



European Economic and Social Committee
The President

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Europe 2020 Steering Committee
9th meeting, with participation of representatives from national ESCs

Staffan Nilsson's opening address

Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
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Check Against Delivery

Dear all,

Welcome again, dear members of the Steering committee!

Many things have happen since our last Steering Committee meeting at the end of March. Since then, while the economic situation remains fragile, we have witnessed a lot of **developments as concerns growth**. There is now a growing consensus, not only in Europe, on the need for both stability and growth. Heads of State and Government do not focus anymore just on short-term crisis management, but also on growth. This is also what the Committee was asking for a long time. You may have seen on the EESC website that I myself made a declaration, and I also sent it to President Van Rompuy a few days before the informal summit on 23rd May.

Growth and employment, our priorities, were also at the heart of discussions in the G8 Summit in Camp David. They will be the main topics for discussion in the G20 summit in Los Cabos, Mexico on 18-19 June.



European Economic and Social Committee

The President

Lots of discussions take place about a **possible "growth pact"** complementing the fiscal compact and at the informal dinner on 23 May. European leaders prepared the ground for common decisions to be taken at the European Council on 28 and 29 June.

The challenge is now: what will be in the European Growth compact? What concrete measures? With what budget and where from? We must bear in mind that the EU already has a growth and jobs strategy. I am pleased to hear that EC President Barroso is also pleading more and more strongly for the **Europe 2020 strategy, as the only "platform for a new growth initiative"**.

In its Schuman Day message, Barroso also said that "the EU has a world class growth strategy in its Europe 2020 strategy". He called on all European stakeholders to "step up their efforts for growth and jobs by accelerating the delivery of the Europe 2020 strategy, which is the right platform for any new growth initiatives".

There is also nowadays a clear **consensus about the important role of social partners and civil society**. But more has to be done at all levels. And we can be an active facilitator for that.

Today I am very happy that a representative of the European Commission Secretariat-General, from the Policy Coordination accepted to come and to present to us the National reform programmes and country specific policy recommendations issued by the European Commission.

I can only welcome the communication that accompanies these recommendations – it is totally **in line with my declaration** "Now is the time for more, not less, Europe. **More consensus is crucial around the need for reforms and this communication states that "social partners play an important role in this dialogue"**.

As you know, the European Commission agrees on the need to involve the EESC as closely as possible. **President J-M. Barroso has several times called on the EESC to make an active contribution to the European semester and Europe 2020, notably through grass-roots contributions from member states.**



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The President

This year, I will also, together with Joost, and in the name of the EESC and the Steering Committee, launch a **call for contribution**. I count on your involvement and help, especially for the countries which do not have an ESC.

This is the last meeting of the Steering Committee before the big conference that we are all organising on 25 September. You certainly know that the preparations are ongoing, all sections, their Presidents, their Bureau, their rapporteurs are very closely involved in the drafting of the agenda and on the choice of speakers and moderators. There will be 4 workshops tackling all levers that can be used to foster growth:

- A genuine European political and economic governance, backed up by a proper European budget
- The internal market
- The employment policy
- The research and development policy, the industrial policy

I would like that as many members as possible actively participate to the conference and contribute with **concrete, innovative ideas on the action that needs to be taken to create growth and jobs**.

The main objective of this event is to open the way for growth in Europe. The conference will provide us an excellent opportunity:

- **To discuss the Europe 2020 strategy**
- **to promote the excellent work done by sections, observatories, CCMI and Europe 2020 Steering Committee**
- and to disseminate the good practices employed or proposed by the EESC and national ESCs and similar bodies.

Thank you for listening to me, dear friends. Joost, now the floor is yours.

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