



IN.

Interview



Jorge Nuño Mayer

Secretary General of Caritas Europe

Striving to transform society into a more just and inclusive civilisation

Caritas Europa is the network of Caritas organisations throughout the European continent. The united strength of its 49 members, present in 46 European countries, makes of Caritas Europa one of the major social actors in Europe. It focuses its activities on issues relating to poverty, social exclusion and inequality, migration and asylum in Europe. On the global level, Caritas Europa is actively engaged in humanitarian assistance and international development throughout the world. One of its primary aims is to bring forward the needs of the people experiencing poverty and the voice of its member organisations to the European Institutions, European Union Member States and different public authorities, as well as private partners.

EUROPE III: What are the main aims and objectives of Caritas Europe?

Caritas Europa has a heartfelt commitment to analyse and fight against poverty and social exclusion. We advocate for, and with, people in need in order to transform society into a more just and inclusive civilisation. We promote the necessity of a caring society and justice where every human person can flourish and live in peace and dignity as part of one human family. In the current economic crisis, these values seem to be more important than ever.

EUROPE III: What are the key issues and problematic situations facing Europe's citizens that you have to deal with?

Clearly poverty; also the new poverties provoked by the economic crisis. And this is not only about economic deprivation because of unemployment and lack of opportunities. It is about cutbacks in education, health, social services, that cause more difficulties and lack of opportunities for children and adults to further develop and contribute to the common good. And in an ageing society we need migration to contribute to the welfare system, but the legal frameworks for migration and asylum are far from being helpful for the people and the European societies.

EUROPE III: To what extent do you think the EU 2020 strategy will be implemented to make a significant difference to child poverty.

The fifth objective of the EU 2020 strategy – where the aim is to bring at least 20 million people out of poverty – is for us the most important one. Also the education target to reduce school drop out is crucial. However, we fear that these targets are not taken seriously in practice by the EU and its Member States. This European Platform against Poverty names Child Poverty as one of the priority issues that the EU must tackle. There are 20 million children at risk of poverty in Europe at the moment and that number is growing. If you are a child in Europe you are more at risk of poverty than the average person. The rhetoric from EU political leaders on the importance of tackling child poverty has been very

strong over the past few years. But we need to make sure that the rhetoric is turned into action. Caritas Europa recently launched a 'Ten Pack' of recommendations on Child Poverty aimed at the European Commission and the governments of Member States. We want to see a specific sub-target for Child Poverty being set within the Europe 2020 Strategy, and we want to see Member States include child poverty reduction targets in their National Reform Programmes each year. It would be the responsibility of the EU Commission then to monitor progress made by MS on tackling child poverty and to ensure that the Country Specific Recommendations that it produces each year target the area of child poverty specifically.

EUROPE III: There is considerable discussion about poverty being determined at less than 60% of the average income in a Member State. Do you consider this to be the most important measure or are the material deprivation targets of equal more relevance?

Income level is a basic measure of poverty and we must never lose sight of that fact. But measures of material deprivation are also very important. For example if a child has no place in which to do his or her homework, if he or she has no winter coat or cannot afford school books, it will be impossible for him/her to prosper in the same way as his/her peers. So as far as Caritas Europa is concerned, the best

Achieving smart and inclusive growth in a time of austerity

Editorial



Étele Baráth (HU)

Member of Group III

The aim of the own-initiative opinion is to answer one of the most frequently asked questions in the European Union: how to reconcile growth and cohesion.

In our opinion, generally speaking, the triple objective of the Europe 2020 strategy, i.e., smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, is appropriate. It is admittedly extremely difficult, but at the same time necessary to achieve these three goals simultaneously. Intelligent implementation of the strategy has become all the more important in this period of major challenges. The financial and economic crisis has become a social and political crisis as well as a crisis of solidarity. It would be a terrible mistake to draw up another (new or parallel) programme for growth. We need to build on the existing strategy and fine-tune it, with instruments in place to strengthen it. The EU needs to show that it has the necessary political will and a specific vision of substantially closer integration. The EU needs fiscal consolidation, an effective programme for growth, and a banking union. At the same time, it is vital to enrich the various forms of multilevel cooperation between Member States and the regions.

Existing measures are not sufficient; it is essential to widen the range of existing instruments while further strengthening governance in support of economic policy and development. It is indispensable to increase EU funding. It has been proven that most EU funding represents an efficient investment (European added value). Faster structural reforms in the Member States are needed. The draft opinion suggests that a growing number of the EU's financial tools could be used to fund the structural changes to be carried out in Member States. In the interests of strengthening foundations for growth, measures such as the issuance of project bonds, should be accelerated.

It is not enough just to define "frameworks" such as the Multiannual Financial Framework or the EU Common Strategic Framework. By identifying key European projects and implementing specific, pan-European, cross-sectoral, multi-dimensional programmes at European level, the objectives can be achieved more quickly. "Smart" and "inclusive" growth can be achieved with a stronger focus on employment as a common goal and encouragement for networks covering a wide range of

activities. Alongside traditional criteria, there is an increasing role for certain "soft" factors (e.g. the situation in terms of healthcare and demographics, the quality of the environment, educational quality and trends, etc). If extended to other common European objectives, and with the involvement of private-sector funding too, the Connecting Europe Facility could be a good example of closer integration.

Networking between individual European urban centres, hubs and concentrations of highly developed activities in line with the concept of excellence could be a good example of dynamic and inclusive, but sustainable development. Microeconomic regional strategies and instruments should be supported. It is vital to ensure much broader involvement of experts and public opinion in preparing decisions. We therefore suggest defining a 12th thematic objective in the Common Strategic Framework, in order to strengthen "dialogue with the media and civil society".

measures of poverty are those which are multi-dimensional – in the way that poverty itself is – and which take account of an individual's income levels, levels of material deprivation and level of employment/work intensity. These indicators have to be brought together with other indicators like housing, education, health... When we see the discussion around indicators we wonder if they are not about looking for excuses, rather than addressing the problems of the people.

EUROPE III: A key issue is that of housing on the health and well-being of children. Can you say more about the impact of inadequate housing?

The right to decent housing is a fundamental human right, and one which every developed society should be able to meet in order to properly provide for its citizens. Children's health is especially vulnerable to damp, crowded or poorly ventilated housing. Very often children who live in inadequate or poor housing do not thrive, and develop health problems such as colds, respiratory problems and infections. Children have a right to live in a warm, dry well-ventilated homes which are not over-crowded. Unfortunately many children in poverty live in circumstances which are well below these standards. And this affects definitively their opportunities for a future better life.

6. There is a growing issue for children whose parents have left them in their country of origin so that they can find work

somewhere else in Europe. What is the effect on the children and the future cohesion of Member States?

Children suffer of being apart from their parents, they are often traumatized. In some cases they lose emotional connections to their parents that are replaced by money and goods being sent to the children by parents. They have to become adult very soon.

EU Member States should be aware of the fact that their restrictive migration policies, not facilitating the family reunification, have direct impact on lives of these children and families. More often people have to choose irregular ways to migrate for work, so they cannot go back and visit their families that easily. Legal channels for migration are the crucial tool that could help those families of migrants.

EUROPE III: Can you give examples of where and how the financial crisis has affected services to children and the elderly in the Member States?

Rates of child poverty vary between Member States from 10 to 35%. Caritas organisations are aware of the current impact of the financial crisis particularly on children, and the elderly. Especially vulnerable to poverty are children in one-parent families and large families. Many of the services on which they depend – health, education social services- are having their budgets cut back. Greece is an example of a country where the financial austerity measures are having a very

negative impact on children. But it is not alone in this. The EU Commission recently warned the UK of the potential for its welfare cutbacks to increase child poverty levels.

EUROPE III: What were the main conclusions of your recent seminar on child poverty on 19 June 2012

Our seminar was a vibrant meeting place of experts in child poverty and EU decision makers. The main conclusions of the seminar were that the EU and its Member States need to move from rhetoric to action in relation to tackling Child Poverty. Caritas launched ten key recommendations on how this could be done. We are committed to continuing the work of lobbying the EU institutions, national and local governments to ensure that child poverty remains top of the political agenda. We also intend to continue the good work that many Caritas Member Organisations are doing at a national level with children and their families who live in poverty.

To find out more about this organisation, please visit: <http://www.caritas-europa.org/code/en/abou.asp?Page=3&menuPage=3>



Highlights of the May 2012 EESC Plenary Session

Group III members co-ordinating the work on new opinions

Mr Antonio LONGO (IT) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "A strategy for e-procurement" – INT/646.

Mr Niko Van NIEKERK (NL) is the President of the study group for the own-initiative opinion on: "The partnership principle in the implementation of the Common Strategic Framework Funds - elements for a European Code of Conduct on Partnership" – ECO/330.

Mr Viliam PÁLENÍK (SK) is the Rapporteur for the opinion on: "The common system of value added tax, as regards the treatment of vouchers" – ECO/331.

Mr Étele BARÁTH (HU) is the President of the study group for the exploratory opinion on: "Developing a macro-regional strategy for the Mediterranean" – ECO/332.

Mr Cristian PÎRVULESCU (RO) is the Rapporteur for the exploratory opinion on: "Establishing a system for comparing fingerprints (Eurodac)" – SOC/466.

Mr Pedro NARRO (ES) is the President of the study group for the opinion on: "European Innovation Partnership on Water" – NAT/564.



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>

Group III Members in the Spotlight playing a key role



On 7th June 2012, the online news agency AFONLINE, "The Voice of Africa", published an interview with President Jahier concerning "2015: European Year for International Co-operation".

To read the interview, please go to: <http://www.afronline.org/?p=25344>



LIKE THE FROG THAT GETS COOKED IN A POT FULL OF WATER!

Photo : Loïc Dequier (Sud-Oest)

On 25 June 2012, Emma Saint-Genez, a journalist with the French Journal, Sud-Ouest, interviewed Group III member, Georges Cingal (FR), who started by saying: "My problem is that I was never able to bear not understanding something..." In the article, George recalls how he got more and more involved in the protection of nature and the environment, dealing with local, regional, national, European, international issues. It all started with the pollution of the environment (Milieus) and thinking about the causes and effects of climate change. He is sure that he has been much more useful to society as an environmental lobbyist than he would be as a politician. So, he concludes he is very happy to work with his fellow members in EESC: "The debates may be tough at times, but we always argue about the problems, we never quarrel as persons", he states. The journalist wondered whether EESC opinions, especially those initiated by members, were not destined to end up forgotten in some cupboard. George answered: "I can assure that the own-initiative opinion, which I have recently proposed at the EESC on "The quality of railway services in the EU", will be of great interest to my friends in the Parliament, whether they be either Socialists or Conservatives". The journalist also asked why people were not more enthusiastic about ecology. George recalled the story of the frog which is plunged in a pot of hot water and jumps out, whereas the other frog plunged in a pot of cold water keeps quiet, even if the water is heated!

To read the text of the full interview - in French - please goes to: <http://www.sudouest.fr/2012/06/25/comme-la-grenouille-qui-cuit-dans-la-casserole-752586-731.php#xtor=RSS-10521769>



From the left: Anne Sophie Parent Secretary-General of AGE Platform Europe, Lenia Samuel of DG Employment, Renate Heinisch, EESC and Maria Iglesia-Gomez of DG Sanco

On 4 June 2012, Group III member, Renate Heinisch (DE), was a speaker at the conference organised by the European Commission in Brussels on "Good Governance for Active and Healthy Ageing". The purpose of the event was to look at how different levels of government can cooperate in designing effective and comprehensive strategies for

active healthy ageing. The conference prepared the ground for the development of integrated strategies for active and healthy ageing to be adopted in the wake of the European Year 2012 for active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. Renate Heinisch was a speaker in the Panel: "Ageing after the European Year – the role of the EU and its institutions". Each speaker presented a key policy proposal from their institution on how to enable effective support from the EU for active and healthy ageing strategies at Member State level and also explained the importance this proposal might have what their institution could do to advance this proposal. Amongst topics that should receive attention, the EESC and the European Alliance for Active ageing cited : A Roadmap for mainstreaming ageing; European Senior Action plan in the framework of EU policy on the elderly; Action for Generations in the Grundtvig programme (Erasmus for all) "What counts is a good start in life and a dignified end to life"; A Roadmap for research in ageing: Prevention, competence of the patient, pain relief therapy, mental health, and finally, Support a European Year of Mental Health.

To find out more about this event, please go to: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventsId=594&furtherEvents=yes>



Group III warmly congratulates its member, Yannis Vardakastanis (EL), President of the EDF, on his recent appointment as the new Chair of IDA. On this occasion he said: "Together with all member organisations around the world, IDA represents one billion people living with a disability". Thanks to its unique composition as a network of the foremost

international disability rights organisations, IDA is now the unquestionable voice of persons with disabilities at the United Nations system and other international institutions. IDA is the voice of all those without voice, all those excluded from decision making, from political participation. We all need to feel that IDA represents them in the international political arena."

For more information, please see: http://www.edf-feph.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=13855&thebloc=30461

Quote of the month...



"I soothe my conscience now with the thought that it is better for these difficult words to be put down on paper, rather than, that Mummy should have to carry them in her heart, should I utter them."

Anna Frank (1929-1945)
Diarist, victim of the Holocaust, 70 years ago, in Amsterdam, on the morning of Monday, 6 July 1942 her family went into hiding in a secret annex (Achterhuis), and were discovered and arrested on the morning of 4 August 1944.

Highlights of the conference on “Youth Education and Employment within the Europe 2020 Strategy” on 8th June in Sofia

The conference on “Youth Education and Employment within the Europe 2020 Strategy”, organised jointly by Group III of the EESC, the Bulgarian Economic and Social Council, the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Representation of the European Commission in Bulgaria, was held on 8th June in Sofia. This main topic is currently of key importance to national and European policymakers, given that the average rate of youth unemployment in the European Union stands at 22%, increasing to a worrying 50% of those who are unemployed in Spain and Greece. Moreover, early school leaving represents a serious challenge, due to the fact that in the European Union, 1/7 children drop out of school with no skills and thus, a bleak future. One of the primary aims of the conference was to discuss the topic in relation with the Europe 2020 Strategy, which contains two main objectives related to education: to reduce the share of early school leavers to under 10 % and to raise the share of young people with higher education to at least 40 %.

The conference was launched by the opening session attended by several personalities both from Bulgaria, namely by Lalko Dulevski, President of the Bulgarian ESC, Tsetska Tsacheva, President of the National Assembly, and Totyu Mladenov, Minister for Labour and Social Policy, and from European Union institutions, represented by Luca Jahier, President of Group III of the EESC, and Koos Richelle, Director-General of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission. In his speech, Luca Jahier gave an overview of the three main topics which were then treated during the different thematic sessions of the conference. He pointed out that the economic crisis has made youth unemployment more acute and visible and that the objectives of Europe 2020 Strategy related to education are still far from being fulfilled. At the same time, he mentioned some paths which could help to solve the problems of youth unemployment and of early school leaving as well. For instance, he referred to three sectors that Universities and public authorities should take into account to face the skill mismatch between education acquired and the needs of the European labour market: the green economy, health sector and information and communications technologies. Koos Richelle focused on related European Commission's initiatives, such as the Youth initiative that is being implemented in the Member States with the highest youth unemployment rates, using funds from the European Social Fund. He also stressed the necessity to introduce growth friendly measures in Member States that would improve job possibilities.

The first thematic session on “The Role of Universities in the training and realization of young people” was chaired and moderated by Sorin Ionița, Member of Group III of the EESC. The first intervention was given by Indrė Vareikytė who represents the Lithuanian Youth Council in Group III of the EESC. Her intervention was followed by presentations by two Bulgarian representatives of academics, Statty Stattev, Rector of the University of National and World Economy, and Dimitar Grekov, Rector of the Agricultural University in Plovdiv, who both consider that their respective Universities succeeded in improving the position of graduates, thanks to establishing regular contacts between the Universities and businesses. During this session, it was highlighted that businesses and society should participate more actively in curricula design as well as short and long term planning of Universities and other higher education institutions. Another important conclusion consisted of the fact that for young people, who are still jobless within four months after they have graduated or left school, employment or continued education and training should be guaranteed.

The second thematic session, chaired and moderated by Maureen O'Neill, Vice-President of Group III of the EESC, addressed “Policies and measures for the prevention of early school leaving”. A presentation was given by Grace Attard, Member of the Bureau of Group III, who

described several best practices aimed at reducing the early school leaving in Malta. This presentation was followed by intervention by Yanka Takeva, Member of the Bulgarian ESC and Rapporteur on the ESC's opinion “Policies to reduce early leaving of the educational system”, who pointed out that in Bulgaria, early school leaving concerns mainly the Roma minority and she referred to various incentives which could be used to tackle this problem, such as inclusion of Roma children in preschool activities. During the session, several general suggestions were made, such as a greater supply of high-quality primary vocational education and training, collaboration with employers and synergy between the different education levels or extension of successful practices, already implemented in several EU Member States, by introducing an “individual education number” for each pupil and building a national registry of pupils.



The third thematic session on “Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems” was chaired and moderated by Krzysztof Pater, Member of the Bureau of Group III and President of the Labour market Observatory (LMO) at the EESC. The main interventions were given by Juraj Stern, Member of the Bureau of Group III, and Neno Pavlov, Vice-President of the Bulgarian ESC. It was stressed that nowadays in the

European Union, there is a mismatch between Universities' curricula and the actual real needs of the labour market and to face this shortcoming, the labour market should be evaluated and consequently the educational programmes and fields of education have to be determined following the results of such evaluations and students should be advised to acquire the relevant skills. This could help avoid the risk that future high schools' graduates would have no prospects of finding a job relevant to their level of education.

Each thematic session was followed by a detailed discussion with participants at the conference. Some Members of Group III of the EESC presented best practices from their respective countries, including Andris Gobiņš who mentioned that in Latvia, European Union funds are being used to promote first job opportunities. In addition to that, Bulgarian participants, often coming from educational institutions, contributed to the discussions by outlining their own successful practices, for instance addressing the prevention of early school leaving of Roma children by facilitating their efficient integration in schools.

In the closing session of the conference, a summary of the general conclusions was presented by Lalko Dulevski, President of the Bulgarian ESC, who reminded the assembly, once again, that it is not possible to separate the role played by Universities and other educational institutions from the necessity to achieve fulfilment in the labour market, a fact that was referred to in numerous interventions during the day.

In his final remarks, the “Various Interests” Group President, Luca Jahier, thanked the hosts and co-organisers, the moderators, speakers and participants for their invaluable contribution to what had been a very successful and interesting day of insightful discussions and debate. He said that the final conclusions would be published, in due course.

To read the final conclusions of the conference, please visit the Group III website at: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-youth-education-employment-conclusions.23692>

And you can also read a quote from President Jahier on the consequence of early school leaving, which he made during an interview with the news agency Focus here: <http://www.focus-fen.net/?id=n280296>

OUR GROUP'S STRENGTH



The ‘Consumers and Environment Category’ and the ‘Farmers’ Category’ held a joint meeting at the EESC on Wednesday 27 June 2012 under the overarching title: “Environment and society: Dialogue between Farmers and Consumers”. Following some brief words of welcome from the two co-chairs, Yves Somville (BE), spokesperson for the Farmers category and Reine-Claude Mader (FR), spokesperson for the Consumers and Environment category the first panel entitled “Environmental issues: consumer perception and farmers’ response” got underway.

Presentations were made by Sebastian Koos, Sociologist at the University of Mannheim (Germany), on “How consumers take ethical and environmental issues into account when making their purchases”, followed by Jean Marot, Advisor to the Agricultural Federation of Wallonia (FWA), who spoke about “Agriculture and the environment: time to adapt the clichéd image”. Then Faustine Defossez, Agriculture and Bioenergy policy officer at

the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) rounded-off the session with her presentation on “The main environmental impacts of European farming - How to ensure positive and sustainable outcomes for society?”. The presentations were followed by an extensive and fruitful debate with the categories members.

The main title for the afternoon session was “Society's expectations: environmental labelling and integrated agriculture”. Firstly, Martin Bortzmeyer, Head of the Agriculture, Industry and Energy infrastructure office at the Commissariat-General of Sustainable Development (France) addressed the issue of “Piloting the environmental labelling of food products” and was followed by Andreas Frangenberg, Technical Director at EISA (European Initiative for Sustainable Development in Agriculture), who spoke about “Integrated agriculture”. Members of both categories took the floor and asked questions and debated with the two panellists.

The spokespersons of the Categories closed the meeting drawing-up the main conclusions, namely:

- guarantee a healthy diet for all of society at an affordable price
- achieve an equal distribution of added value at each stage of the food chain process
- recognition of Integrated Agriculture as a possible solution to realising quality standards and achieving environmental protection
- improved and standardised labelling giving transparent information to consumers and enabling them to choose products and have confidence in the producers
- tackle the issue of the lack of respect and non-compliance of the European criteria for quality and environmental protection with regard to products coming from outside the EU
- increase the resources allocated to public research aiming at maintaining the quality

and the independence of experts who sit on evaluation committees (e.g. for the agreement of a phytopharmaceutical product being put on the market)

On 19 July the Category “SMEs/Crafts/Liberal Professions” will organise the “Day of the Liberal Professions”. Representatives of national organisations from Spain, Italy, Portugal, Austria Belgium and France will meet with the EESC members to discuss the situation of liberal professions in their countries vis-à-vis of the trend in Europe going towards a deregulation following the reform of the Directive on recognition of qualifications.

The draft agenda will be available shortly on line at this address: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.smes-professions-and-crafts-category-documents>

Overview of our Members' Work in the EESC

At its plenary session on 23-24 May 2012 the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted the following opinions for which Group III members were Rapporteurs or Co-Rapporteurs.



Bernardo HERNÁNDEZ BATALLER (ES) - INT/587 "Tax and financial havens: a threat to the EU's internal market" (EESC opinion 1289/2012)

In this own-initiative opinion the EESC states that the European Union must step up its action within the G-20, the OECD and the FATF (Financial Action Task Force) to eradicate opaque tax jurisdictions and to compel Member States to combat the crime originating in many of these jurisdictions. The EESC calls on the Union's institutions to adopt measures to prevent abuse of the principle of "residence" by means of ownership arrangements and fictitious residency, whereby holding companies not actively engaged in business, or bogus companies, allow the owners to avoid paying taxes in their country of domicile. Tax havens distort the internal market: effective EU action is therefore needed that can ensure fiscal justice and prevent destabilising opacity, tax evasion and corruption through tax havens. All obstacles to the automatic exchange of bank information must be removed so that the authors of transactions and owners of bank accounts can be easily identified. Companies must be required to draw up statements of account, broken down by country, stating the scale of their activities, the number of employees and the profits made in each country. In conclusion, the EESC calls for a coordinated strategy to step up the fight against tax evasion and to restrict the right to free establishment in the case of completely bogus businesses set up exclusively for tax purposes.



Renate HEINISCH (DE) - INT/588 "Horizon 2020: Road maps for ageing" (EESC opinion 1290/2012)

In this own-initiative opinion, the EESC states that in order to meet the major challenges facing us and to tap into the potential offered by demographic change and the accompanying economic and social developments in the future, EU Member States must step up appropriate action over the next few years at different levels and in a wide variety of fields. Coordinated research could make a decisive contribution to appropriate measures at regional, national and European level, by establishing a sound basis for planning and decision-making. Road maps on the design of long-term research programmes are useful in setting future research priorities. Current road maps on ageing and demographic change have already identified some key aspects of relevance to the "Horizon 2020".

Renate HEINISCH (DE) - INT/599 "Partnering in Research and Innovation" (EESC opinion 1291/2012)

The EESC shares the Commission's view that partnerships offer a range of advantages and still have untapped potential. The EESC, therefore, welcomes the Commission's initiative to establish and promote European innovation partnerships (EIP) under the Innovation Union flagship initiative. To ensure that partnerships have a long lifespan and a sustainable impact, conditions must be put in place that are geared towards overcoming challenges relating to management structures, financing and implementation. A basic requirement is that partnerships must be simple, flexible, inclusive and open, steering groups should be representative and balanced, and relations between existing initiatives and instruments must be clarified from the beginning. There must be close ties with stakeholders at national, regional and local level with a view to taking account of particular national and regional features. At the same time, the importance of the global dimension of current challenges must not be overlooked.



Ariane RODERT (SE) - INT/623 "European Social Entrepreneurship Funds" (EESC opinion 1294/2012)

The EESC welcomes the European Commission's proposal to regulate the development of such funds by creating clarity and certainty for all parties concerned while facilitating cross-border raising of capital. Improving access to appropriate capital for social entrepreneurship is a top priority and the Committee urges the Commission to continue to use the definition of social entrepreneurship set out in the Social Business Initiative, rather than coining a new definition. In the EESC's opinion, there is a risk that some of the proposed equity instruments may have a limited impact on investment in social enterprise, as the structure of the proposed investment instruments assume a type of ownership that, in many cases, is incompatible with the legal forms within which many social enterprises operate. As regards these legal forms, the most worthwhile instruments for further development are the proposed long-term loans and any other type of participation. To improve the impact of these types of funds on social entrepreneurship, they might usefully be seen as one element of a hybrid capital solution, which is the most appropriate form of financing for social entrepreneurship. The greatest challenge in this proposal is the need to measure and report on the social effects and impact on society of portfolio undertakings. Investment readiness programmes and other forms of capacity-building for all parties should also be set up in order to build trust and joint structures specifically tailored to this type of fund.



Gerd WOLF (DE) - INT/633 "Supplementary Research Programme for the ITER project (2014-2018)" (EESC opinion 1295/2012)

As a major international project based in EU territory, ITER is the decisive, globally unique step forward needed to exploit fusion energy in the future. The Committee reiterates the importance of this project for the competitiveness of European industry in developing the most ambitious new technologies. The EESC urgently calls for more investment in R&D of technologies with the potential for long-term provision of sufficient, sustainable and climate-friendly energy in order to bring about the ambitious adjustment of our energy system that is needed. The Committee therefore strongly opposes the Commission's proposal to remove European commitments in constructing ITER from the MFF. Doing so would not only compromise the project, but also throw into question the reliability of the EU as an international partner.



Cristian PÎRVULESCU (RO) - SOC/436 "Green Paper on the right to family reunification of third-country nationals living in the European Union" (EESC opinion 1300/2012)

The EESC welcomes the European Commission's efforts to organise a broad public debate on the Directive on family reunification. Irrespective of the political and economic challenges that European society faces, it is vital to protect and strengthen the respect for fundamental rights upon which the European venture is built. The Committee believes that the debate on the Directive and its impact should focus on the practical aspects of implementation and that the way in which action will be taken and the instruments used should be established during a subsequent phase, again with the consultation of stakeholders. The EESC notes that in highly sensitive areas such as fraud and forced marriages, there is not enough evidence to guide policy-making. The Committee therefore recommends furthering efforts to collect information, particularly qualitative data, in such sensitive and pertinent areas.



Stuart ETHERINGTON (UK) - SOC/440 "A renewed EU strategy 2011-14 for Corporate Social Responsibility" (EESC opinion 1301/2012)

The EESC commends the Commission on its commitment to fostering responsible business practice, through its range of policy initiatives outlined in the responsible business package, as part of the Europe 2020 strategy. The Commission's action plan reflects mainly the old (and now abandoned) definition of CSR and reads as a mere continuation of the promotional activities of the past ten years. The Committee would rather have expected plans pertaining to what should be new in the "renewed strategy": plans to encourage and help enterprises to take responsibility for their impacts on society and to demonstrate to their stakeholders how they try to do this. The Committee agrees with the Commission that respect for applicable legislation and for collective agreements between social partners is a prerequisite for meeting the responsibility enterprises have for their impacts on society. Female representation in the boardroom and CSR are proven to be linked with gender-inclusive leadership having a positive impact on CSR. The European Union should be urged to promote and to protect authoritative international frameworks for CSR. Enterprises should respect these instruments, use them for guidance in developing their CSR activities and demonstrate to their stakeholders how they use them.



Ákos TOPOLÁNSZKY (HU) - SOC/441 "Towards a stronger European response to drugs" (EESC opinion 1302/2012)

The EESC welcomes the proposals in the Commission communication, and agrees that there must be a balanced approach to effectively influencing supply and demand for drugs. However, it is disappointed that the Communication constitutes a step back compared to the previous balanced and consensus-based approach, with its one-sided emphasis on measures to reduce supply. Moreover, the Committee does not feel that a regulatory and criminal law approach suffices, and calls for the development of a new EU-level drug strategy; it supports further harmonisation of national measures to combat drug trafficking; recommends developing and using an independent, scientifically based evaluation system on supply reduction measures; feels that the section of the Communication on demand reduction is over-generalised and disproportionate; believes that a comprehensive and coordinated policy on addiction to all psychoactive drugs, both "legal" and "illegal", is needed, and finally, supports the work of the EU Civil Society Forum on Drugs.



Jorge PEGADO LIZ (PT) - SOC/455 "General Data Protection Regulation" (EESC opinion 1303/2012)

The EESC welcomes the general direction taken by the Commission, endorses the proposed choice of legal basis, approves of the strong focus on the protection of fundamental rights and agrees in principle with the objectives of the proposal. However, the Committee regrets the fact that the stated principles of the right to protection of personal data are qualified by an excessive number of exceptions and restrictions. In the new context of the digital economy, the Committee shares the Commission's opinion that, "individuals have

the right to enjoy effective control over their personal information" and considers that this right should be extended to cover the various purposes for which individual profiles are drawn up on the basis of data collected by numerous (legal and sometimes illegal) methods and its processing. When it comes to delegated acts, references to which appear almost everywhere, the Committee cannot accept those that do not fall within the express scope of Article 290 TFEU. The EESC considers that several improvements and clarifications can be made to the proposed text and it gives some detailed examples in this opinion in relation to a number of articles. Lastly, the EESC calls on the Commission to reconsider certain aspects of the proposal that it deems unacceptable, in sensitive areas such as child protection, the right to object, profiling, certain restrictions to the rights granted, the threshold of 250 workers for the appointment of a DPO and the way in which the "one-stop shop" is organised.



Gabriel SARRÓ IPARRAGUIRRE (ES) - NAT/548 "Measures against countries allowing non-sustainable fishing" (EESC opinion 1306/2012)

The EESC fully endorses the proposal and believes that together, the proposed measures must ensure that those countries allowing non sustainable fishing stop doing so. Moreover, the Committee considers these measures to be the most effective that the EU can adopt. Therefore, while it congratulates the Commission on its decision to submit this proposal for a regulation, which broadens and develops the measures set down in the regulation on illegal fishing, the Committee urges the Commission to ensure that it is strictly enforced and fairly monitored. The Committee also warns that, even if requests are made to the World Trade Organization, there should be no question as to its continued application, for it is through this regulation that the long-term sustainability of the fish stocks of common interest to the EU and third countries can be guaranteed.



Nikolaos LIOLIOS (EL) - NAT/553 "Movement of pet animals" (EESC opinion 1308/2012)

The EESC considers that the Commission's proposal sets out in full the framework for non commercial movements of pet animals, ensuring the protection of public health and making the rules clear and accessible to the general public. Moreover, it endorses the removal of unjustified obstacles to the movement of pet animals provided that validated scientific information is taken into account and that the Commission conducts appropriate consultations with experts before granting derogations. The requirement to provide identification documents ensures that the health of pet animals would be certified and the EESC supports that implantation of a transponder by a qualified veterinarian is made the sole method of identifying dogs, cats and ferrets, with the exception of animals already marked using a tattoo.



Richard ADAMS (UK) - TEN/481 "Energy Roadmap 2050" (EESC opinion 1315/2012)

The EESC welcomes the Energy Roadmap 2050 and its objective of providing a framework for the agreed policy of the substantial decarbonisation of the energy sector in Europe by 2050. The challenge is not only to achieve a sustainable and secure low carbon energy mix in a competitive market but to convince civil society that this is an attainable objective. The widest possible debate among the European public will be necessary and the Committee believes the Roadmap can be effective in launching this dialogue. But it must promote engagement at every level – personal, community, regional, national, at EU level and, in particular, with complementary global action. The Roadmap concludes with ten conditions or priorities for immediate action. The EESC agrees with all these and in particular with the last one which recommends the establishment of concrete and specific milestones to guide progress over the next few years. Preliminary to that the EESC recommends carrying out an urgent review of the Energy 2020 strategy. This is essential in adjusting the final course towards 2030 or 2050. The involvement of the public in energy transition issues is essential. A European civil society forum and active steps towards establishing a European Energy Community will both be constructive steps in achieving the desired goal of a sustainable energy future.

Richard ADAMS (UK) - TEN/485 "Nuclear Safety Cooperation" (EESC opinion 1317/2012)

The Committee welcomes the proposed regulation and conditionally supports the wider application of the EU's expertise in nuclear safety to third countries. It is noted that the views of European civil society about the development of nuclear energy in general vary considerably across the Member States and recognition of this should be more evident in certain aspects of the regulation. In particular, it should be clarified for the European citizen as tax payers, that the majority of programme expenditure will be directed towards remediation with only a small minority of expenditure applied to safety advisory programmes in emerging economies where political and civil stability can be assured. As an aid to transparency it is recommended that case studies from the current programme are made available as well as improving presentation and inter-referencing on the EuropeAid website. We particularly recommend the inclusion of support for independent civil society organisations within or adjacent to beneficiary states who wish to improve accountability and transparency of the nuclear safety culture through specific actions.

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>

