



European Economic
and Social Committee



INFORMATION BULLETIN OF THE WORKERS' GROUP

WORKERS

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Georgios Dassis,
president of the Workers' Group

At last a proposal to tax financial transactions

For a long time now, our group - along with the trade union movement as a whole - has been advocating a tax on financial transactions: a tax which reduces the volume of short-term speculative financial transactions and raises public money, as recommended in the EESC opinion adopted by a very large majority at the July session; a tax that helps combat speculation, penalises automatic exchange transactions which expose the Member States themselves to permanent risk, and makes the financial sector contribute more fairly to the costs of the financial crisis - because thus far, it is the workers who have borne the cost.

According to the Commission's estimates, by introducing this tax the European Union could increase its revenue by EUR 57 billion, which is equivalent to the funds currently allocated to social and territorial cohesion.

All the proposals for overcoming the crisis have been based on reducing expenditure, attacking public services and social service provision in particular, whereas it is now time to find new sources of revenue and channel it once more into growth and jobs.

We can be pleased that, at last, the Commission and its president, Mr Barroso, have taken this initiative, but we must also note that the Treaty does not provide for consultation of either the EESC or Parliament in this field: this will have to be addressed when the time comes, so as to ensure genuine democratic participation of all the parties concerned.

Furthermore, the legal basis proposed implies a decision to the Council by unanimity, up to us to persuade our ministers.

Ciao Mario...



We expected Mario in Brussels; he had everything ready to participate in our special meeting at the French EESC. Eventually a phone call: Mario is gone. Life is like this: relentless. Mario passed away suddenly.

He was with us, brotherly, in this struggle for a just and social Europe and when, having been Group President, he became President of the Committee, he did not stop to be a real trade unionist and to act as such. His fight, our fight, had no ultimate goal but that of the European Union itself: the welfare of the people, of men and women. And nobody, not even death can deprive workers of that wonderful feeling of fraternal solidarity they experienced whenever they came together to defend their rights and achieve progress. Mario felt that with us as we did with him.

Georges Dassis

STATEMENT OF THE WORKERS' GROUP

Restoring confidence in the integration project of the European Union

Having regard to the evolution of the crisis and the current situation in some Member States,
the EESC Workers' Group,

whereas

- the citizens bear no responsibility for the crisis and it is unfair that innocent people have to pay for the excesses of speculators and the irresponsibility or the incompetence of some politicians;
- unscrupulous speculators continue to enrich themselves by attacking States, i.e. peoples;
- the European Union aims, under the terms of the Treaty itself, 'to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples',
- calls on the European institutions and Member States governments to measure the anxiety and the suffering of citizens and to summon up the courage to act in a significant, energetic and unequivocal way against the threat that is currently weighing on Europe;
- firmly condemns all demagogic propaganda designed to exploit the situation in order to turn peoples against each other, to undermine the achievements of the Union or to forget that it exists only for the well-being of its peoples;
- rejects the 'austerity' measures, impoverishing citizens and causing a spiral of recession at the very moment when we must carry out an ambitious policy of investment, growth, employment support and inclusion;
- demands that any measure taken at any level whatsoever
- tends to ensure a return to inclusive and sustainable growth;
- respects the European social model, including social dialogue, collective negotiations and collective agreements that derive from it;
- preserves the support mechanisms for the poor, as in the case of food aid.
- demands effective regulation of financial markets and effective measures to combat speculation, including the establishment of a European fiscal policy and taxation of financial transactions;
- reiterates its confidence in the euro as a political venture that is vital to the future of the European Union and gives its full support to the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism, which must be granted enough resources to guarantee its efficiency as well as solidarity at European level;
- calls for the introduction of Euro-bonds, as an effective instrument to stimulate the real economy in the EU and contribute to solving the problem of sovereign debt in the Member States;
- insists that economic, social and political cohesion be strengthened, as a fundamental pillar of European integration.

The EESC Workers' Group reaffirms its commitment to a strong, sustainable social Europe, as a source of hope for its citizens. It will continue its fight in this direction, together with the European Trade Union Confederation and the national trade-union confederations.

Brussels, September 22, 2011

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Europe urgently needs additional measures to safeguard fundamental rights effectively, and it is imperative that the culture of fundamental rights be strengthened. The European Economic and Social Committee's opinion on the Communication from the Commission setting out a Strategy for the effective implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights by the European Union (COM(2010) 573 final) can and should make a major contribution here.

The Committee welcomes the communication, but nevertheless feels that several major aspects have been neglected or addressed too superficially, and that improvements are therefore essential. It makes various proposals seeking to ensure that fundamental rights are more effectively safeguarded and promoted and to attach greater value to these rights.

1. The EU fundamental rights culture must be consolidated in general.

The Commission must ensure that both the legislative process as a whole and the legislation it adopts comply with the Charter, and that this legislation is observed in Member States. Given that there have been cases of serious violation of the charter, it is urgent to establish a strategy for monitoring the situation and for rapid reaction. This also means incorporating non-legislative acts into the strategy.

2. The requirement to promote fundamental rights must be accorded due importance.

The legal requirement to promote fundamental rights must become one of the most important elements of the implementation strategy for the EU. This makes new, targeted initiatives necessary.

3. Special focus is needed on fundamental social rights.

The EESC has always accorded particular importance to developing and safeguarding fundamental rights – particularly fundamental social rights. In this connection, the EESC explicitly calls for a "Social Progress Protocol" to be included in the Treaties, in order to enshrine the principle of the equal value of fundamental social rights and economic freedoms and thereby make it clear that neither economic freedoms nor competition rules should be allowed to take precedence over fundamental social rights, and also to clearly define the impact of the Union's objective of achieving social progress.

The EU must reinforce the legal framework for fundamental social rights. This will require the EU to be party to the

4. The economic crisis and other current issues can be seen as a "stress check" for safeguarding fundamental rights.

The effectiveness of fundamental rights must be demonstrated in practice, in particular in times of economic crisis or where there is strong political pressure. The EESC is especially concerned at the spread of certain political stances which can, and in some cases effectively do, lead to serious violations as well as setbacks in the promotion and protection of fundamental rights.

The financial and economic crisis is putting considerable pressure on fundamental social rights. All pacts, recovery plans and other EU and/or Member States measures should in no way violate fundamental (social) rights, such as the right to information and consultation, collective bargaining and collective action with all due regard for the autonomy of the social partners, as well as public



Revised European Social Charter and its Protocols. For the Member States, the Union should recommend ratification of all relevant fundamental (social) rights instruments (including amending and additional/optional protocols). Where ratification by the EU is not possible, all means should be explored and employed to make their content legally binding.

and social services, but should rather respect and promote them.

Furthermore, the EESC notes with concern the mass expulsion of Roma people, the treatment of people from North Africa without identity papers, restrictions on freedom of expression, especially in the media, etc. All legislation allowing for exclusions or restrictions in respect of fundamental (social) rights (e.g. the right to a limit on maximum working hours) will have to be specifically addressed.

5. New initiatives and promotion measures are necessary

Civil society should be more involved in the strategy as a general rule. As guardian of the EU's values and representative of organised civil society, the Committee is best placed to liaise with civil society. The EESC therefore proposes to draw up an opinion and hold a hearing every year on implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the horizontal social clauses, other social policy provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, secondary legislation

and other legal and policy measures, with regard to compliance with and support for objectives and requirements. The opinion will analyse and evaluate the extent to which such implementation has contributed to developing the EU's fundamental rights and social policy and make recommendations on specific measures to meet objectives more effectively.

6. The opt-out clauses of the United Kingdom, Poland and the Czech Republic should be put back on the agenda; opt-outs are not acceptable.

Such opt-outs for Member States are not acceptable as they can lead to situations where the protection of citizens' and workers' rights enshrined in the Charter of EU Fundamental Rights or the enforcement of these rights within the European Union may be seriously affected.

Gabriele Bischoff

Gabriele Bischoff



Group II Extraordinary meeting

November 29th, 2011 in Paris

at the headquarters of the Economic, Environmental and Social Council
(Palace of Jena)

Morning:

"The future of the European Union"

Participants:

- Georges Dassis, *President of Group II - EESC*
- Jacques Delors, *former President of the European Commission, President and Founder of the association "Notre Europe"*
- Bernard Thibault, *Secretary General of the CGT*
- Yves Veyrier, *President of the EESC FR Section for European and international affairs and Confederal Secretary of FO*
- Marcel Grignard, *Deputy Secretary General of CFDT*
- Jacques Voisin, *Confederal President of CFTC*
- Guglielmo Epifani, *President of the Association "Bruno Trentin"*

Afternoon:

A "low carbon" industrial policy as a way to get out of the crisis in Europe

Participants:

- Alain Mestre and Philippe Morvannou, *Responsibles for European Studies at the firm Syndex*
- Joël Decaillon, *President of Sustainlabour*

Conclusions

- Jean-Paul Delevoye, *President of the European and Environmental Social Council FR*
- Staffan Nilsson, *President of the European Economic and Social Committee*
- Georges Dassis, *President of the Group II - EESC*

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Rio+20: preparations are under way

Trade unions, NGOs and governments are preparing for the NGO conference to be held in Rio next year. We at the Committee are doing the same. The summit's agenda contains some unresolved issues.

Famine is increasing in the world.

Many people have no access to education, water, employment or minimal rights.

Climate change goals have not been achieved, etc.

This would constitute grounds for despair, if civil society were not there to put pressure on governments and to take action before and after the conference. In the opinion it is currently working on, the EESC states its firm belief

that the transition to a sustainable economy must be incorporated into an overarching sustainable development strategy and handled fairly. The Committee advocates greater social cohesion, greater equity, including between generations, fair redistribution and a sustainable solution to social issues. The way the world economy currently operates is not geared to sustainable development.



What can the Rio+20 conference do to move things forward?

In addition to ensuring climate protection and pursuing energy objectives, efforts must, of course, be stepped up to fight poverty and invest in sustainable use of key resources and natural assets.

That also means promoting a green economy and putting together national strategies. Better governance will be crucial. In this connection, the UN and UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) need to be reinforced. Lastly, penalties will have to be introduced in the future for failure to comply with sustainable development goals or WTO rules. There is still a long way to go. If pressure is not exerted by civil society, world governance and rules will become even more watered down and indefinitely postponed.

That is why the Committee believes Rio+20 is so important. We are currently discussing our opinion with partners throughout Europe and beyond. Our work will not come to an end with the conference.

It is to be hoped that, after Rio, we will be able to see a little light at the end of the tunnel.

Hans-Joachim Wilms



EUROPEAN UNION - CHILE

A delegation from the EESC-Latin America Follow-up Committee went to Chile with the aim of acquainting themselves with the situation in Chile for the EESC opinion currently being drawn up on EU-Chile relations, in particular from the viewpoint of civil society.

The delegation met with the three Chilean trade unions (CUT, UNT and CAT), the National Confederation of Production and Commerce and employers from large firms; organisations representing small businesses and the social economy (CONUIA and CONAPYME); and the main consumer organisations, the NGO movement Action, and representatives of the Employment and Foreign Affairs Ministries.

Things are changing fast in Chile. While the country has growth rates of over 6% per year, significant disparities have been

recorded. There have recently been major demonstrations in the education sector triggered by the indebtedness of households with children in higher education. The main trade union – the CUT – called for two days of general strike to support the demands of the students. In Chile collective bargaining coverage is less than 6% and there is not a full right to strike, for example.

Moreover, the Committee delegation stressed the need to adopt measures in line with the provisions of Article 10 of the EU-Chile Association Agreement, signed in 2003, stipulating the need to set up a joint consultative committee.



Jose Maria Zufiaur



THE MEDITERRANEAN



The Mediterranean Basin, which has been the cradle of our civilisation for four millennia, has over 500 million inhabitants, with more than 200 living on its coasts. Its peoples and countries are inextricably linked to different degrees through migration, trade and energy. The latter has become increasingly important in recent decades: the southern and eas-

tern sides are exporters of underground raw materials, while the northern side imports them and is extremely dependent on them. Recent events on the southern and eastern sides call for resolute endeavours to achieve more balanced relations between regions. Against a background of concern for the most balanced co development possible, along with more trade,

renewable energies are an area where tangible progress and sustainable relations can be achieved. There are projects which should now be given a higher profile and supported by all stakeholders: states, industrial operators, institutions and also communities through their civil societies. The opinion for which I am rapporteur is not a technical

opinion on energy, but a contribution to better relations with our brothers and sisters from the south, job creation and a better standard of living. Tangible responses to the desire for more democracy.



Pierre Jean Coulon

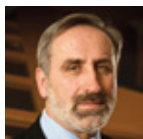
The new team of the European Trade Union Confederation



Bernadette Segol
General Secretary



Ignacio F. Toxo
President



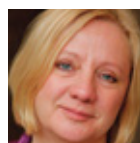
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Deputy General Secretary
Social Dialogue ; Campaigning; Trade union rights/Fundamental rights agency; Corporate social responsibility; Youth; Turkey; ESCE



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Claudia Menne
Industrial democracy; Workers' participation, Corporate governance; SE: EWC; Equality and non discrimination; ETUC and PERC Women committees and gender equality; Social protection;



Veronica Anna-Maria Nilsson
Internal Market SMA ; Public services. SGEI/SSGI ; social protocol and Monti II ; Labour law ; Mobility



Luca Visentini
Collective Bargaining and wage policy; Migration; Cedefop ; IRTUC: Eures; LLL/ training/skills councils; Economic and Social cohesion - EU budget and structural funds; Committee of the Regions



Ciao Mario...



Dear Mario,

First, thank you for everything you have done for us members coming to the Committee after the enlargement of the EU in 2004! Your welcome was wonderful and we still remember very well how you have integrated us right away as if we were there from the beginning. We have appreciated it a lot. Thank you for your solidarity, your devotion for the protection of the workers' interests, for the development of the social dimension of Europe and the world. We will not forget your smile, your kindness, your understanding and your art for negotiating. We will miss you a lot.

Dana Štechová and the present and former Group II Czech members.

Hello Friend,

Tell me Mario, do you remember? We met in Rome in the early 80's, at the headquarters of the CISL metal workers at a meeting of FIM-FGM/CFDT. Then we made a long journey together to the Executive Committee of the EMF and the Central Committee of the FIOM to meet again at the EESC in 1994.

From this long path, nearly thirty years, I remember with emotion, your deep humanism which was part of your personality, the depth of your thinking and your constant concern to give sense of the trade union action.

You were an activist of Europe, of the European federalism. Concepts that we have shared together for 30 years.

Mario, we will all miss you: your family, your friends, the trade unionism and Europe for whom you have done so much. Nobody will forget you!

Mario I will miss you.

Farewell Friend.

Gérard Dantin

There is something special, among many others, for which Mario will always remain in our memory: his "meekness."

Meekness is the serenity of the strong, who knows how to walk in the right direction and is not afraid of adversity, not afraid of the violent, the arrogant, the bullies. His meekness was the indication of a path to follow, a philosophy of behavior: we will always remember his quite determination, we will miss his sweet, contagious smile.

Giuseppe Iuliano

Mario

You left us like that, quietly, politely, with your usual sly glance ... We will never forget your casual look, your plaid shirts, never wearing a tie, except to meet kings and presidents, your poems, your improbable books, but also your enthusiasm for life and for Europe, your deep humanity and your kindness, your always wanting to leave your office door open to everyone, in case someone would want to come and have a coffee ... You just left for your little Umbrian village and we miss you already!

Simona Simeoni

In 1998 I started a conversation with Mario, which lasted over 13 years. We shared the same passion for Trade Unions and for politics, the same melancholy of better and more glorious past times. Mario talked to me about his books, philosophy and literature, about the cinema "without borders" that he loved so much; and I think he was one of the few people to read the newspapers with a pure curiosity and interest, almost an eagerness, to then think, think again, re-elaborate. I often criticized Mario for the "lightness" with which he faced problems, obstacles, and sometimes, I reproached him for his smile. Now I miss him, simply, I miss him.

Susanna Florio

I met Mario at a meeting of the FIM-CISL in Brunate near the lake of Como in 1969. Spanish trade unionists were acting in secret, but this did not prevent the fact that Enrique Baron and I were invited. Mario was part of a core group of unionists - Franco Bentivoglio, Sandro Antoniazzi, Alberto Tridente, Mangui Bruno, Mario Sepi - which, together with Pietro Carniti, have transformed the CISL and, to a large extent, the Italian trade unions movement.

Mario has always been characterized by its political intelligence, by his personal approach and his good nature, by his attitude of understanding and consensus, by his generosity and his ability to seek solutions to people's social problems. He had the virtues of the best trade unionist: he was an educator, someone who has always given priority to being rather than seeming, someone who had in him a strong and calm feeling of rebellion against all forms of injustice.

These values have marked his entire career in the Committee: as an adviser, as President of the Workers' Group and as President of the Committee itself.

As always, Mario had ideas and projects in mind. Now this was a project to create a kind of strategic seminar at the European Institute of Florence, on trade unionism and the industrial relations in Europe (we had already had the occasion to discuss it with the Rector Borrell). Without his assistance, the project will be more difficult.

Mario, forever in our thoughts.

José María Zufiaur

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