



# Europe III

The voice of Group III  
Various Interests  
March 2015



## Progress made on implementing the Europe 2020 strategy and how to achieve its targets by 2020?

ED  
Editorial



Etele BATÁTH (HU)  
Member of the Various Interests Group

At the EESC's February plenary session, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker reaffirmed the commitment of his institution regarding the importance of a renewed and effective Europe 2020 strategy. He thus allayed fears that instead of promoting balanced, innovative, social and sustainable growth, the Commission would continue to focus on instruments used solely to manage the crisis.

The strategy has suffered as a result of the crisis. The EU is now much further away from the Europe 2020 goals than it was in 2010. It is increasingly clear that only by strengthening governance and developing and harmonising instruments will it be possible to overcome the tensions within the EU and the growing imbalance between its countries and its regions in

terms of economic output and social conditions.

The new Commission, which took office in autumn 2014, has published its work programme entitled "A new start for Europe", which is based on its President's ten policy guidelines. The guidelines, the investment plan, the envisaged increase in resources, and the new flexibility and innovative approach will all help to directly support the implementation of the various goals of the Europe 2020 strategy.

According to the EESC's exploratory opinion (see page 4), drawn up at the request of the Latvian Presidency, the investment plan should remedy the main shortcomings of the Europe 2020 strategy, and the new financial instruments should increase the chance of implementing its objectives.

There should be closer coordination between the new economic governance priorities, the reinforced semester, the national reform programmes, the new investment plan and the Europe 2020 strategy, in terms of both content and management and implementation. The frameworks for implementing the new financial and legal instruments are also greatly influenced by the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the use of structural and cohesion funds.

The EESC, the CoR and MEPs have presented a number of options enabling resources to be increased for a transitional period, with the aim of kick-starting EU investments. The question is how it might be possible to remove Member States' co-financing of Structural Funds used for long-term social

investment (especially in education) from the deficit calculation, in line with the Commission's flexible approach.

Due to changing priorities and in order to ensure successful implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy, it is worth considering setting up a one-stop shop to manage and oversee inter-agency cooperation and coordination between the real economy and the pan-European and national/regional levels, or converting an existing body for this purpose. This approach might strengthen governance, avoid overlaps and create better synergies. Through its position, the EESC could play a leading role in the development of the new instruments underpinning the new system of governance.

## INTERVIEW: The mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy: will it happen, or not?

IN.  
Interview



Conny Reuter  
Co-Chair of the Liaison Group at the EESC  
Secretary-General of SOLIDAR

SOLIDAR is a European network of NGOs working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide. With 60 member organisations based in 27 countries (22 of which are EU countries), member organisations are national NGOs in Europe, as well as some non-EU and EU-wide organisations, working in one or more of our fields of activity. The network is brought together by its shared values of solidarity, equality and participation. SOLIDAR voices the concerns of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions by carrying out active lobbying, project management and coordination, policy monitoring and awareness-raising across its different policy areas.

EUROPE III – The Commission has apparently decided that the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy will be postponed until either the end of this year or the beginning of 2016. Who would be disadvantaged most by such a delay.

We regret that we have never been informed officially by the Commission of their decision or social partners, social NGOs and the institutions have been largely mobilized and delivered their contributions in time. The impact of the decision will be the on the formulation of National reform programmes and country specific recommendations. Already today we can see that major progress like the Social Investment Package has disappeared from the screens. Better legislation

should not be the pretext for not pursuing the ambitions of the integrated Europe 2020 strategy.

EUROPE III – Given the EU financial crisis has contributed to a huge increase in the population now officially recorded as living in poverty, is it possible that the current EU 2020 strategy is no longer fit for purpose, in particular in 'Tackling Poverty'?

As at least the Employment and Social Development (ESDE) report 2014 has shown: poverty is in the end of the line the result of increasing inequalities (see also Picketty). The strategy as such can be fit for purpose, but under some conditions: it shall be THE strategy of EU, the

social targets of the strategy should be reinforced as the levers of social policies guiding the structural reforms in Member States, the member states shall have ownership and the social partners and civil society should be better included in the elaboration of the CSRs and NRPs. If the EU focus remains on debts, deficits and nebulous investment, this will not be the way out of poverty.

EUROPE III – In view of this figure and its likelihood to rise, do you think that the Juncker Commission have any viable plans to make 2020 more relevant in terms of tackling poverty?

I don't have a crystal ball, but I can read relevant documents and there I have to state that the social

dimension is not as integrated as it should. The new triangle the Commission presents does not refer to social issues and seems again to be build the belief that only more growth and jobs can be the solution without having an answer on the how and on their quality. The wording says: hope is the last to die. Let us be positive and say we still have trust and confidence that the new Commission will deliver better, but want to have clear signs and indications.

EUROPE III – Apart from the contribution of the recession to the EU 2020 Strategy's failure, what other factors have contributed to the 2020 decline? And where do you place the role of EU institutions and the responsibility of national governments?

As pointed out above there is an issue of ownership and participation, but there is also an issue of setting targets. Many country specific recommendations went more in the way of flexible employment markets and reducing social achievements like the indexation of salaries in Belgium. You cannot fight exclusion and poverty by increasing inequality and lowering the protection schemes. So it is also matter of political choices on which we will have to challenge the new Commission – and the Council.

EUROPE III – In your view, what should the EU commission do to ensure that Member States,

particularly those who are part of the bail out or just emerged for same, can implement programmes to satisfy the aims of EU 2020?

Abandon austerity! And introduce budgets where the costs for education, training, social protection are no longer considered as a cost, but as an investment. This could be supported by a larger interpretation of the Stability and Growth Pact who sets benchmarks for stability, but does not set them for qualitative growth. And there is another need: some of these countries cannot use the structural funds as the administration is not capable and as other actors like social partners and civil society are not involved. There is an urgent need in some countries to start capacity building to make sure that there is an intelligent use of the available means.

In addition, to reach the employment targets of the Strategy creating new jobs is not enough, if abuse and discriminating treatment leading to more and more precarious employment are not fought. Actions are also needed to clear legal uncertainties, which provoke social dumping and leave room for abuse.

EUROPE III – How can civil society ensure that the aspirations of 2020 are incorporated in the next review and that it will be implemented as a matter of principle?

Through campaigning, better coordination and convincing with and through arguments which provide credence to social needs and political remedies! The open method of coordination would be strengthened if it referred to, for example, the guide for partnership principle developed by the Commission for the ESF.

EUROPE III – What guarantees do you want to see in a potential review document that will ensure that targets listed will be met?

There will be no guarantees, if we do not continue to argue and to lobby. We would like to still see the overarching and integrated approach and do not want to see a repetition of the same mistakes, like what happened with the revision of the Lisbon strategy, where it was watered down to simply a jobs and growth approach. Binding targets on employment and poverty reduction are needed, but will only be effective if the member states put in place the right policies. Scoreboards are a tool which can be helpful and the former Commissioner Andor had made some proposals along these lines.

EUROPE III – At what point over the next two years will we know for sure if 2020 is ever going to work? If the European Semester can deliver the Annual report on Employment and Social developments

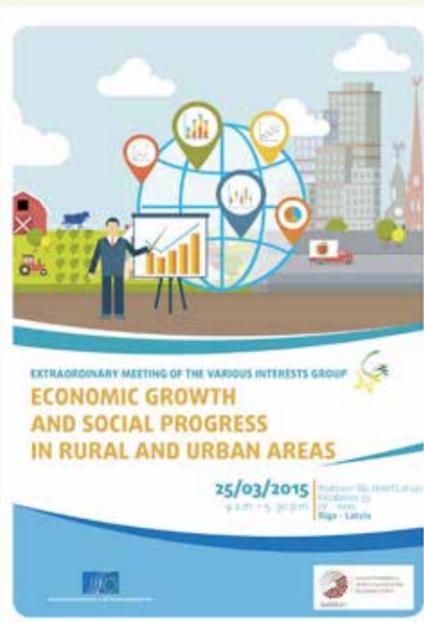
on the same basis as the first 3, then we will be in a better position to compare facts and figures and see whether social progress has really been made.

To find out more about SOLIDAR, please visit: <http://www.solidar.org/>

Extra reading: <http://www.solidar.org/Editorial-by-Conny-Reuter-SOLIDAR,1687.html>



## News from Group III



On 25 March, 2015, the "Various Interests" Group of the EESC is organising, in collaboration with the Latvian Presidency, an international conference in Riga, entitled: *Economic Growth and Social Progress in Rural and Urban Areas* which will bring together a large spectrum of Latvian civil society actors, including farmer and consumer organisations, SMEs, representatives of industry, the Social Partners, charities, family, voluntary and youth associations. The Keynote address will be given by Andris Piebalgs, Former EU Commissioner, Advisor to the President on: *Economic growth and social progress in Latvia – the influence of the energy sector*. The main objective of the conference is to examine ways of stimulating economic growth and social progress, in the aftermath of the economic and financial crisis. The event will also explore how the EU can assist in this process and the contribution to be made by civil society in both rural and urban areas.

Conference website:

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-economic-growth-social-progress>



On Wednesday 18 February 2015, we welcomed a guest speaker at our Group meeting. Mr Jimmy Jamar is the Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Belgium and author of the book: *'Pourquoi aimer l'Europe... maintenant?' (Why love Europe... now?)*. In his spare time, Jimmy has organised, over the past couple of years, the philanthropic fund-raising cultural mega-event *'Twelve hours for Greece'* (see link below), the proceeds of which were donated, amongst other social projects, to heat schools in Northern Greece which would otherwise not be able to afford heating in the classrooms due to the dire financial situation. These events included continuous all-day readings from Homer's Iliad in a variety of languages, poetry recitals and music performances of all genres, performed by international Greek celebrities, who gave their time for free. Mr Jamar was also the force behind the high level event at Bozar in Brussels in November 2014, *'Good Morning Europe'*, which brought together citizens and EU leaders to discuss Europe's future.

For his intervention, Mr Jamar chose to speak on the theme *'Europe of today and tomorrow, the Europe of citizens'*. In his presentation he outlined the significant schism that has emerged in Europe, among Member States and among the people of Europe. The head of the EC Representation commented that

today, the word 'protection' has been replaced with 'austerity' when describing the role of the EU in the lives of citizens. Mr Jamar stressed that today the EU needs a vision for itself, to be communicated to Europeans. But this vision must go beyond simple economic concerns; it must balance the economic, humanitarian and citizens' pillars. In conclusion, Mr Jamar stated that it will be citizens who will determine the outcome of the European project and that it will not be able to move forward without the support of its citizens.

Please see: <http://www.12hoursforgreece.com/en.html>

Jimmy's Blog: [http://ec.europa.eu/belgium/blog/index\\_fr.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/belgium/blog/index_fr.htm)



A delegation of 9 representatives of civil society organisations from the third sector in Ukraine came to observe our Group meeting on 18 February 2015. They were part of a wider delegation visiting the EESC on a fact-finding mission following the recent establishment of the EU-Ukraine Civil Society Platform.

We had a short exchange of views with them on the current political and military crisis on their Eastern flank. For the Various Interests Group, it was a good opportunity to welcome colleagues from Ukraine and to discuss with them the issues that are of primary concern to them. One of the main recurring topics raised was the disinformation and anti-western propaganda which is being peddled by Russia to Ukraine, but particularly to the more rural population living closest to the border with Russia. The preoccupation is very much on persuading them that the Western European culture is perverted with low moral standards and it would be harmful for the Ukrainian people to be associated with the European Union. The propaganda messages usually contain a strong emphasis on homophobia. The general understanding is that these false and misleading messages are focussed on those who have little knowledge or awareness of how the EU functions or its potential benefits.

We learned how this polarisation of information and the violence and military conflict are very disconcerting and confusing to Ukrainian citizens. The spokesperson for the delegation, Oleksandr Sushko (photo), Research Director of the Institute for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation, acted as the interim coordinator for the Ukrainian side of the EU-Ukraine Civil Society Platform. He took the floor and thanked the EESC for this valuable opportunity for mutual dialogue and for the general support shown by the EU for his country and its present difficulties.

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



Dilyana SLAVOVA (BG)  
President of the NAT Section  
Member of the Bureau of the Various Interests Group

### SOME SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE EU'S MOUNTAINOUS REGIONS

Europe's mountainous areas can be characterised in terms of their topographic specificities, they exhibit great diversity in many aspects and at all scales, with regard to natural conditions, structural diversity, urbanisation, socio-economic trends and policy implementation.

Mountain areas cover 40% of Europe and are home to 20% of its population. EU mountain regions are exposed to particular challenges linked to demographic changes, poor accessibility, climate change, migratory phenomena, energy supply and regional integration. Yet even more striking is the diversity of socio-economic situations within massifs - specific problems related to competition in sustaining both economic activities and the environment, constraints on agricultural activity due to soils and climate sparseness and size of businesses, and difficulty in passing them on to younger generations. But the most important one is the social dimension, with depopulation and poverty in many EU mountain areas. All these facts underline the variety of challenges for any particular mountain area, depending on its location, assets, and constraints. And also a clear need for the development and implementation of informed and appropriate policies which recognise the specificities of each of Europe's very diverse mountain areas and further more - the need for a real European mountain strategy adequately and properly answering all the challenges in front of the EU mountain areas.

I would like to stress on a quite sensitive and significant aspect of the mountain areas – the agriculture. Agriculture frequently suffers from a double handicap, with both a difficult natural context (handicap of the slopes and climate) and structural weaknesses. In general, mountain agriculture cannot compete with lowland agriculture. However, the maintenance of mountain agriculture is important to preserve landscapes, recreational opportunities, and cultural identity – and is a social necessity in some countries where it is a subsistence activity, often on the way to abandonment (we should not forget that there are EU mountain areas where the list of agricultural activities that could be developed is very limited – potatoes, sheep and goat breeding, tobacco). Mountains are suitable for production, processing, and marketing of quality products and/or niche markets (e.g., organic food, labelling), promoted when possible through their links of the attractiveness to tourists and other consumers. Such initiatives are being developed in a large number of local programmes, in both Member States and acceding countries, but often with inadequate resources or coordination. And I am proud that the European Parliament in 2014 approved a recommendation for inventing “mountain product label”. Furthermore, we should support agricultural policies in mountains that are more specially targeted on this kind of area-based farming, complemented by the public protection of labels of origin, and sustaining links with other activities through multi-activity (forestry, hunting, tourism, small industries).

In order to reduce isolation and depopulation, high priority has to be given to new technology infrastructures and networks. Information and communications technologies can play key roles in providing new opportunities for business, education and training in mountain areas. Networking between various players (institutions, communities, enterprises) and also in cross-border co-operation at different levels, within as well as between countries, is a crucial point. Pilot projects and the exchange and analysis of good – and bad – practice are also essential.

In conclusion I would like to underline the importance of promotion of the main principles in treating the EU mountain regions

- address in a coordinated, integrated, balanced and coherent manner the various aspects of sustainable mountain development such as forestry, agriculture, transportation, culture, education, health, economy, environment, biodiversity, tourism, etc;
- respect the cultures, protect the rights, promote the well-being and ensure the participation of local communities in mountain areas;
- promote and facilitate bilateral and multilateral cooperation and networking particularly in trans-boundary mountain regions.

These principles could be a base for a broader EU Mountain Platform as a permanent dialogue among EU institutions, stakeholders, national authorities, research institutions, think tanks, etc. for finding better practical solutions for the EU mountain areas and proper implementation at local level. Because we really need more Europe locally!



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

### YOUNG SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS IN DIALOGUE WITH THE EESC

On February 16 Group III hosted a conference on “Social Impact Investment (SII) and its role in the future social public/private investments”. The conference was co-organised by the Social Platform, Confrontations Europe and BAFW. The aim was to continue the dialogue on the subject of social impact investing which is pushed forward as an emerging conceptual framework.

The main issues discussed during the conference were why/where impact investment and social impact measurement can be useful, this in the context that the new EU Commission not yet has signalled support for the continuation of the Social Business Initiative (SBI) where access to suitable capital and finance is highlighted as a barrier for the development and growth of the social economy.

As Group III Vice-President, I opened the conference sharing the work on the topic done by the EESC in particular from the opinion on Social Impact Investment (INT/747) which proposes social impact investment as bringing cross-sectorial resources together, clearly linked to both the Social Investment Package (SIP) and the Social Business Initiative (SIB). I then presented the key recommendations from the opinion in Social Impact Measurement (INT/721) and highlighted the links between the two subjects.

One feature of the conference was the recent initiative on the subject of ‘impact investing’ put on the G7 agenda and the current pressures on welfare systems across the Europe. During the conference, G7 Task Force representatives from Germany, France, Italy and the UK shared their work and view on this issue. The message was that not one model can be applied across countries, that social impact investment must be seen in the context of the national welfare models and that public financing and the role of the state in many Member States remains central. This was followed by a debate with various civil society stakeholders.

The conference was closed by Ms Lieve Fransen, European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, who discussed the logical, intellectual and ideological links between the social investment package and social impact investment. She stressed the differences between the two, one being policy while the other is funding driven. However, she also mentioned the links between the two, such as that the investment package also looks at funding streams but also the social forces behind the initiatives. A key point stressed was the need to measure social impact better and in particular in the context of “better social outcomes” and the Commission's commitment to the support of a Social Investment approach. Here Ms Fransen made a reference to the EESC Group III Milan Declaration.

You can read the Milan Declaration here: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-boosting-innovation-milan-declaration.33583>



Carlos TRIÁS PINTO (ES)  
President of the CCMI

### ROLE OF COOPERATIVE AND SAVINGS BANKS IN TERRITORIAL COHESION

On 18 February 2015, during the plenary session, Carlos Trias Pinto recorded a video message on the EESC opinion: “Co-operative and savings banks” ECO/371, for which he was the rapporteur.

You can watch the video here: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.videos.34875>

#### Quote of the month...



“Civil government, so far as it is instituted for the security of property, is, in reality, instituted for the defence of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all.”

(Source: 'The Wealth of Nations', Book 5, Chapter 1, Part 2, Written in 1776)

**Adam SMYTH (1723 – 1790)**  
Scottish moral philosopher, pioneer of political economy, proponent of free market economics and key Scottish Enlightenment figure

## Overview of our Members' Work in the EESC

At its plenary session on 18-19 February 2015 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/761  
"EU strategy and action plan for customs risk management: tackling risks, strengthening supply chain security and facilitating trade" (EESC opinion 6021/2014)

While welcoming the Commission communication, the EESC believes that:

- customs authorities should work together, but also with other government authorities;
- it is important to ensure effective implementation of the EU's customs rules and the proper functioning of the cooperation mechanisms provided for by EU law;
- it is necessary to harmonise implementation of other policies and make it coherent and to share information, particularly by making official data interoperable;
- the EU should take as a basis the rules of the Risk Management Compendium and other standards of the World Customs Organisation (WCO).

Moreover, the EESC considers it a priority to clearly define the arrangements for carrying out future controls and to ensure uniform implementation of EU customs rules and also stresses that when the strategy is defined, the EU must take into account the distinctive features of customs practice in the Member States — such as the size of the relevant trade flows, volumes and practices.

Lastly, the EESC stresses the importance of other social stakeholders involved in the strategy and the role they can play, and calls for greater visibility for pilot projects on the ground, in order to encourage stakeholders to play a greater role and thus foster additional private investment that would further the communication's strategy by boosting innovation.



**Etele BARÁTH (HU)** – ECO/362 "Proposal for mapping macro-regional strategies across Europe" (EESC opinion 2544/2014)

In this own-initiative opinion, the Committee states that the macro-regional strategies have an increasing

role to play in the future of the EU. It is clearly necessary to develop macro-regional strategies at European level. They can help improve economic competitiveness, give a much needed boost to GDP, and also increase European added value.

Thanks to monitoring supported by an appropriate database, effective application of the partnership principle and a comparative analysis based on experience, these strategies have proved to be an effective policy. The EESC recommends that the European Council advocate the integration of macro-regional policy into the EU's governance structure and calls for EU-wide guidelines to be drawn up with a view to defining a macro-regional development strategy to support economic and social development. It is also of key importance to strengthen the European governance structure by involving civil society and municipal and regional authorities at each stage in the decision-making process, alongside the high-level coordination group made up of representatives of the 28 countries, which is responsible for macro-regional management.

**Etele BARÁTH (HU)** – EUR/007 "Progress made on implementing the Europe 2020 strategy and how to achieve its targets by 2020" (EESC opinion 34/2015)

The EESC agrees with the Latvian Presidency, recognising the fundamental importance of the EU 2020 Strategy review to boosting European competitiveness. The Committee supports the direct link made between improved European competitiveness and the "Digital Agenda for Europe" flagship initiative, including the enormous consequences for industry, the labour market and society in general, which have been underestimated by the European Commission and the Council.

The EESC is of the opinion that Europe 2020 and the Investment Plan should be much more closely linked in the way that it could remedy the main shortcomings of the Europe 2020 Strategy, and the new financial instruments increase the chance of implementing its objectives.

The EESC proposes that an overview of investments in infrastructure and economic development programmes supported by the Structural and Cohesion Funds be established, and be brought in line with the European Fund for Strategic Investments. It is important that the Structural Funds focus more on the implementation of environmental programmes or those with a human aspect, which would also promote the sustainable development of factors "beyond GDP".

Due to changing priorities and in order to ensure successful implementation of the EU 2020 Strategy, it would be useful to have a "one-stop shop" able to ensure effective coordination and rationalisation of tasks and procedures related to policy implementation, and this includes EU agencies.



**Carlos TRIÁS PINTO (ES)** – ECO/371 "The role of cooperative and savings banks in territorial cohesion - proposals for an adapted financial regulation framework" (EESC opinion 4516/2014)

In this own-initiative opinion, the EESC considers it vital to preserve the "biodiversity" of the financial system, without this meaning the arbitrary application of rules. In this context the Committee strongly supports the consideration the European Commission has given to the introduction of adapted financial regulation frameworks for cooperative and savings banks that avoid the undesirable effects of uniform application of prudential rules and possibly an overload of administrative burdens.

However, the main problem remains the adequate application of the proportionality principle in the new banking rules (especially regarding the Capital Requirements Directive – CRD IV and the Capital Requirements Regulation – CRR), which the Basel Committee suggested should be applied proportionately in keeping with the EU Treaties. This means that the strictest requirements should apply to global banks, stringent requirements should apply to pan-European banks (of a systemic nature in Europe) and more flexible requirements should apply to national and local banks.

The EESC has always been committed to a level playing field, and therefore recommends the use of objective parameters that justify a specific regulation for each business model. Essentially, these are financial and economic performance, contribution to the real economy, risk management, and governance.

In conclusion, the Committee proposes that the financial authorities should offer incentives to those actors who best comply with these conditions, and calls for stronger ethical standards and codes of good governance, as these are vital for restoring lost confidence.

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>

## Highlights of the February 2015 EESC Plenary Session

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

Mr Jorge PEGADO LIZ (PT) is the Rapporteur for the additional opinion on: "Delegated acts" – INT/768

Mr Krzysztof PATER (PL) is the President of the study group for the Green Paper on: "Capital Markets Union" – ECO/379.

Mr Carlos TRIÁS PINTO (ES) is the Rapporteur for the own-initiative opinion on: "The Economy for the Common Good: a sustainable economic model geared towards social cohesion" – ECO/378.

Mr Pavel TRANTINA (CZ) is the Rapporteur for the opinion on: "Youth Employment Initiative – pre-financing" – SOC/522.

Mr Tony VIDAN (HR) is the President of the study group for the own-initiative opinion on: "Contribution of indigenous coal and lignite resources to the EU's energy security" – CCMI/138.

Mr Seppo KALLIO (FI) is the President of the study group for the own-initiative opinion on: "The importance of agricultural trade for the future development of agriculture and farming in the EU in the context of global food security" – NAT/662.

Mr Richard ADAMS (UK) is the President of the study group for the Communication on: "The Energy Union strategic framework" – TEN/570.

Mr Bernardo HERNÁNDEZ BATALLER (ES) is the Rapporteur for the own-initiative opinion on: "Cyber activism and civil society organisations" – TEN/571.

Mrs Evelyn PICHENOT (FR) is the President of the study group for the own-initiative opinion on: "Financing for development - the position of civil society" – REX/441.



Mr Ionuț SIBIAN (RO) is the President of the study group for the own-initiative opinion on: "Energy, a factor for development and a deeper accession process in the Western Balkans" – REX/440.

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>

## OUR GROUP'S STRENGTH

The Social Economy Category held a meeting on Thursday 26 February 2015. Following some words of welcome from the Category Spokesperson, Miguel-Ángel CABRA DE LUNA (ES), there was an exchange of views with Jens Nilsson MEP, Co-chair of the European Parliament's Social Economy Intergroup. The members then had a debate on the latest situation regarding the European Foundation Statute with

Emmanuelle Faure of the European Foundation Centre. This was followed by a brainstorming session on the possible priorities for the Category's Work Programme for 2015. The meeting continued with an exchange of views with Emmanuel Verny, General Delegate, French Chamber of Social and Solidarity Economy, and this was followed by a presentation of the Cooproute project by Bruno Roelants,

Secretary-General, CECOP. In conclusion, Ariane RODERT (SE), Vice-President of the Various Interests Group, updated the members about the latest developments concerning the Social Business Project (INT/735).

More information on the work of the categories can be found on our website, by contacting the spokespersons of the categories, or the Secretariat of Group III at: [gr3@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:gr3@eesc.europa.eu).

