drafted in a Statement on the Baltic Sea Region which was presented at the 14th Baltic Development Forum Summit and the European Commission’s 3rd Annual Forum on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, taking place in Copenhagen on 18-19 June 2012.

The key discussion topics included:
- European Macro Regions as a tool for European Integration
- How To Promote Business-Friendly Conditions And Investments?
- Infrastructure Inter-operability
- the Relations with Russia and the Northern Dimension
- Cross-Border Business Development

You can find the Employers' Group statement here: http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-cooperation-baltic-sea-statement

You can find the detailed report of the event, speakers' presentations and photos here: http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-cooperation-baltic-sea
“A Covenant of Companies associated with the Covenant of Mayors will be an engine for recovery, growth and jobs.” Henri Malosse, President of the EESC Employers Group voiced the key message of the event “Covenant of Mayors signatories meet business to convert plans into actions”, held on 22 June 2012 during the EU Sustainable Energy Week at the EESC.

“A green economy represents a huge opportunity for the private sector and SMEs are the real protagonists of the green revolution” said Diego Canga Fano, Head of Cabinet of Antonio Tajani, Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for industry and entrepreneurship.

Building on the model and success of the Covenant of Mayors, the EESC proposes to create a Covenant of Companies. Antonello Pezzini, Member of the EESC Employers’ Group and mentor of the idea, states that this new platform geared towards companies “will be responsible for collecting and coordinating industry-specific energy efficiency action plans and for allocation of funding”.

The event was co-organised with the Covenant of Mayors’ Office (a voluntary commitment taken by over 4,000 local and regional authorities demonstrating cooperation between different levels of governance), and discussed how the cooperation between local authorities and the private sector can be further enhanced to achieve the EU sustainable energy targets, boost green growth while creating jobs.

**Members’ Life**

**Vice President Tajani appoints Employers’ Group Member Madi Sharma to Advisory Board, 29 May**

The European Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry, Vice-President Antonio Tajani, has appointed Ms Madi Sharma, an Entrepreneur and UK member of the Employers’ Group of the European Economic and Social Committee to join his Advisory Board for a discussion on issues of relevance for the development of European Industrial Policy. Ms Sharma’s focus will be all aspects of Enterprise but especially on entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurship following her successful work in the EESC on these topics over the past years.

Ms Sharma will be joined by a number of personalities to share views on these important matters concerning EU policies on a regular basis. Stakeholders of the Employers Group, Presidents of MEDEF and Lewitan are included in the 14 member Advisory Board alongside two former Commissioners and experts from academia and the business world. The first meeting was held on 10th July 2012.

Madi is an active Entrepreneur who recently launched the Entrepreneur Envoy web portal www.EntrepreneurEnvoy.org to promote the ambitions of the Young European Entrepreneurs Seminar held annually by the Employers’ Group. She is also an active member of the Social, External Relations and Industrial Change Sections, as well as a participant in study groups from other sections.

Madi Sharma asks any colleagues with issues to be raised or recommendations to kindly contact her directly on madi.sharma@eesc.europa.eu

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**Brendan Burns and Madi Sharma at JA-YE Europe’s Innovation Camp, 22-23 May**

Two Employers’ Group UK members - Brendan Burns and Madi Sharma mentored students during the Innovation Camp 2012 organized by Junior Achievement-Young Enterprise Europe (JA-YE Europe). Held on 22 - 23 May 2012, the camp was part of the European Creativity and Innovation Challenge.

The event aimed at improving vocational students’ talent for innovation and enhance their entrepreneurial skills. The camp required students to invent realistic product or service concepts, given a deadline of 24 hours, in an international team whom they meet for the first time; while they are mentored and evaluated by real business people.
Cveto Stantič Headed the EESC Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, 14-16 May

As President of the Western Balkans Contact Group, Cveto Stantič, Vice-President of the Employers’ Group, led the EESC delegation to Sarajevo and Banja Luka on 14 – 16 May 2012. This study visit aimed at following-up on the EESC exploratory opinion on the Role of civil society in EU-Bosnia and Herzegovina relations.

Well attended public hearings proved that most of the EESC’s recommendations were "right to the point" and as such very welcomed by the NGOs and most social partners. Unfortunately the social dialogue exists only on the entity level. Therefore the delegation urged political leaders and social partners to implement our most important recommendation and form a national Economic and Social Council. Mr Stantič clearly pointed out at the final press conference in Banja Luka: “An efficient civil and social dialogue on the State level is not only a pre-condition for further approaching towards European social models and standards, it is also a pre-condition for more democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina".
Christian Ardhe on Horizon 2020: “Bridging the Valley of Death”, 30 May

The Horizon 2020 is a key pillar of the EU 2020 strategy. With the economic crisis and high youth unemployment, investing knowledge and innovation represents an important way to create new growth and jobs.

“But Europe is not alone in wanting to promote a knowledge economy through world-class research and innovation”, says Christian Ardhe, a Swedish Member of the Employers’ Group. Other economies are doing the same. For instance, recent studies show that Asia’s share of the total R&D spending will double from 10 to 20% by 2025.

Europe has now the opportunity to take the lead. The single most important priority is to translate research results into successful business opportunities, to bridge what is known as "the valley of death".

How should that be done then? Increasing the R&D expenditure is not enough. For instance, Sweden has (with its 4% of GDP) the second highest R&D expenditure in the EU and is considered an innovation leader. However, as regards the commercialisation of innovative products, Sweden performs below the EU average. Furthermore, according to the European Commission assessment Sweden’s overall strong position in R&D is vulnerable due to its strong dependence on a few large multinational companies.

Today the EU spends on average around 2% of GDP on R&D and the goal is to achieve 3%. At the end of May 2012 ministers reached an agreement on the overall structure of Horizon 2020.

80 billion euro over six years means an increase of the total amount dedicated to financing European R&D projects but still represents less than 0.07% of GDP.

In order to better capitalize on R&D, Europe needs a Horizon 2020 program based on industrial leadership and which builds on:

- A strong focus on excellent basic research
- Simplification and less red tape, which will make it easier and more attractive for SMEs to apply for EU funding
- A climate favourable to research and investment, which attracts companies and talented people to Europe.
- A closer collaboration between academia and business

The Horizon 2020 program will continue to be discussed with a view to reach a final agreement before the end of 2013. In the meanwhile it is crucial that Member States in their own R&D bills introduce measures to improve the general conditions of R&D, not least the commercialisation of innovative products and services.
Brenda King and Madi Sharma at a ‘Global Changemakers’ EU-Africa Youth Summit, 26 May

On 26 June 2012, the European Economic and Social Committee was honoured to host, and also very much appreciated for doing so, the ‘Global Changemakers’ initiative’s EU-Africa Youth Summit. Organised by the British Council, the event welcomed more than 70 young leaders, involved in community projects, social entrepreneurs and volunteers, coming from Asia, Africa and Europe.

The event aims to empower young people to catalyse social change by building an international network of ‘changemakers’ aged between 18 and 25, and have them interact with mentors, councillors and experts. The theme of the summit this year was “social entrepreneurship”, and included discussions on skills for entrepreneurship and employability.

Anna Maria Darmanin, EESC Vice-President for Communication opened the event. The Employers’ Group was represented by two of its Members, Brenda King, President of the ACP/EU Follow-up Committee and Madi Sharma, serial entrepreneur and rapporteur on female entrepreneurship.

Brenda King spoke during the panel on EU-Africa relations. She shared: “this group of young people were very inspirational and truly active citizens from their respective countries. I hope that this will be the start of a long-standing collaboration with this refreshingly innovative project.”

“It was great to take part; I was inspired by the questions we received from the very proactive changemakers” was Madi Sharma’s opinion after she took part in the panel “EU policy on youth, entrepreneurship and employment”. She advised the young entrepreneurs “lack of money should not be a setback”.

The event closed off with a practical session entitled “How to campaign?” with representatives of NGOs and workshops with ‘senior changemakers’.

Participants found that the event offers the rare opportunity of meeting like-minded people from different regions, all of whom have innovative ideas, and learning from the interactions. As entrepreneurship is not often undertaken by single individuals, the event was the occasion for sharing potential undertakings, knowledge and forming cross-border and cross-cultural links. Hopefully, these will lead to successful future projects.
"Tomorrow Could Just be Too Late": Article by Stefano Mallia, 13 June

Stefano Mallia is a member of the Employers’ Group of the European Economic and Social Committee and Deputy President of the Malta Chamber of Commerce Enterprise and Industry. This article by Mr. Mallia appeared in Times of Malta on 13 June 2012 (p.48) http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20120613/opinion/Tomorrow-could-just-be-too-late.

The past weeks have been intense, to say the least. We have witnessed a flurry of political activity and gone through countless hours of speeches. A minister has resigned (no trivial matter) and the Prime Minister has, for the third time in six months, sought and obtained a vote of confidence. High drama by any standard and one which would normally signal that the country is facing a profound crisis of sorts.

Any “outsider” would be forgiven for assuming that, in one way or another, it is all related to the financial and economic crises. It is happening right across Europe: Greece, Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Ireland, the UK. All are witnessing momentous political debates connected to the crises. Austerity or growth? Both at the same time, ideally. Growth, yes, but how without a further deterioration of public finances?

In one particular country, Germany, the raging debate is about for how long they should continue to fund the ailing states. For how long they should carry the cost of the “misbehaviour” of others. Little does it matter that some years back, during the debate on the European Constitution Germany showed no enthusiasm for economic governance. This is the kind of daily debate doing the rounds in all the major and not-so-major capitals of Europe. But not so in Malta. Here, we have more important matters to debate.

Europe, and we are firmly part of this same Europe, is facing an unprecedented crises of work and jobs, which will very shortly lead to a material poverty that many of us thought was a thing of the past. Millions of jobs have already been lost. Millions of youngsters are struggling to find any kind of work. Spain has now hit the 50 per cent mark of youth unemployment.

Wealth accumulated over the past 10 years is being wiped out in a matter of months. Countries are struggling with debt amounts that, frankly, belie belief. If all goes to plan in Greece, and we all know what the chances of that are, in 2013 the country will still be struggling with a debt level amounting to 161 per cent of its GDP. Ireland, which is deemed to be on the road to recovery, is expected to have government debt at the level of 118 per cent of GDP while Portugal will have debt levels amounting to 115 per cent of GDP. In the midst of all this Greece has seen its GDP shrink by some 17 per cent since 2007.

Italy, the same Greece, Ireland, Spain, all are implementing savage austerity measures that include hefty tax increases and real reductions in salaries, pensions and social benefits. People are losing their homes. Many are fast losing hope that they will ever see better days. Europe is becoming a continent of despair.

But, hold on a minute, here we still pay our students a stipend. We still have free health care. We still haggle to continue increasing our wages. We still expect the state to provide first-class educational facilities. We continue to expect all this as if we have some divine right to it.

The Greeks too thought they had a divine right to early retirement, wages that far outstrip productivity and outlandish pensions. Paying taxes was frowned upon almost like a scourge. Those divine rights vanished in less than 12 months. One fine morning, they found that their world had changed and decades-old certainties suddenly became distant memories.

Can this happen to us? Maybe not, but if we do not get real and concentrate on the real issues we will significantly increase the odds of it happening.

Of course, politicians will always be politicians and it is their duty to perform the art of politics. They, however, have to acknowledge that they are the leaders of this country - government and opposition - and as leaders their prime duty at this moment is to lead this country safely through this incredibly difficult moment in history.

"They have to acknowledge that they are the leaders of this country and as leaders their prime duty at this moment is to lead this country safely through this incredibly difficult moment in history."
FOR YOUR AGENDA (SAVE THE DATE)

UPCOMING EVENTS OF GROUP I:

- Group I thematic meeting on “The Future of Youth in Europe”, Versailles (FR) 29-31/08/2012
- Group I thematic meeting on “Opportunities for Growth”, Thessaloniki (EL) 07-08/09/2012
- Meeting of the EESC Bureau members of Group I 17/09/2012, 10:00 – 12:30
- Meeting of the Group I Bureau 18/09/2012, 09:00 – 10:00
- Group I meeting 18/09/2012, 10:00 – 13:00
- Group I thematic meeting on “Future Scenarios of the EU”, Sopot (PL) 26-28/09/2012
- Extraordinary Meeting of the Group I Bureau, Bansko (BG) 05-06/10/2012
- Meeting of the EESC Bureau members of Group I 13/11/2012, 10:00 – 12:30
- Meeting of the Group I Bureau 14/11/2012, 09:00 – 10:00
- Group I meeting 14/11/2012, 10:00 – 13:00

THE JULY PLENARY

OPINIONS PRESENTED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE EMPLOYERS` GROUP DURING THE PLENARY SESSION OF 11-12 JULY 2012:

CCMI/094 - What changes for Europe’s banking sector with the new financial rules? by Anna Nietyksza

CCMI/095 - Revision of 1994 and 2005 EU aviation and airport guidelines by Jacek Krawczyk

CCMI/099 - European Technology Platforms (ETPs) and industrial change by Josef Zbořil

CCMI/100 - Need for a European defence industry: industrial, innovative and social aspects by Joost van Iersel

CCMI/102 - Restructuring and anticipation of change: what lessons from recent experience? by Antonello Pezzini

INT/641 - Securities settlement and central securities depositories (CSDs) by Peter Morgan

INT/648 - Key Actions towards a Single Market Act II by Ivan Voleš

TEN/479 - Transport White Paper: getting civil society on board by Stefan Back

TEN/488 - Maritime Labour Convention/Flag State and port State responsibilities by Anna Bredima

SOC/446 - Female entrepreneurs – specific policies to increase EU growth and employment by Madi Sharma

SOC/462 - Strengthening the participatory processes and the involvement of local authorities, NGOs and social partners in the implementation of Europe 2020 by Heidi Lougheed

Members of Group I have successfully passed amendments to opinions, most notably the amendments:

by Ana Bontea, Michal Pintér, Reet Teder and Marie Zvolská (on the opinion ECO/326 - The feasibility of introducing stability bonds),

by Adalbert Kienle (on the opinion NAT/540 - The role of women as drivers of a development and innovation model in agriculture and rural areas),

by Anna Bredima (on the opinion NAT/557 - Ship recycling),

by Christa Schweng (on the opinion SOC/457 - An Agenda for Adequate, Safe and Sustainable Pensions),

and a Counter opinion by Group I (on the opinion SOC/460 - Posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services).
The Employers’ Group of the EESC

The Employers’ Group (Group I) has 114 members, and is made up of entrepreneurs, employers and representatives of employer associations working in industry, commerce, services and agriculture in the 27 Member States of the European Union. These are women and men involved in the business world and in touch with the realities of everyday life who are willing to put their experience to use to further the European venture.

Our goal is to promote European integration by supporting the development of our businesses, which play a key role in fostering the prosperity of our societies and in creating jobs.

In an economically difficult climate, the European Economic and Social Committee is the only European institution that brings together business people and people fully engaged in the economic and social life of their home country.

A strong, coherent and dynamic Employers’ Group is therefore crucial to making the voice of business heard at European level.

Naturally, the Employers’ Group also works closely with the five major European business organisations – BUSINESSEUROPE, CEEP, EUROCHAMBRES, EuroCommerce and UEAPME – to which a large number of our members also belong.