



**European Economic and Social Committee**  
**The President**

The European Parliament, Strasbourg, 05 February 2013

**Conference of Committee Chairs**

**Staffan Nilsson's speech**

Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
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President, Presidents of the Committees,

I would like to thank you for inviting me to give a modest overview on our **existing cooperation with the European Parliament** and the boost to representative democracy given by the entry into force of the **Lisbon Treaty**.

The European Parliament's legislative role has been strengthened. In addition, the Lisbon Treaty has also put the European democratic model on a broader basis, in particular by acknowledging the role of **participatory democracy in complementing representative democracy**, and the role played by civil society organisations.

2013 is the European Year of Citizenship, and the EESC has explored the role of organised civil society in the renewal of the European democratic model in depth over the last few years.



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The **added value of European policies** is one of the subjects which the EESC is concerned with. The EESC drew up an opinion in 2012 on the costs of non-Europe, and on what Europe can do to overcome the crisis and ensure the success of the EU 2020 strategy. We hope this contribution has helped to take the debate forward on how the European integration process should be continued in this difficult context.

Through its activities, the EESC commits itself to **promoting the European project**, and it is aware that the European integration process needs the support of ordinary Europeans. **The EESC supports the EP in promoting active and participatory citizenship, and it is ready to cooperate with the Parliament to the next European elections in 2014.** For example, the EESC would like to help raise public awareness of these elections and to encourage Europeans to take part, and it can do this through its own communication activities, in cooperation with the network of EU economic and social councils and similar institutions.

It is in the interest of democracy for EU institutions and bodies to work together, in order to make dialogue with civil society more effective. Involving organised civil society in the European integration process would guarantee the long-term future of this process.

**The EESC is closely cooperating with other EU institutions.** EC President Barroso has asked us to set up an ad hoc commission and to give our contribution on the **EU 2020 strategy**. This commission supports European initiatives, for example by issuing opinions and joint reports with national Economic and Social Councils, which feed into the discussions of the spring European Council.

During his statement to the EESC's January 2013 plenary session, the president of the **European Council** also called on the EESC to issue an opinion on the social dimension of economic and monetary union. This reflects the very close cooperation between the EESC and the other institutions.

With regards to our relations with you, there are many examples of good cooperation between the EP and the EESC, for example joint organisation of political debates. I would also like to mention President Schulz and my letter to President Barroso on making the Year 2015 Year of development. That is now happening!



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EESC members are actively involved in parliamentary committee meetings and inter-groups; at the same time, MEPs attend EESC conferences, hearings and other meetings. Dialogue between rapporteurs from the two institutions already exists and could be put in a more systematic footing. We have had the pleasure to welcome Pervenche Bérès, as rapporteur on the Crisis report already many times. **This cooperation should be encouraged and best practices in terms of dialogue and debate should be consolidated. To this end, President Schulz and I have agreed to look into how, if needed, our cooperation can be formalized.**

With regards to legislative programming, in most cases EESC opinions are synchronised with the EP's work, and are issued at an appropriate stage of the legislative process. Nevertheless, the EESC is determined to improve its working methods even further, not just to act in a timely manner, but also to enhance the impact of its opinions on the EP.

In order to benefit from these existing best practices, we should put them on a systematic footing at the same time as consolidating political cooperation. Today I would like to confine myself to three proposals:

- First of all, I would like to see systematic **dialogue between EP and EESC rapporteurs** during meetings of parliamentary committees and sections. Rapporteurs from the two institutions should have an opportunity to present their reports and opinions;
- Secondly, I would like to see **regular dialogue between our section presidents and European parliament committee chairs** on major issues and strategic approaches in their areas of responsibility. This dialogue would enable our Committee to take the EP's priorities more closely into account, and to enhance the relevance and added value of EESC opinions.

Thirdly and finally, **interinstitutional political debate** is a vital cohesive force in the European democratic model. Debate with civil society should be encouraged. I feel it would be appropriate and useful for the EP president and vice-presidents to engage in this kind of debate with EESC members.

I personally commit myself to supporting these efforts, and I hope you will do the same.



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