



Group 2 Newsletter



DECEMBER 2009

Electronic information bulletin of the Workers Group

EDITORIAL

On behalf of the workers of Europe, we would like to convey our best wishes for success to Mr Herman van Rompuy, who has recently been appointed President of the European Council, and to Baroness Catherine Margaret Ashton of Upholland, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

We wish them all that the workers of Europe and the world could hope for from those who hold important positions of po-

litical responsibility: that, at the end of their term, they will leave behind them an image, both for themselves and for current and future generations, of a man and a woman who acted without having ever lost sight of the fact that what lay in their hands was the very real and immediate fate of men and women – the vast majority workers - not abstract theories or virtual ideas.

We hope that they can find the energy, brilliance and backing needed to surprise the sceptics and critics.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown is confident that Baroness Ashton of Upholland will give the UK a "strong voice" in Europe. Europe's workers, in turn, hope that she will give Europe an adequate voice in its relations with third countries.

As for Mr van Rompuy, we hope that he will be able to demonstrate his efficiency. Far from being political celebrities, many of those who have left their mark on the European construction process were avowed Europeans concerned about the plight of their citizens.

They will, in any event, enjoy the support of the workers

every time that they work to uphold, improve or promote on the global stage the European social model, fundamental rights and, in general, everything that can contribute to people's wellbeing and to combating poverty, injustice and unemployment.

When we watch the television today, we can see a U.S. President who is personally involved in promoting a more "European" social security system which will benefit his most disadvantaged fellow citizens.

We, the workers of Europe, would like to see the European Council lead Europe to what it should become: a genuine social Europe, whose only aim is the wellbeing of all its citizens; a Europe which has understood just how important work is for the daily lives of virtually all of its citizens, including those workers who are unemployed, those who are still too young to have begun work and its oldest workers, who are retired.



George Dassis

President of the workers' group

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457th EESC plenary session (4 and 5 November 2009)

Guests of the Committee

At its plenary session, on 4 November 2009, the Committee was pleased to welcome:

- Mr Jerzy Buzek, [President of the European Parliament](#).

Statements by Group II members



Addressing Mr Buzek, [George Dassis, group II president](#), recalled that the Employees' Group, which needless to say included Solidarność representatives, had been at the forefront of the fight against the "democratic deficit" and for the establishment of an elected European Parliament with real legislative power. It was fortunate that today this deficit had been met, but it was not enough. It was the aspirations for peace, freedom, dignity and prosperity that the European had brought with it that had made it so attractive. But it could now be seen that that the most disadvantaged members of society were being faced with the bill for the financial crisis. The European Parliament had an important role to play in this area. It could and should encourage the other institutions, the Commission and the Council, to introduce legislation that was mindful of the people's welfare and of the most vulnerable in particular. This was what was required to turn back the tide of nationalism and reignite enthusiasm for the European project.

In the context of the **thematic debate on the Lisbon Strategy and economic growth**, [Wolfgang Greif](#) presented the draft [opinion on the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy \(ECO/267\)](#), for which he was rapporteur-general.



This was a general and comprehensive "umbrella" opinion that set out concrete and practical recommendations for the future strategy. Not only did we need to guarantee national transposition, but we also needed to raise questions about governance – and in particular about civil society involvement – and funding, i.e. the volume as well as the mode of funding. Solutions were also put forward with respect to the objectives. Thus, it was imperative to pursue certain objectives even when a crisis made them seem unattainable. There could even be grounds for making them more ambitious and improving their formulation. The strategy needed "bite" and we should no longer be satisfied with expressing aspirations. We needed more binding measures.



[Xavier Verboven](#) pointed out that the Committee opinion advocated a serious overhaul: unemployment, deprivation and exclusion could only be beaten through a genuine European project (and not by superimposing 27 national plans).

[Carmelo Cedrone](#) stressed that although the Lisbon Strategy was an excellent tool, it lacked means and efficiency. With regard to the means, it was a good time to recall that these had been found for banks.



[Gabriele Bischoff](#) welcomed the rapporteur-general's work, pointing out that the Committee's opinion would be more than just a technical document. This opinion truly pointed the way for future EU policy. The Lisbon Strategy had been positive. It had advanced European integration, but the crisis had shown us to what extent European projects could be set-back by nationalist resurgences. We therefore expected the Spanish presidency to place environmental and social sustainability at the heart of the new strategy, bearing in mind the cost of any cutbacks to the environment and welfare budgets.

A rewarding
role for the
Parliament

Lisbon:
what needs
to be done:

A genuine
European
project,

with
appropriate
resources,

to ensure
environmental
and SOCIAL
sustainability!

Guests of the Committee

At its plenary session, on 5 November 2009, the Committee was pleased to welcome:

- [Mr Jöran Hägglund, State Secretary to the Swedish Minister for Enterprise and Energy.](#)
- [Mr Jo Leinen, Member of the European Parliament, Chairman of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety,](#)
- Mr Olivier **Deleuze**, Director, [Brussels Office, United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\).](#)

Statements by Group II members



Commenting on the draft [Resolution of the European Economic and Social Committee on Climate Change](#), [María Candelas Sánchez Miguel](#) stated that the Employees' Group would vote for the resolution but considered it weak and incomplete. It should serve a cross-cutting rather than a merely environmental objective. It should cover the social dimension of this considerable challenge. Nevertheless, whatever the outcome and impact of the crisis, the EU should not, under any circumstance, go back on its tracks and abandon its own objectives or deviate from the principles of the Lisbon Strategy.

In the context of the **thematic debate on the Copenhagen environment conference**, [Ernst Erik Ehnmark](#) presented the Committee's draft [opinion on the Outlook for the sustainable development strategy](#), for which he had been rapporteur. He pointed out that there was agreement within civil society regarding the need to give more importance to the strategy's social dimension. Moreover, this required a new management tool, which implied human and financial resources. There should be a Commissioner responsible for coordinating sustainable development and a high-level committee tasked with monitoring progress. This was the type of measure that could improve the strategy's efficiency, turn it into a truly overarching strategy and, following from that, ensure enhanced dialogue with all parties concerned.



[Ágnes Cser](#) had serious concerns that the conference could result in an "empty agreement" at a time when China, for instance, was making a real effort to reconcile environmental and human parameters. We also had to guard against believing that "green jobs" meant "decent jobs", as should be the case. Some undervalued and strenuous "green" jobs deserved more consideration and their conditions should be improved, including by reassessing our values.

Health and water, for instance, should be among our foremost concerns. We should not be responding to the economy's needs but to people's needs. When all was said and done, should the world be made for financial groups or for civil society, which often included women and children among its most vulnerable members?

[Edgardo Iozia](#) emphasised the link between climate change and work. Climate change called us to account as citizens, as actors for change and as workers. The international trade union movement had taken its position and so had the Committee. But the problem was a financial one. What we needed now was the courage to lighten excessive burdens on financial transactions and support developing countries by introducing a tax along the same lines as the "Tobin tax".



http://eesc.europa.eu/groups/2/index_en.asp?id=4006GR02EN

**Copenhagen:
integrating
the social
dimension**

**A truly
"overarching
strategy"**

**"Green"
but
"decent"
jobs**

**Financing
sustainable
development
through the
"Tobin" tax**

invitation

etui.

Conference

After the crisis - towards a sustainable growth model

Date : Wednesday 13 January 2010
from 11.00 to 16.30

Venue: European Economic and Social Committee
Sixth floor, Room 62
Rue Belliard 99
B-1040 Brussels

Languages: English and French

Resources: <http://www.etui.org/Events/2010>

Briefing: The limitations of 'financial capitalism' have been brutally exposed by the financial and ensuing economic crisis. This has opened up a window of opportunity to propose and implement progressive reforms.

The ETUI has brought together around 30 prominent critical and progressive academics and researchers to help launch a debate on setting an agenda for a reformed capitalism 'after the crisis'.

Each has produced a short policy-oriented proposal in areas ranging from macroeconomic policy and financial market re-regulation, across labour market and social policies, to issues raised by the need for growth to be ecologically sustainable.

Authors will briefly present their proposals in thematic blocks as an entry point into a broader discussion with representatives of Brussels-based policy-making institutions, think tanks, academia and civil society actors about the reforms Europe needs to shift to an equitable and socially and ecologically sustainable growth model after the crisis.

Registration : see
<http://www.etui.org/Events/2010>

[Communiqué]



EUROPEAN ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

GROUP II
(EMPLOYEES)

99 RUE BELLIARD
OFFICE JDE 7127
B-1040 BRUSSELS
TEL. + 32 2 546.87.83

GR2@EESC.EUROPA.EU
[http://eesc.europa.eu/
groups/2/index_en.asp](http://eesc.europa.eu/groups/2/index_en.asp)

EDITORS:

ANTOINE COCHET
DENIS LIÉGEOIS

MANAGING EDITOR:
GEORGES DASSIS

New member officially joins group II

At the EESC plenary session of 4 and 5 November 2009, the assembly officially accepted as member our colleague [Stefano Palmieri](#), Head of the CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro) Europe Office in Brussels.

We are delighted to welcome him to the Employees Group, and wish him a pleasant and productive term.

