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***European Economic and Social Committee***

**How does the future of Europe affect me?**

**Friday 2 June 2017**, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

In the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) building, Henriette-Herz-Platz 2, 10178 Berlin

**A categorisation of the viewpoints expressed in the debate in response to the EESC's questions**

# ***Which of the five scenarios set out by the White Paper best meets from your perspective the internal and external challenges facing the EU, and why?***

* Various preferences and viewpoints were expressed during the debate.
* The five proposed scenarios serve as a useful basis to explore what direction we want to move in. However, it is difficult to limit discussion to these five scenarios alone. None of the scenarios is optimal.
* The Commission analyses and describes the problem well in the White Paper's introduction. However, none of the scenarios provides a solution to the problems.
* The next step is not taken. The Commission is held back before even getting to this stage. This alone shows how critical the EU's situation is.
* It is important to identify areas where we can continue to work together.
* Constant doubts about the ground rules get us nowhere; we have to accept the framework and identify where we can reach an agreement.
* Important areas for strengthened EU measures are:
  + Social affairs
  + Young people
    1. A budget to support young people is necessary.
    2. Many young people feel very isolated from the political system.
  + Regional policy
  + Solving the problems of the euro area
  + Security and defence policy
    1. Different national approaches to defence and security, depending on the Member States' geopolitical situation and history.
    2. There should be joint projects when procuring materiel.

Individual assessments of the five scenarios:

* Scenario 1:
  + Title is wrong. "Continuing the reform process" would be better.
  + Scenario 1 must continue, but more needs to happen. This scenario alone is not enough.
* Scenario 2:
  + Only the single market: unacceptable for workers, and does not tackle the challenges.
  + The single market is not an end in itself; it must serve citizens.
* Scenario 3:
  + Some argue that Scenario 3 would not be positive and would widen the gap in the EU still further. The EU treaties would also not be equipped for Scenario 3.
  + Nobody should be excluded under Scenario 3, and Member States in eastern Europe should be involved too. (This scenario causes some alarm.)
  + Democratic legitimacy of the path chosen is important.
  + Avenues for the democratic legitimation of Scenario 3 (e.g. in the European Parliament) are conceivable. All MEPs can discuss, but only some can then vote. (A past example is the German Bundestag and the role of members from Berlin.)
  + Neither the euro area nor Schengen are examples of Scenario 3/"enhanced cooperation".
* Scenario 4:
  + Whether willingly or unwillingly, the Commission is already implementing Scenario 4.
  + "Less" is already a reality. The result is uncompleted tasks.
  + The main question is: what should be done "less" and what should be done "more efficiently"?
* Scenario 5:
  + The acceptance of Scenario 5 depends on the policy adopted. More austerity, for example, would not be acceptable.
  + Some prefer Scenario 5; however, the general mood in Europe is not in favour.

# ***Would another scenario, not mentioned, be possible and preferable? If so, why? How do you see trust and confidence being fostered within the Union?***

* Current developments mean that the EU could conceivably fall apart. The situation is very serious.
* Openness to any revision of the EU treaty and to contributions higher than 1% of GDP are, as a rule, to be welcomed.
* **Further deepening of the euro area:**
* The problems in the architecture of the euro must be quickly rectified.
* The proposal made by French President Macron for a euro area parliament is intriguing.
* **Criticism of bureaucracy/levels of administration:**
* The system of multi-level governance is an insoluble problem when it comes to criticism of bureaucracy.
* Fundamental question: what direction should a reform go in? Do we want a federal or centralised system?
* Some argue that more decentralised administration reaches more people.
* Each political level must have set competences.
* EU measures need to emphasise cooperation with Member States and regions.
* The experience gained from regional funding should be used for this purpose.

# ***Is more visibility of and better communication on the European Union required, and how?***

* There is a need for better communication about the EU. There is a wide divergence between what is set down in policy and what is experienced in practice.
* Citizens' well-being must be at the heart of the project.
* There is also the question of who is doing the communication, and how.
* Communication via the internet is a one-way street. New communication channels are necessary.
* It is often not stated that the EU provides financing for individual projects in the Member States.
* Good regulations and increased transparency are necessary; otherwise, citizens feel that decisions are being made over their heads.

# ***Are the policy areas referred to sufficiently comprehensive and illustrative? How would you rank them in a scale of importance? Is there a major policy area not mentioned or insufficiently highlighted? If so, which one and which of the five scenarios would best suit its development?***

* Migration and unemployment are among the most pressing issues.
* Imbalances in the EU have grown. Economies are not converging.

**Employment and social affairs, education:**

* Why is the emphasis placed on the single market rather than on a social Europe?
* Europe is judged according to whether living and working conditions have improved.
* The Pillar of Social Rights does not propose any new competences either.
* The future of work is crucial. People need safeguards amidst processes of change.
* Some job-related problems can only be solved at European level.
* Many workers in eastern Europe work in poor conditions.
* There is brain drain and de-industrialisation.
* If the Structural Funds are used to invest in people, then people will stay where they are.
* Investment in education and vocational training. Training systems are very much academically oriented.
* There are some discrepancies in the action taken by the EU, e.g. the proposal for a Pillar of Social Rights while simultaneously intervening in free collective bargaining in Greece. This kind of action does not inspire trust.

**Regional policy:**

* Regional development is important.
* Some regions' policies are very positive, e.g. success in the greater Trier/Wallonia/Saar region.

**Trade policy:**

* The profits achieved via international trade must be shared more fairly.
* During the TTIP and CETA negotiations, there was a wide gap between the public's and governments' positions.
* Protectionism is not the answer; the fundamental freedoms should not be called into question.

# ***Regarding "the way ahead", how should the "Future of Europe Debates across Europe's national Parliaments, cities and regions" be structured? What role should organised civil society play in "the way ahead" and how?***

* There should be debates with civil society, and not only among governments!
* EESC debates have already taken place in many Member States. They proceed in very different ways; there are very different approaches in the different Member States.
* Create more pressure from the social partners.
* The social partners are involved in the Structural Funds, which is positive.

# ***What are your particular expectations as regards the outcome of the consultation?***

* The EU must continue to be able to act, even with 27 Member States.
* European solutions are the better option for the way ahead!
* No relapse into parochialism.
* There is a great deal of political pressure to act (especially Brexit).
* We do not have long for discussions (the next European elections are in 2019).

# ***How can the citizen be more empowered in shaping the future of Europe?***

* Europe works, but not as a project of the elites.
* The EU's decision-making structures can be opaque.
* Well-functioning decision-making processes and efficient structures are important so as to inspire more trust.
* People/citizens need to be involved to a greater extent.
* The Council of the EU has an obligation to make decisions and the decision-making process transparent. The Council's working groups are not transparent. It is impossible to tell how a country has acted in the course of negotiations.
* The trilogue is also problematic, as it is not transparent.
* Civil society needs to be involved at an early stage in consultation processes.

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This summary of viewpoints provides a snapshot of the views expressed during the debate on the Future of Europe at the EESC at the event in Berlin on 2 June 2017.

**Programme**

The EESC would like to discuss the future of Europe with you.

**Friday 2 June 2017**

**10 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

**DGB-Bundesvorstand   
Henriette-Herz-Platz 2   
10178 Berlin   
Room 4**

After opening remarks by **Bernhard Schnittger**, from the Representation of the European Commission in Germany, EESC member **Christian Moos** will deliver a keynote speech on the substance of the issue.

Then you can have your say! Discuss issues relating to the future of Europe with experts in a fishbowl format.

**Participants**

| **Full Name** | **Organisation** | **Job Title** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Arany, Olga |  |  |
| Baumann, Mechthild | Europäische Akademie Berlin | Programme director |
| Berger, Dorian |  | Trainee |
| Bischoff, Gabriele | EESC |  |
| Chiachowski, Erich Heinz |  |  |
| Coudray, Sterenn | Internationaler Bund e.V. | Department of international labour |
| Degen, Christel |  |  |
| Ehleringer, Timo |  |  |
| Eisenbarth, Johannes M. | GKV-Spitzenverband |  |
| Erkan, Ertan |  | Officer for EU affairs |
| Gath, Manuel |  | Federal chair |
| Gresch, Friederike |  |  |
| Heinz, Sophia |  |  |
| Hemmerling, Udo | EESC | Member |
| Hesseken, Gabriele |  |  |
| Hirt, Ilka |  | Head of EU unit |
| Höffer, Eva-Marie |  | Head of unit |
| Jentsch, Ferdinand |  |  |
| Jüngling, Thomas |  |  |
| Kalmar, Silvie |  |  |
| Klec, Gerald | EESC | Administrator |
| Liewald, Tilo |  |  |
| Markowski, Cornelia |  | Head |
| Moos, Christian | EESC | Member |
| Nußberger, Malte |  |  |
| Paulun, Eike |  |  |
| Pohl, Jonas |  |  |
| Prouvost, Timothée |  | Legal trainee |
| Reichelt, Jeanette |  |  |
| Sartorius, Wolfgang | Erlacher Höhe | Chairman |
| Schiller, Simone |  | Managing director |
| Schmuck, Otto |  | Board member |
| Schnittger, Bernhard | European Commission Representation in Germany |  |
| Schönmeyer, Hartmut | BundeswehrVerband | Staff captain (ret.) |
| Spiller, Robert |  | Head of EU labour market and social policy unit |
| Stowasser, Rolf |  |  |
| Szabadi, Dieter |  | Local chairman Marzahn-Hellersdorf |
| Tauss, Julia |  |  |
| von Massenbach, Udo |  | President |

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