



# Europe III

The voice of Group III  
Various Interests  
February 2016



## Challenge of today: helping refugees arriving in Europe EESC takes a pro-active approach

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Editorial



Pavel Trantina (CZ)  
SOC Section President  
Member of the Various Interests' Group

The current refugee crisis poses a variety of immediate challenges requiring EU action. The EESC has developed strong expertise in the field of migration since the early 2000s and has presented many progressive ideas in its opinions, even before migration became an absolute priority. It is therefore not surprising that one of the SOC section's three priorities concerns refugees and migrants and that this is also considered one of the main overall EESC priorities.

Last autumn, therefore, the EESC Bureau decided to conduct **12 Going local missions**, each comprising 3 members, in order to assess the situation in the countries most hit by the influx of refugees. These missions took place in December 2015 and January 2016 and all the members participating returned very enthusiastic both about the intensive programme and the experience they had gained. Some of you were amongst them and you deserve our appreciation for being so interested and flexible. The first informal stock-taking meeting to gather experience from the majority of these missions took place immediately after the January EESC plenary and I had a pleasure of co-chairing it upon

the invitation of the EESC vice president, Mr Lobo Xavier.

The members who participated in the various missions gave a brief account of their experience, focusing on the problems that they witnessed and **the main issues to be tackled at local, national and European level**. Among the various issues highlighted was the need for better coordination at various levels (public sector, civil society organisations (NGOs and others) and the EU). **Each contribution fell into one of four areas according to the stages of migration:**

1. Countries of origin (and neighbouring countries) - including border control, combating smugglers and improving conditions for refugees
2. Arrival in Europe - here the most important factor is the proper functioning of hotspots and registration procedures
3. Transit across Europe - we are worried about the closing of borders in the Schengen area; it is clear that the Dublin rules need to be revised and that relocation and return policies need to be properly implemented.

4. Integration in destination - the absence of institutions was highlighted, as well as the need for a sustainable, long-term policy, education & training (of both refugees and migrants and those working with them) and labour market integration

There are a number of horizontal topics to be addressed: for example, the **need for a truly common EU migration and integration policy** and procedures, funding and human resources, the need to change the narrative/perception of refugees and migrants, as well as the challenge of dealing with a large number of unaccompanied minors.

An ad hoc group consisting of 16 members has been set up by the Bureau, which should prepare a summary report to be submitted to the March Bureau and March plenary session, in the presence of Commissioner Avramopoulos.

At the same time, I also have the pleasure of cooperating with Christa Schweng from Group I and Anne Demelenne from Group II on the **development of the EESC strategy on refugees and migrants**, which will

certainly benefit from the input of the final report on the Going local missions, but will have a longer term perspective and a broader scope. The aim of the strategy is to give a shape to the numerous ongoing EESC initiatives by building on the work done by the EESC so far and by adding new elements based on the hands-on experience of our members. It shall situate all EESC activities in this area within a coherent framework and make them more visible and easier to understand.

We believe that in order to better contribute to the resolution of refugee crisis and policies for integration of migrants, EESC should become a stronger and more visible EU actor. It should be **recognized as the main supporter of organised civil society** and its activities in this area. It will be channelling its needs, observations and recommendations towards other EU institutions, European citizens and their organisations. By adding our expertise, as well as European and global perspectives, **the EESC will further contribute to the development of the EU policies in these areas.**

## News from Group III

### DEBATE ON SCHENGEN

# #Donttouchmyschengen



**During the Group III meeting on 20 January, president Luca Jahier entered the debate on the Schengen crisis, expressing his full support for maintaining the agreement**

Freedom of movement within the Schengen area is one of the pillars of the EU. Faced with the crisis, European leaders sometimes find themselves caught between their partners and public opinion. The arguments they use with one or the other are sometimes contradictory.

**On behalf of civil society, Group III expressed its unconditional support for maintaining the Schengen area on the basis that questioning the Schengen area, even temporarily, will inevitably shake the foundations of the European Union.**

Besides its symbolic significance, Group III took a look at some of the economic advantages associated with the area:

- There are 1.7 million cross-border workers
- Around 1.25 billion people cross borders every year
- Europe has 24 million business trips per year
- There are 57 million cross-border road journeys per year

The end of Schengen could lead to a serious crisis of the single market, meaning less growth and fewer jobs. This will cause immeasurable damage, economically, politically and socially. In the absence of freedom of movement, the purpose of the single currency would become even lower.

Beyond the economic benefits, free movement also promotes cultural integration among Europeans. Mobility is necessary for the development of intercultural understanding and a sense of unity among Europeans.

Regarding trade, the restoration of border controls would lead to higher costs for companies, which would be passed on to products, consumers and families.

In this respect, a return to national borders would only multiply monitoring costs without improving its effectiveness, not to mention strengthening of the role and earnings of 'smugglers'.

**Group III, representing European civil society, points out that what Europe needs is not less Europe but rather more Europe: joint control of EU external borders or a defence and common security policy.**

Everything must be done to save the Schengen area, and this requires a well-controlled European policy on legal migration.

### EVENT IN MANCHESTER - The UK in the EU

**The Various Interests' Group of the EESC, chaired by its president Luca Jahier, is organising a conference in Manchester on Tuesday 8 March entitled 'The UK in the EU: What Is In It For Us?'**

The UK's future role and membership of the EU is without doubt one of the most important political issues to be debated in the next few months at both the national and European levels. The decision of EU Member States in December 2015 to "...work closely together to find mutually satisfactory solutions in all four areas at the European Council meeting on 18-19

February 2016", has increased the time pressure and placed the topic squarely in the public domain. Arguably, the grass-roots movements and civil society initiatives which are springing up throughout the UK, either in favour of or against EU membership, are prime examples of the active citizenship that the EESC has espoused for decades.



Within this context, the Various Interests' Group has decided to take 'Europe' to the UK and specifically, to Manchester. In particular, the objectives of the conference include:

- To engage with, listen to and learn from British civil society and citizens;
- To provide a forum for local civil society organisations, citizens, the media, economic, social and political actors to come together and openly debate the pros and cons of continued membership of the EU;
- To demonstrate that the EESC and European civil society recognise the importance of the topic and that the decision of the UK referendum will have direct repercussions for both the UK and other EU Member States.

### Just for a laugh



**"Make photocopies of this memo, informing the staff to reduce the use of paper, and distribute it to all of our staff."**

## OUR GROUP'S STRENGTH

The **Consumers and Environment category** met on 3 February 2016, chaired by Bernardo HERNANDEZ BATALLER and Michel DUBROMEL. The meeting continued with the presentation of members to the rest of the category and set out the state of play in current study groups. Spokespersons put forward the possibility of a "Minority declaration" by the category.

In the afternoon, the category asked the TEN Section President, Pierre Jean COULON, to give an overview of the section's work and possible cooperation with the category. The INT Section secretariat gave a brief presentation on the organisation of the 2016 European Consumer Day. Finally, the spokespersons briefly mentioned the 2016 work programme.

The **SMEs, Professions & Crafts category** met for the first time on 3 February 2016, chaired by re-elected spokesperson Panagiotis GKOFAS. The category also appointed its spokesperson for the Liberal Professions, Arno METZLER, Vice-President of Group III. At the meeting, Mr Gkofas introduced the long-term objectives of the category and, after discussions with members, he outlined the main areas of interest for the coming years, such as administrative burdens, vocational training, access to finance and support for start-ups. The category's detailed programme will be made available on the website shortly.

The Category welcomed Commission officials presenting the latest developments on the SME chapter in the TTIP negotiations (Luca DE CARLI, policy officer at DG TRADE), EU SME policies

(Maria Pia VIGLIAROLO, policy officer at DG GROW), Internationalisation opportunities for SMEs (Wojciech SOPINSKI, policy officer at DG GROW) and SMEs' perspectives in EU rural development programmes (Éva DIMOVNÉ KERESZTES, policy analysis and coordination at DG AGRI). Their presentations will be soon available on-line: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.categories-smes-crafts>

The **Farmers' category** will hold the first meeting of the year on Thursday 3 March 2016 from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

On the agenda there is a high level debate on the theme "Implementation of the present CAP, budget and design of CAP post 2020" with interventions of Mr Tom TYNAN and Mr DERMOT Ryan, members of the Cabinet of Commissioner Phil HOGAN and Mr Pekka PESONEN, Secretary General of Copa-Cogeca. The members will then have the opportunity to discuss the state of play in current study groups.

The **Social Economy category** will meet on 23 March from 9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Following a discussion on the draft work programme for 2016, external participants will join the members to listen to presentations on the state of the social economy in several EU Member States.



## Group III Members in the Spotlight playing a key role



Thierry LIBAERT (FR)  
Member of the Various Interests' Group

### FIGHT AGAINST PLANNED OBSOLESCENCE: NEW SUPPORT

The topic of product lifetime has started to become a dominant issue in many debates on consumer practices. It should be noted that the European Economic and Social Committee was the first European body to draft a text - in 2013 - on planned obsolescence (CCMI / 112). On Saturday, 23 January 2016, we were invited to discuss progress on the matter at an afternoon debate devoted to this topic. The audience came in large numbers, which is proof that the subject attracts wide-spread interest. The participants were especially attentive to the social aspects of planned obsolescence, including the potential for jobs generated by goods being more easily repaired. Some participants suggested launching a citizens' initiative on this matter. Looking ahead, the next step will be the publication in early March of the first study on the impact of displaying product lifetimes on consumer behaviour - a study also launched by the Committee.



Ariane RODERT (SE)  
Vice-President of  
Various Interests' Group

### SOCIAL WELFARE – INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE

On 28th of January 2016, the Association of German Social Welfare Organizations (BAGFW e.V.) organised a conference in Berlin on social welfare, in cooperation with the German Ministry for Families, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

Under the chairmanship of EESC Member Prof. SCHLÜTER (DE) the workshop on the topic of social policy in Europe presented and compared the welfare systems of Germany, the UK and Sweden.

Mr. Prof. Cremer, Secretary General of Caritas Germany presented the so called „triangular relationship“, which is a key principle of German social law. EESC Member Mrs. Ariane RODERT (SE) explained the Swedish model. Former EESC Member Mrs. Maureen O'NEILL introduced the audience to the UK model.

According to Mrs. Rodert, the Swedish welfare system is traditionally state driven, but is currently undergoing major changes. The former strong position of public providers in the area of social and health services is more and more taken over by private non-profit organisations. After the compliance with relevant regulations is checked, local authorities grant private service providers the permission to commence their activities. As a result consumers are free to choose between various providers. This freedom of choice is however subject to restrictions which depend on the concrete social service which is to be delivered and the different funding models.

Prof. Cremer pointed out that a harmonisation of national welfare systems would be utopic. However, a stronger coordination of Europe's national welfare systems would be useful. Ariane Rodert and Maureen O'Neill argued that the EU should play a stronger role in the area of social policy, but that so far the member states have blocked most of the initiatives. The participants concluded that legally binding European principles, ensuring for example the access of all Europeans to high quality and affordable social services, should be introduced.



Roman HAKEN (CZ)  
Member of the Various Interests' Group

### THE FUTURE OF THE EU URBAN AGENDA

Recently I was appointed rapporteur for opinion ECO/386 on "The future of the EU Urban Agenda seen from the perspective of civil society". My general focus is on sustainable local development and public participation in the decision-making processes. So, with solid support from the ECO secretariat, I attended several meetings, where I introduced the topic and asked those attending for their comments and recommendations; these meetings included the National Urban Forum in Prague, the Urban Development Network in Brussels, organised by DG Regio, and the SEISMIC meeting in Brussels (<http://www.seismicproject.eu/>). With the section president, Mr van Iersel, and the secretariat representative, Ms Polomik, we visited the Netherlands Embassy in Brussels to speak about the future Amsterdam Pact, due for adoption under the Netherlands Presidency. We organised a public hearing on this topic at the EESC in December and a study visit to Prague (District 14). I took part in the public hearing at the European Parliament – jointly organised by EP REGI and CoR COTER.



Alain COHEUR (BE)  
Member of the Various Interests' Group

### THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

On Thursday 28 January, the European Parliament organized an event entitled 'European Forum on the Social and Solidarity Economy: Transforming the European and Cultural Paradigm'.

The meeting was opened by outstanding personalities in the field of social economy, amongst which our Group III colleague and Vice-President of Social Economy Europe **Alain COHEUR** (FR).

In his opening remarks, M. COHEUR pointed out that the social economy should not limit its scope of activities to the fight against poverty and social exclusion, but considers plural economy to be essential for the well-functioning of the market. Its goal should therefore be the creation of a different economic model based on a new, more transparent, sustainable, and, ultimately, more accountable business model

M. COHEUR emphasized the diversity of activities within the social economy, which demonstrates that a sustainable economic model and social objectives can go hand in hand. The social economy carries the project of a society based on respect for others, tolerance, equality, social justice and solidarity.

M. COHEUR ended his opening speech by insisting that each and every one of us can, through the institution in which we work, help create this society. "If one does not know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favorable". M. COHEUR quoted Roman philosopher Seneca, so let us not be afraid to question our system, to build and develop alternatives on which our citizens can rely, even when the winds are contrary. Also, let us bear in mind: alone, we will not succeed.

## SPECIAL FEATURE: Tunisia's National Dialogue Quartet in the EESC, by President of REX section Dilyana SLAVOVA (BG)



Dilyana SLAVOVA (BG)  
Member of the Various  
Interests' Group

**Tunisia's National Dialogue Quartet, which was awarded the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize, were guests at the EESC.**

The EESC recognises the critical role civil society organisations play in consolidating the democratic process, essential work that has long been acknowledged and supported by the European Union.

The EU has supported, on an individual basis, the members of the Quartet and consulted regularly with them. Our collaboration with them became stronger following the fall of President Ben Ali in 2011 and the creation of the Quartet in 2013.

The Tunisia's National Dialogue Quartet are the architects of a unique transition towards democracy in which civil society has played, and

continues to play, a decisive role in preserving national unity and democracy, making possible the adoption of a Constitution that protects the principles of a pluralistic society, the rule of law and human rights.

"The Quartet's determination and sense of responsibility serve as a model for crisis resolution in the region," This is why Ms Mogherini said

that "only national unity and the promotion of democracy pave the way towards peace and stability." We at the EESC will remain committed to supporting Tunisian civil society organisations as they continue to strengthen and protect their democratic system. We will do so through our work in the Euromed area, a region with which we have been involved since 1995.

# Overview of our Members' Work in the EESC

At its plenary session on 20-21 January 2016 the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted the following opinions for which Group III members were Rapporteurs or Co-Rapporteurs.



**Lutz RIBBE (DE) – TEN/577** "Launching the public consultation process on a new energy market design" (EESC opinion 05033/2015)

The EESC welcomes the communication and supports many of the proposals put forward, which are the logical outcome of the discussions on the European Energy Union.

The market improvements which the communication outlines, including intraday trade, getting rid of rules which distort competition, demand-side management and creating the right price signals are in principle appropriate and important measures for redesigning the energy market, which in future will be more strongly geared to the specific nature of variable, decently produced renewable energies (VRE).

The safe and affordable supply of businesses and households with (cleaner) energy provides a vital basis for the economy and people in today's society. The energy system is fundamentally a matter for the whole of society that can only be accomplished through establishing a careful balance between markets and regulation. To date, this has not been properly discussed at the political level and nor does the communication do so.

The goal of a low-carbon energy supply, with a high proportion of adjustable renewable energy sources, can only be achieved in the short to medium term if all market participants (including new ones) have at their disposal enough options that afford flexibility, such as sufficient storage capacity, flexible, consumer-friendly demand options and flexible power generation technologies (e.g. cogeneration), as well as adequately upgraded and interconnected power distribution infrastructure. Other conditions are that consumers must receive adequate, timely and correct information, they must have the chance to develop their own marketing opportunities and the necessary investments in technology and infrastructure should pay off. None of this is

currently the case.

Price signals are important, since the transformation of the current system will require large investment. With exchange prices currently standing at 30 or 40 EUR/MWh, investments cannot be re-financed, whether they are in new electricity production capacity or in storage technologies. Such exchange prices are only attainable because, among other things, a lot of electricity from power plants whose costs have been paid off is coming onto the market and subsidies are being paid for electricity produced from coal, nuclear power and renewable energy. In other words, today's exchange prices do not even reflect the real cost structure. The prices at power exchanges reflect the actual power generation costs in a distorted way as a consequence of subsidies and overregulation. Only realistic and transparent prices can provide the correct signals for the large-scale investments required for transforming the existing energy systems.

**Lutz RIBBE (DE) – TEN/578** "Delivering a New Deal for Energy Consumers" (EESC opinion 05067/2015)

The EESC welcomes the Commission's analysis and firmly supports its proposals. It is high time to place consumers at the heart of European energy policy and to provide them with comprehensive opportunities for active participation.

The obstacles "preventing consumers from self-generation and self-consumption" addressed in the Commission communication are therefore an issue that urgently needs to be resolved. Unfortunately, however, the document does not explain in sufficient detail where and how these obstacles arise and what must be done to eliminate them. The Commission should produce a separate document to this end.

The EESC considers the Commission's approach - recognising local conditions, taking them more into account and promoting them, and supporting the involvement of local market participants - to be correct.

The question of how to design energy systems is of strategic importance. What is needed is competition to design the most

efficient overall system. This goes far beyond production and conventional marketing.

Demand response will play a central role. To this end, the technical conditions (smart meters, smart grids) must first of all be established on the consumer side and should be understood and financed as part of grid development.

Demand response systems could be used by consumers to do more than just adapt their energy consumption and thereby save money. As the Commission quite rightly points out, "the combination of decentralised generation and storage options with demand side flexibility can further enable consumers to become their own suppliers and managers for (a part of) their energy needs, becoming producers and consumers and reduce their energy bills" ("prosumers").

New incentive schemes must be developed that reward efforts to design self-consumption, direct supply, storage of surplus energy and the provision of control power, i.e. active load management for all market participants, in a way which benefits the system.

NOTE: The complete texts of all EESC opinions are available in various language versions on the Committee's website:

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.opinions-search>

## Quote of the month...



"There is no future for the people of Europe other than in union"

Jean Monnet

French political economist and diplomat  
Founding father of the European Union

## Highlights of the January 2016 EESC Plenary Session

### Group III members co-ordinating the work on new opinions

Bernardo HERNÁNDEZ BATALLER (ES) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "Ensuring the cross-border portability of online content services in the internal market" – INT/781

Jorge PEGADO LIZ (PT) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "Company law" – INT/780

Elzbieta SZADZINSKA (PL) President of the study group for the opinion on: "European standardisation 2016" – INT/783

Cristian PIRVULESCU (RO) Co-Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "European Border and Coast Guard" – SOC/534

Ronny LANNOO (BE) President of the study group for the opinion on: "The REFIT programme" – Sub-Committee SC/044

Cristian PIRVULESCU (RO) is President of the study group for the opinion on: "On the way to a coherent EU labour migration policy" – SOC/539

Antonio LONGO (IT) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "The limits for companies' transparency requirements" – ECO/404

Thierry LIBAERT (FR) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "The functional economy" – INT/784

Ariane RODERT (SE) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "Social Economy Enterprises as a driver for migrant integration" – INT/785

Arno METZLER (DE) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "Threats and obstacles to the Single Market" – INT/786

Etele BARÁTH (HU) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "New measures for development-oriented governance and implementation – recommendations for the mid-term evaluation of the European Structural and Investment Funds" – ECO/400

Krzysztof PATER (PL) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "EU Budget performance and its focus on real results: The key to sound financial management" – ECO/399

Carlos TRIAS PINTÓ (ES) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "Completing European Monetary Union: Policies of the Eurozone and the case of Greece" – ECO/401

Ákos TOPOLANSKI (HU) is the Co-Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on "European control mechanism on the rule of law and fundamental rights" – SOC/536

Antonio LONGO (IT) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "European Citizens' Initiative (Review)" – SC/043

Krzysztof BALON (PL) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "Long term social care, labour supply and mobility" – SOC/535

Krzysztof BALON (PL) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "The effectiveness of ESF and FEAD funding as part of civil society efforts to tackle poverty and social exclusion under the Europe 2020 strategy" – SOC/537

Ioannis VARDAKASTANIS (EL) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "Concluding observations of the UN CRPD Committee to the European Union – A new strategy for persons with disabilities in the European Union" – SOC/538

Carlos TRIAS PINTÓ (ES) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "Industry 4.0: State of play – the way forward" – CCMI/141

Mihai IVASCU (RO) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "Role and effect of JTI and PPPs in implementing Horizon 2020 for sustainable industrial change" – CCMI/142

Mindaugas MACIULEVICIUS (LT) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "The impact on key industrial sectors (and on jobs and growth) of the possible granting of market economy treatment to China (for the purpose of trade defence instruments)" – CCMI/144

Lutz RIBBE (DE) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "The Biodiversity policy of the EU" – NAT/681

Timo TIAINEN (FI) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "The main underlying factors that influence the CAP post-2020" – NAT/682



Thierry LIBAERT (FR) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "Towards applying Nudge Thinking to EU Policies" – NAT/685

Lutz RIBBE (DE) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "Building a coalition of civil society and subnational authorities to deliver commitments of the Paris Agreement" – NAT/684

Tomi VIDAN (HR) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "Prosumer Energy and Prosumer Power Cooperatives: opportunities and challenges in the EU countries" – TEN/583

Renate HEINISCH (DE) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "The digital pillar of growth: e-seniors, a potential 25% of the European population" – TEN/584

Benedicte FEDERSPIEL (DK) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "The position of the EESC on specific key issues of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations" – REX/464

Ionut SIBIAN (RO) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "The new EU strategy on foreign and security policy" – REX/463

Ioannis VARDAKASTANIS (EL) is the Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on: "The 2030 Agenda – A European Union committed to sustainable development" – REX/461

Jean-Marc ROIRANT (FR) is the Co-Rapporteur of the study group for the opinion on "Cooperation with third countries in promoting regular migration to the EU" – REX/640

The full listing of membership of the study groups for the new work may be consulted here: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.group-3-new-study-groups>