



European Economic and Social Committee

Brussels, 18 September 2006

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

13 and 14 September 2006

SUMMARY OF OPINIONS ADOPTED

Full text versions of EESC opinions are available in the official languages on the Committee's web site at the following address:

http://eesc.europa.eu/activities/press/summaries_plenaries/index_en.asp

1. CITIZENSHIP, IMMIGRATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY

- *Immigration in the EU and integration policies: cooperation between regional and local governments and civil society organisations*

– **Rapporteur:** Mr Pariza Castaños (Employees – ES)

– **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1169/2006

– **Key points:**

The present opinion represents a fresh contribution from the EESC, which focuses on the social and political players at regional and local level, since this is where challenges can most effectively be met and where policies can achieve the best results.

In conjunction with the drawing-up of the opinion, the EESC held a hearing in Barcelona in order to exchange local and regional authorities best practice and another in Dublin, in cooperation with the ILO and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working conditions, to analyse best practice on integration and anti-discrimination measures at the workplace.

In keeping with the powers which they have in the various Member States, local and regional authorities possess political, legislative and budgetary instruments which they must put to good use in integration policies.

In the field of employment, legislation and public policies must complement one another through cooperation with the social partners, because integration into the labour market is also an issue of society's attitudes and of commitment on the part of trade unions and employers.

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• ***Making European citizenship visible and effective***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Vever (Employers – FR)
- **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1173/2006

– **Key points:**

The formal inclusion of European citizenship rights in the recent treaties has not been enough to stop the rise of euro-scepticism in public opinion.

It is urgent to enable European citizenship to be used fully.

Firstly, the EESC proposes to put right particularly unjustified deficiencies in Europe, i.e.:

- re-start work on and adopt rapidly a European statute for associations;
- do the same as regards a European statute for mutual societies;
- create a simplified European statute open to SMEs;
- implement the Community patent between the Member States which have ratified it;
- remove all double taxation, at least in the eurozone;
- ensure non-discriminatory portability of social security benefits.

Secondly, the EESC proposes to develop a more citizen-oriented governance of the Union, i.e.:

- put right the media's failure to make people aware of Europe by encouraging best practices, with the support of a European audiovisual agency;
- upgrade the consultation phase in preparing projects, by ensuring they have more added value for citizens;
- identify and justify publicly the reasons for proposals concerning European citizens' rights being blocked at the Council or withdrawn by the Commission;
- promote socio-professional self-regulation and co-regulation in all areas of direct relevance to civil society;
- set out the ground rules, in liaison with the various single market support agencies, for a concept of European public service, ultimately including a Europeanised customs service at the EU's external frontiers;
- develop more interactive methods of providing information about Europe;
- involve socio-professional players in the interventions of the Structural Funds on the ground.

Finally, the EESC proposes to promote joint initiatives with a strong identity content, such as:

- giving greater priority to EU budget funding of particularly significant major European projects (trans-European networks, research, advanced technology);
 - investing in ambitious European education and training programmes, not least in the field of languages, including a European non-military voluntary service scheme that is attractive to young people;
 - getting celebrities to talk about their sense of having a "European" identity;
 - investing in equally ambitious European cultural and media programmes, with a common statute for foundations and sponsors;
 - making particular progress in economic and social integration in the eurozone;
 - adopting decisions of major political significance, such as electing the European Parliament on the same day, making 9 May a European public holiday and bringing forward a European right of popular initiative.
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• ***Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010 (Roadmap)***

- **Rapporteur:** Ms Attard (Various Interests – MT)
- **Reference:** COM(2006) 92 final – CESE 1174/2006
- **Key points:**

The EESC:

- acknowledges that common priorities in the employment policies are necessary to increase the female participation rate;
- finds that all relevant parties have an obligation to ensure that pay systems do not lead to pay discrimination between women and men;
- recommends that measures be taken to make more women graduate in technical disciplines;
- proposes that strategies with regard to gender equality in social protection should be stepped up to ensure that taxation and social security systems address the needs of women at risk of poverty, particularly single mothers;
- believes that the national strategies for health and long-term care should include integrated policies that address women health standards at work;
- recommends that gender equality be fully mainstreamed into EU migration policy;
- recognises the importance of developing measures to ensure the provision of care for children and dependent elderly and disabled;

- recommends the introduction of targets and deadlines in order to increase female participation in all forms of decision-making;
- recommends the development of a European Action Plan on Violence Against Women;
- recommends the introduction of gender training modules in media-training institutions;
- believes that improving governance for gender equality is crucial to the success of the Roadmap and recommends the strengthening of mechanisms for dialogue and consultation with organised civil society;
- calls for a separate gender impact assessment of the EU budget on an annual basis.

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2. WORKING LIFE AND EMPLOYMENT

- ***Quality of working life, productivity and employment in the context of globalisation and demographic challenges***
- **Rapporteur:** Ms Engelen-Kefer (Employees – DE)
- **Reference:** Exploratory opinion – CESE 1172/2006
- **Key points:**

The EESC:

- finds that Europe should focus on its strengths, which are to be found in the high quality of its products and services, its well-trained workforce and its social model;
- refers to research showing that improving the quality of working life is a key to increasing the growth in productivity and innovativeness of businesses; quality of working life includes a number of aspects, such as the avoidance and reduction of health risks, the way work is organised at the workplace, social benefits including a fair income, opportunities to gain skills and qualifications, and the ability to reconcile work and family life;
- believes that business structures and cultures should take into account that secure jobs, salubrious working conditions and working arrangements that give workers more autonomy in their work are an important factor for increasing productivity and innovativeness; the Lisbon strategy needs to be implemented at company level, where economic and social goals meet and social dialogue has an important role to play here;
- finds it necessary that new forms of work organisation are introduced in order to promote job satisfaction and a readiness to boost output; cooperative methods of working, involving low-profile hierarchies and greater autonomy, make it possible to exploit

people's knowledge and abilities to the full, whilst, at the same time, taking account of the greater demands for flexibility in the economy;

- supports the concept of flexicurity – i.e. a healthy balance between flexibility and social security – as endorsed at the last meeting of the Employment and Social Policy Council on 1 and 2 June 2006;
- calls for more studies into the relationship between quality of work and productivity to be commissioned; the Dublin Foundation would be well suited to doing this;
- suggests that a European index for quality of work be developed on the basis of relevant studies; such an index could help raise the profile of changes and progress, and at the same time form the basis for new initiatives to improve the quality of working life.

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• ***Law applicable to contractual obligations (Rome I)***

– **Rapporteur:** Mr von Fürstenwerth (Employers – DE)

– **Reference:** COM(2005) 650 final – 2005/0261 COD – CESE 1153/2006

– **Key points:**

The European Economic and Social Committee welcomes the Commission's plan for a European regulation on conflict-of-law rules in the field of contractual obligations. The regulation is useful and necessary for the development of a single European area of justice, since the 1980 Rome Convention that currently regulates this field is in need of modernisation.

The Committee is pleased to note that Ireland intends to become a party to the regulation on a voluntary basis. It regrets that the regulation will not apply in the United Kingdom and Denmark, as the impact of harmonisation will not be felt as strongly as could otherwise have been the case. The Committee urges the Commission to use all possible means to bring about the application or adoption of the regulation in these two countries.

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• ***European Works Councils: a new role in promoting European integration***

– **Rapporteur:** Mr Iozia (Employees – IT)

– **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1170/2006

– **Key points:**

The European Economic and Social Committee recognises the essential role of European Works Councils (EWC) in stimulating and upholding social cohesion, and as a means of integrating European workers, with mutual knowledge and understanding helping European citizens to gain a clearer picture. The more than 10 000 EWC delegates working in Europe are directly and actively committed to creating a new society.

The Commission was required, not later than 22 September 1999, to review its operation "in consultation with the Member States and with management and labour at European level", with a view to proposing "suitable amendments to the Council, where necessary".

The Commission has begun consulting the social partners. UNICE and CEEP have said they are opposed to a revision of the directive. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), in contrast, has repeatedly called for an urgent revision.

The EESC has closely examined the present situation, in part by means of a hearing with labour, employers' and civil society representatives.

In the years since Directive 94/45 came into force, the Community legal framework on information and consultation rights has been strengthened, in particular by Directives 2001/86, 2002/14 and 2003/72, which provide a more advanced view of information and consultation than under Directive 94/45, together with employee involvement procedures designed to ensure that they take place prior to any decisions. These procedures help to make European businesses more competitive on a global scale.

The EESC has identified three main points which it feels should be taken into consideration for a rapid updating of Directive 94/45:

- coordination of the information and consultation provisions of Directive 94/45 with those dealing with the same question in the above-mentioned directives;
- an adjustment to the number of worker representatives on the Special Negotiating Bodies (SNBs) and EWCs to reflect EU enlargement and the right of representatives of each country concerned to belong to the former; the directive had set a maximum membership of 17, which at the time corresponded to the number of countries covered by the directive;

- recognition of the right of national and European trade unions to belong to SNBs and EWCs, and to make use of their own experts, not only during the scheduled meetings.

The EESC proposes that, following a reasonable period of integration for the new Member States and in the light of whatever the social partners may highlight from the lessons learned on EWCs, currently being discussed in various seminars, the directive should be subject to a review which takes account of these experiences and of those indications which can already be made.

The European social model is marked by the respect it shows for the rights on which human dignity is based, as well as by the protection it provides for the most vulnerable through welfare systems. In today's Europe, it should be indeed possible to exercise citizenship rights everywhere, including in the workplace and, in particular, within cross-border companies. The EESC urges the Commission to recognise those new elements which have emerged since Directive 94/45 was adopted, and to identify the measures most likely to strengthen the feeling of belonging to the Union.

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3. THE FIGHT AGAINST ORGANISED CRIME AND TERRORISM

- ***Civil society participation in the fight against organised crime and terrorism***
 - **Rapporteurs:** Mr Rodríguez García-Caro (Employers – ES)
Mr Pariza Castaños (Employees – ES)
Mr Cabra De Luna (Various Interests – ES)
 - **Reference:** Exploratory opinion – CESE 1171/2006
 - **Key points:**

Civil society plays a fundamental role in promoting the values of the rule of law and making an active contribution to democracy. Civil society organisations in Europe are carrying out very positive work in society, promoting active European citizenship and a participatory democracy. However, these organisations cannot and must not replace the national and European authorities in operational policies.

The EESC cannot accept that terrorists and criminals should be able to escape justice due to the EU's internal borders hindering police or judicial action. The EESC urges the EU institutions and Member States to draw up and implement a common strategy against terrorism and to abandon the current situation of decision-making "on the fly".

The EESC believes that the current situation of mere intergovernmental cooperation is for the most part inadequate and often inefficient.

The EESC supports the Commission's proposal to set up a European platform for public-private partnership and believes it essential that it secures the means to gain maximum benefit from public-private cooperation between the Member States and between the EU and Member States.

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4. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

- ***Meeting the challenges of Climate Change – The role of civil society***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Ehnmark (Employers – SE)
- **References:** Own-initiative opinion - CESE 455/2006
- **Key points:**

Climate change is a process that cannot be stopped, not at least within the next 15 to 20 years. In that perspective, we must learn to live with climate change, and seek ways and means to mitigate its effects, and to adapt.

The discussion on climate change focuses excessively on the macro level and events in the distant future. There is a clear need for a debate on how climate change affects – and will affect – citizens in their everyday life. Climate change issues must be restructured in a way that makes them more understandable and concrete.

The social partners and organised civil society have an essential role to play in bringing the issues of climate change to the citizens, and in promoting discussion at local level on how communities can prepare concrete steps to adapt to climate change.

Climate change will have an impact on large sections of society. The EESC has highlighted a number of examples of this. The overall conclusion is that communities in the EU, together with the social partners and organised civil society, must take greater responsibility for preparing and planning for the consequences of climate change.

The EESC proposes that every EU Member State should identify and/or establish a climate change information and coordination office to promote links between local, regional and national levels.

The EESC regrets that climate change is most often discussed in terms of far-off scenarios. Climate change is no longer mainly, or only, a matter for the distant future. Climate change concerns us here and now.

By applying EMAS, individual organisations and institutions explore concrete ways to measure and reduce the environmental impact of various activities, for instance energy and materials use and travelling by car or railway or airplane. The European Economic and Social Committee could consider introducing EMAS and in particular explore the possibility of calculating the emissions caused by travelling to meetings – and then introducing compensatory measures.

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- ***Type approval of motor vehicles***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Ranocchiarì (Employers – IT)
- **Reference:** COM(2005) 683 final – 2005/0282 COD – CESE 1154/2006
- **Key points:**

The EESC welcomes the Commission's proposal, which marks a further step towards the continued improvement of car emission levels. However, the Committee notes that the draft regulation poses considerable problems for the industry and for the Member State government departments responsible for vehicle type approval and registration.

The EESC recommends changing the dates of entry into force of the new rules contained in the proposed regulation to 1 January 2010 (for the type approval of new types of car) and 1 January 2011 (for new registrations) or, alternatively, 36 months and 48 months after the publication of the new regulations in the EU Official Journal. The EESC also recommends maintaining a further period of one year for class II and III N1 vehicles.

The EESC agrees with the limits proposed for vehicles with diesel engines. It has doubts, however, as to the need to further tighten the limits for vehicles with engines running on petrol or gaseous fuels.

With regard to M1 passenger vehicles¹ that perform specific functions or are used for work, the EESC asks the Commission to provide a more precise and restricted definition than that given for them in the current directive.

The EESC asks the Commission to revise those points in the proposed text that could give rise to administrative uncertainties.

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- ***Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Pezzini (Employers – IT)
- **Reference:** COM(2005) 718 final – SEC(2006) 16 – CESE 1158/2006
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- ***Marketing of certain measuring devices containing mercury***

- **Rapporteur:** Ms Cassina (Employees – IT)
- **Reference:** COM(2006) 69 final – 2006/0018 COD – CESE 1163/2006
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¹

Category M covers passenger vehicles with at least four wheels. They are divided into three classes (M1, M2, M3) based on the number of seats and their maximum weight: M1 < 9 seats; M2 > 9 seats and < 5 000kg; M3 > 9 seats and > 5 000kg

5. INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND GLOBALISATION

- *A sectoral survey of relocation*

- *Rapporteur: Mr Van Iersel (Employers – NL)*

- *Co-rapporteur: Mr Calvet Chambon (Employers – ES)*

- **Reference:** Information Report – CESE 1143/2006

- **Key points:**

Complementing the opinion entitled The scope and effects of company relocations (CCMI/014), adopted by the EESC on 14 July 2005, the report is designed to present, through the use of the most relevant indicators, a survey of company relocation across 19 sectors, providing a synoptic view of existing statistical and other data in each area so as to draw an accurate picture of the state of company relocations in each instance. This survey was carried out by Reckon LLP, an external consultant operating under the close supervision and with the guidance of a CCMI study group.

Thus the report gives a short description of the approach adopted by the consultant, in close cooperation with the CCMI study group, and comments briefly on the main results contained in the study, sets these in context and makes some suggestions.

Within the EESC, the drafting of this information report represents an innovative working practice in that it couples the expertise and know-how of the CCMI members and delegates to the findings of a survey produced by an external consultant, albeit working under the close supervision of the relevant CCMI study group.

The resulting product is one of high added value, given that, as the literature review contained in the external study reveals, to date there has been no attempt by public or private institutions in Europe to undertake a comprehensive survey based on all readily available evidence and dedicated exclusively to the issue of relocation from a sectoral point of view.

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• ***European Globalisation Adjustment Fund***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Van Iersel (Employers – NL)
- **Co-rapporteur:** Mr Gibellieri (Employees – IT)
- **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1147/2006
- **Key points:**

The EESC welcomes the proposal from the European Commission concerning the setting up of a European Globalisation Fund (hereafter EGF). The EESC agrees with the objective of intervening via the EGF in cases where immediate and extensive social problems for workers arise as a consequence of serious and unforeseeable economic disruptions.

The EESC agrees that the Member States themselves have primary responsibility and that the EGF should intervene only at the request of a Member State and after a corresponding decision of the budgetary authority. The rules have to be clear.

During times of severe disruption, anticipatory policy, dynamic entrepreneurship, regional responsibility and timely measures and cooperation by the relevant stakeholders – business, the social partners, government, regional authorities and others – are key. The EGF as an instrument of EU solidarity has a complementary function. To be credible the expectations must not be raised too high.

The specific actions, financed by the EGF, must fit into the overall planning of all stakeholders concerned. The EGF should not intervene in areas where the Member States have exclusive competence. It should be made clear that the Fund is targeting specific employment opportunities for people in urgent economic circumstances.

The EESC calls on the Commission to ensure active involvement of the social partners in processes aimed at creating employment for workers made redundant. Achieving the objective of "quick reintegration" of redundant employees into the labour market is usually a tough job. Evidence shows that such processes take a lot of time.

Strict coordination between the various existing instruments, particularly between the EGF and the Structural Funds, should be guaranteed in order to increase effectiveness and coherence.

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• ***Sustainable development and industrial change***

- **Rapporteur** : M. SIECKER (Workers – NL)
- **Co-rapporteur** : M. CINCERA (Various interests – CZ)
- **Reference** : Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1142/2006
- **Key points** :

The aim of this own-initiative Opinion is to consider how sustainable development can act as a catalyst for gradual and proactive industrial change. The Opinion provides, in the main, examples from the energy and related sectors but the same processes can be applied to others.

The EESC reaffirms that the three pillars of the Lisbon strategy are of equal importance and stresses that sustainability is not just one of the options on a list; rather, it constitutes the only possible course of action in order to secure a viable future. The concept of "sustainability" is an overarching one and is therefore not restricted to the environment, but also embraces economic and social issues. Europe can contribute to this by strengthening competitiveness through innovation and by stimulating research and development through a combination of active policies and a mixture of targeted measures.

The eco-industry offers a lot of opportunity for economic growth. Europe has a strong position in a number of sectors in this industry. In order to retain and develop its strengths and to achieve similar positions in other sectors, the EESC feels that Europe has to display greater ambition.

An industrial policy directed at sustainable development can contribute to the competitiveness of the entire European economy. The EESC wants the European Commission to support such a policy. Examples described in this Opinion show that well thought-out and implemented support schemes, set in motion at the time of introduction of new environmental technologies, can help to create a market for these technologies that can then be developed further without support. Any support mechanism must be clearly degressive as the cost of state aid should not restrict the international competitiveness of other industries.

Sustainable development is not to be limited to a European context, as it has a global dimension. European sustainability policy should be endowed with instruments to prevent reallocation of labour to other regions. In order to ensure a level playing field, a two-pronged approach is needed: internally to the EU on the one hand and externally to the EU on the other.

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• ***Territorial governance of industrial change***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Pezzini (Employers – IT)
- **Co-rapporteur:** Mr Gibellieri (Employees – IT)
- **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1144/2006
- **Key points:**

The EESC is convinced that:

- There is no one form of governance to suit all. Each regional/local tier must seek the formula that best services the requirements of local or regional governance, while remaining compatible with the national, European or international frame of reference. There are however certain common features.
- It is essential that this integrated regional policy include a structured social dialogue, not least by making more of existing local/regional economic and social councils with the social partners and representatives of organised civil society and by establishing effective forms of economic and social partnership. This is necessary in order to form a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses with a view to finding new niches on the internal and international market.
- Only an integrated and jointly-framed territorial approach will ensure that knowledge accumulated through investment in research and development, innovation and education can generate the capacity for innovation, giving the European industrial base a competitive edge and enabling it to attract human and financial resources.
- The new CIP programme (2007-2013) cannot be looked at in isolation from the Community's other regional policies and programmes.
- The CIP must be closely coordinated with regional and cohesion policy and cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation measures as well as with the VIIth RTD framework programme.

- Lastly, the Committee reiterates a view it has already expressed in a recent opinion on the subject of modern industrial policy: "What is missing is a clear link between the efforts at EU level, and the necessary involvement of governments, industry and stakeholders at national and regional level."

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- ***IT-supported lifelong learning and industrial change***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Krzaklewski (Employees – PL)
- **Co-rapporteur:** Mr Szücs (Various interests – HU)
- **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1145/2006

- **Key points:**

The EESC is convinced that e-learning would be an effective tool for improving the competitiveness of enterprises, especially SMEs, as these have a key role to play in generating economic growth and creating jobs.

The EESC is convinced of the need for a greater awareness in the EU of ICT, in particular of the way these technologies can support training in industry and lifelong learning, e.g. through:

- training provided mainly in the workplace, geared towards solving existing problems in a particular context;
- methods and approaches recognising prior learning achievements – including those obtained through work and experience – and encouraging active involvement in learning activities, both independent and collaborative.

The Committee suggests following the example of terms already in use in the EU such as *e-Europa*, *e-learning*, *e-skills* etc. by introducing the term – *e-LL (e-lifelong learning)*, thereby stressing the role of this form of learning and the need to develop and extend it within the *e-Europa* programme and subsequent programmes.

The EESC reasserts the importance of avoiding any form of exclusion in this regard (rural areas and small towns, blind people, the elderly, etc.). The EESC appeals to the Commission to recognise access to broadband as part of a wider strategy aimed at ensuring that eAccess is accorded the status of general interest. The EESC would like to stress that the European Commission should also pay special attention to the question of intellectual property rights in the field of IT education.

The EESC notes that there is an urgent need to define a new role for civil society and for dialogue among the social partners as regards the promotion and establishment of IT-assisted lifelong learning in the EU's labour markets.

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• ***Interaction between services and European manufacturing industries***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Calleja (Employers –MT)
- **Co-rapporteur:** Mr Rohde (Employees – DE)
- **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1146/2006
- **Key points:**

The EESC emphasises the positive contribution of business services to increased productivity and competitiveness of both European manufacturing and the service sector. The opinion highlights the positive potential for improvement and expansion of business services and pays particular attention to developments in the new discipline known as "service engineering" and to the impact of externalisation/outsourcing of business services. In this perspective, the Committee proposes a series of specific measures. The EESC strongly recommends the following actions at EU level:

- completion of the internal market for business services and especially the removal of obstacles to the smooth operation of the sector;
- urgent recognition of business services as an integral part of any industrial policy;
- creation of a European Business Services Observatory;
- reinforcement of social dialogue to follow up and assess changes in labour conditions and job opportunities resulting from the structural changes.

More generally, other measures need to be taken at market level and encouraged by public administrations, such as:

- promotion of business services as a means to improve business and industrial performance and to achieve competitive advantages;
- encouragement of more extensive and effective use of business services by SMEs;
- boosting of employment and enhancement of working conditions in business services as a means to improve productivity, service quality and living standards;

- targeted training and re-training programmes to strengthen the adaptability and improve the employability of workers affected by structural change.

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- ***Structural business statistics***

– **Rapporteur:** Ms Florio (Employees – IT)

– **References:** COM(2006) 66 final – 2006/0020 COD – CESE 1156/2006

– **Key points:**

The EESC broadly supports the proposal to recast Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 58/97 on industrial statistics and stresses the key role played by Eurostat.

In addition the EESC makes the following observations.

- As far as possible, statistics should be based on up-to-date data already kept by administrative authorities and other authorised bodies. The administrative burden of collecting statistics must match the size of the business concerned.
- It is important to have a good system within which Eurostat, the social partners, the academic world and businesses can consult one another and pool experience. This mechanism should be improved and expanded within the CEIES-Eurostat forum (one representative of users for each Member State).
- Were Eurostat to dialogue more closely with social partners on social security costs, it would be possible to get a more detailed breakdown of the burden on businesses in this area.
- More detailed employment data could provide a clearer picture of the activities of businesses. The Committee notes that structural business statistics must always include a careful analysis of the quality of employment.
- Given the sensitivity of the health and education sectors and their crucial importance for all of Europe's citizens, it would be inappropriate to include these fields in structural business statistics. The EESC thinks it would be useful for the Commission to initiate ad hoc gathering of statistics on these sectors.
- On the question of energy purchases and investment in human resources in the research and development sector, it is important to assess both the qualitative and quantitative importance this has in the life of businesses.
- Emphasis is placed on the importance of collecting data on the treatment of industrial waste, waste-water purification and the cleaning-up of polluted areas.
- Finally, greater emphasis should be given to regionally based statistics showing in which areas industry and business had sprung up, what the principal activities were, in which areas

research investment was concentrated, and where the most business start-ups and failures were.

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6. ENERGY POLICY

- ***Energy mix***

- **Rapporteur:** Ms Sirkeinen (Employers – FI)
- **Reference:** Exploratory opinion – CESE 1176/2006
- **Key points:**

Having examined the energy sector extensively, the EESC believes that the strategic goal should be a diversified energy mix. This should include all potential sources and uses of energy. Energy efficiency, including combined heat and power production, is the first key answer to the energy policy challenges. Better efficiency supports all energy policy targets – competitiveness, security of supply, climate change. Renewable energy sources have much potential in the EU and need specifically adapted support. Policies have to be designed carefully so as not to contribute to the already strong push upwards on energy prices. In transport, a variety of measures (alternative fuels, intelligent traffic planning, hybrid vehicles, etc.) could help energy policy targets to be better implemented. Nuclear energy continues to be an option for the foreseeable future and as long as demand can't be satisfied by other technologies and sources (fusion, renewables etc.). Even better support is needed for nuclear safety and the implementation of an existing, practical solution to the question of spent fuel. New technologies will allow for a broader and environmentally sound use of traditional energy sources like coal and gas in future (clean coal technology, liquefied natural gas etc.). Finally, a better coordination of energy policy within the EU and increased R&D efforts are equally essential for an optimal EU energy strategy. The EESC stresses that the impact of present and future climate and environmental policy measures on the other energy policy objectives – competitiveness and security of supply – as well as on a diversified energy supply, must be carefully assessed.

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7. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

- ***The Belarus Civil Society***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Stulik (Various Interests – CZ)
- **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1167/2006
- **Key points:**

The EU institutions and Member States must take action on Belarus and must coordinate and harmonise their strategies for supporting civil society both among themselves and with the European Commission and other international donors.

The potential pros and cons of imposing economic and other sanctions must be analysed extremely carefully. With President Lukashenko controlling virtually all the media, the EU can easily be portrayed to the Belarus population as a hostile institution.

A distinction must be made between sanctions which directly affect the population or only those in power. If sanctions are imposed, the form they take must respect this distinction. Sanctions should not directly affect the Belarus population itself.

Participation in the European Neighbourhood Policy programme must be conditional on Belarus demonstrating the political will to push forward vital reforms and opting unambiguously to follow the "European" path.

Russia will continue to be one of the key stakeholders in Belarus' situation. Since Russia is a declared strategic partner of the European Union, there must be a policy of dialogue with the country and its politicians on the situation in Belarus.

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- ***Support for young people in Mediterranean partner countries***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Calleja (Employers – MT)

- **Reference:** CESE 1168/2006

- **Information Report:**

- **Key points:**

In the information report, the EESC calls on the Euromed authorities and governments in the Mediterranean and Partner Countries (MPCs) to make education and the integration of young people in economic and social life a priority. It also stresses the importance of establishing a policy of consultation with the social partners, civil society and particularly youth organisations in the drawing-up and implementation of the National Action Plans under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

Emphasis is placed on the need to improve and coordinate the visibility of opportunities available for young people under the European Neighbourhood Policy.

It is recommended that the EU and the MPCs collaborate further in the education and cultural fields by developing knowledge standards and mutual recognition of qualifications, skills and competences. It is important to foster more understanding and tolerance of the diversity of cultures and religions, especially through youth exchanges and twinning activities.

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8. **INTERNAL MARKET, TAXATION, FINANCIAL SERVICES**

- ***Voting rights by shareholders/Shares admitted to trading***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Cassidy (Employers – UK)

- **Reference:** COM(2005) 685 final – CESE 1148/2006

- **Key points:**

The EESC welcomes the Commission proposal as barriers to cross-border voting provide distortions of the single market. It welcomes particularly the elimination of share "blocking" and the proposals for Proxy Voting set out in Article 10.

The EESC would like to see greater use of electronic voting to improve transparency and to encourage shareholder participation. It expects a wider use of secure Internet voting perhaps including the use of SMS.

The EESC would like to see a strengthening of Article 5 concerning the supply of information to shareholders prior to a general meeting.

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- ***Information on Purchasing Power Parities***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Santillán Cabeza (Employees – ES)
- **Reference:** COM(2006) 135 final – 2006/0042 (COD) – CESE 1149/2006
- **Key points:**

The EESC welcomes the proposal for a Regulation establishing a legal basis for the implementation of Purchasing Power Parities (PPP) and recommends its immediate approval.

Due to cost reasons, the Commission (Eurostat) calculates PPPs by countries, not by regions. However, these calculations are used, *inter alia*, to evaluate the economic performance of regions. Therefore, it is recommended that Member States make every effort possible, both economically and technically, to ensure that spatial correction coefficients reflect as precisely as possible geographical differences in prices. The minimum period of six years for the revision of the spatial coefficients seems too long and should be reduced. Information on prices should if possible be supplied every two years (the draft stipulates a minimum of three years).

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- ***A paperless environment for customs and trade***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Burani (Employers – IT)

- **Reference:** COM(2005) 609 final – 2005/0247 COD – CESE 1151/2006

- **Key points:**

Adopting the computerised system proposed by the Commission requires a joint and coordinated effort by all the Member States and by the bodies responsible for putting the concepts of the single window and the one-stop shop into practice.

The EESC welcomes the main innovations introduced provided that the costs to the tax-payer and to operators are sustainable. The EESC also comments on the integration of computer systems and their complementarity.

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- ***Payment services***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr von Fürstenwerth (Employers – DE)

- **Reference:** COM(2005) 603 final – 2005/0245 COD – CESE 1152/2006

- **Key points:**

The EESC supports the establishment of a Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA), which is crucial for establishing a single market with no internal borders. The Committee therefore backs the European Commission's efforts to achieve this.

Nevertheless, the EESC is concerned that the target of establishing the Single Euro Payments Area in 2008 could be missed because of an overly cumbersome legal framework.

The EESC therefore feels that the principle of better regulation is only served by focusing on those areas that really do require regulatory action. Hence, in the interests of both providers and users of payment services, the basic premise of the proposed directive should be to promote and facilitate payments, not to hamper them by red tape that ultimately makes the systems more expensive and thus less acceptable to users.

Finally, the establishment of a single market in payment services also raises other issues, which it has not yet been possible to resolve. These include, on the one hand, the security of

electronic payments and related factors and, on the other, the question of access to a current account.

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- ***Control of the acquisition and possession of weapons***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Pegado Liz (Various interests – PT)
- **Reference:** COM(2006) 93 final – 2006/0031 COD – CESE 1157/2006
- **Key points:**

Although the Committee welcomes the Commission initiative, it wishes to make the following comments.

- It is not thought that there is any need for a lengthy delay in transposing the directive once it has been adopted; 12 to 18 months should be sufficient.
- Existing comparative law in the Member States could provide useful support for classifying the illicit activities, and the relevant system of penalties could be discussed as soon as possible at the European Council.
- The concept of "illegal trafficking" should be viewed against the background of the fight against transnational organised crime, in such a way as to limit the application of criminal sanctions to situations that fall exclusively within the specific scope of the United Nations convention referred to above.
- The definition of antique weapons or the reproductions of such (No 3(c) of Annex I to the directive) must be coordinated by the Commission.

To conclude, it might also be useful to refer to the use of weapons in hunting, sporting and collectors' activities, because the primacy of security interests must also prevail in these areas, due to the nature - or rather the lethal nature - of the items in question.

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- ***Glucose and lactose***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Donnelly (Various interests – IE)
- **Reference:** COM(2006) 116 final – 2006/0038 CNS – CESE 1165/2006
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9. **AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES**

- ***Agriculture in areas with natural handicaps***

- **Co-rapporteurs:** Mr Bros (Various Interests – FR)
Mr Caball i Suburana (Various Interests – ES)
- **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1159/2006
- **Key points:**

The EESC considers that the existence of areas with specific natural handicaps (upland, island and outermost areas) must be recognised both publicly and politically, so that coherent, targeted policies in line with the real needs of these regions can then be implemented.

Bearing these handicaps, the importance and the needs of farming in areas with specific natural handicaps (upland, island and outermost areas) in mind, the Committee calls on the European Commission to submit proposals for developing specific instruments for upland areas and other disadvantaged areas, in order to coordinate the different policies currently applying to them and to develop synergies between existing measures.

Even though the second pillar of the CAP - rural development - is a key policy and thus a high political priority, it has to be said that this was one of the main variables which could be adjusted to reach agreement on the financial perspective. Noting this cut in budgetary resources, the Committee calls on the Commission and the Council to steer appropriations for rural development towards the weakest areas in the greatest need; in other words, areas with permanent natural handicaps.

The Committee calls on the Commission and the Member States, when drawing up rural development and regional programmes under the Structural Funds, to ensure that these programmes in areas with natural handicaps are both complementary and consistent.

The EESC proposes that, in the same way that platforms such as Euromontana already exist to promote mountain regions, this type of cooperation should be boosted in island and outermost regions, especially for agricultural policy issues and should actively involve civil society. Furthermore, and given the precarious situation and the importance of farming in these areas, the EESC considers that creating a European monitoring centre for these areas (upland, island and outermost areas) is of the utmost importance.

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- ***Use of animal by-products***

- **Rapporteur:** Ms Santiago (Employers – PT)

- **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1161/2006

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- ***Special measures to encourage silkworm rearing***

- **Rapporteur:** Ms Le Nouail (Employees – FR)

- **Reference:** COM(2006) 4 final – 2006/0003 CNS – CESE 1162/2006

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- ***Economic situation in the fishing industry***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Sarró Iparraguirre (Various Interests – ES)

- **Reference:** COM(2006) 103 final – CESE 1164/2006

- **Key points:**

The EESC agrees with the Commission's diagnosis that the fishing sector is in a state of economic crisis and believes action is necessary to improve the situation. However, the Committee considers the measures to be insufficient and unrealistic because the vast majority of operators are SMEs or owners of one sole vessel, working in fishing grounds with limited resources, with very small crews, subject to stringent fishing management rules and with very little scope to take measures to restructure and ensure their short-term viability.

The Committee believes that without a new budget that is separate from the FIFG/EFF (Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance/European Fisheries Fund) arrangements, there is very little opportunity to put these new measures into practice and therefore the communication will have little practical impact for most enterprises.

The Committee considers that a further series of measures should be taken to alleviate the serious effects that high fuel prices are having on fishing enterprises and their crews, including:

- increasing the level of de minimis aid to EUR 100 000 per enterprise
- temporarily halting fishing activities in the event of “unforeseeable circumstances”, understood as the crisis provoked by high fuel prices
- setting up a Community scrapping fund with a special budget, which would give priority to those fleet segments with the most problems and enable vessel owners who choose voluntarily to abandon fishing to do so in an acceptable way
- provision of support through RTDI aid (research, technology, development and innovation) for projects presented by the fishing sector aimed at improving the energy efficiency of fishing, finding alternative or complementary energy sources to oil and developing Fishing Technology Platforms.

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10. TRANSPORT

• *Pan-European transport corridors*

- **Rapporteur:** Ms Alleweldt (Employees – DE)
- **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion –CESE 1175/2006
- **Key points:**

In principle, the EESC considers the new transport policy initiatives (identification of new priority projects, new central trunk routes with neighbouring states, etc.) to have been a success. However, these new initiatives have remained rooted in old concepts: the focus is virtually exclusively on the planning of transport routes, with little or no attention paid to questions of intermodality and environmental impact, or to local economic and social interests. The EESC feels that the 20% co-financing available through EU funds for projects within the EU should be better exploited. At the same time, the conditions stipulated for environmental and security aspects should be formulated in a more binding way. There should be more effective cooperation between cross-border bodies (such as the steering committees

for the corridors) and those set up by the Commission. It is important, in future, to study and evaluate not only regional approaches, but also transport-mode-related issues along trunk routes and priority projects within the TEN-T network.

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- **Maritime safety – Erika III**

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Retureau (Employees – FR)
- **Co-rapporteur:** Ms Bredima Savopoulou (Employers - EL)
- **Reference:** COM(2005) 586-587-588-589-590-592-593 final – CESE 1177/2006
- **Key points:**

Overall, the EESC welcomes the Third Maritime Safety Package, which is a further constructive and proactive step towards improving maritime safety. The Committee broadly supports the flag state performance proposal, the port state control proposal, the oversight through audits of the classification societies, the accident investigations and the vessel traffic monitoring (VTM, ships in distress and areas of refuge) proposal.

The Committee has some concerns about the proposals regarding passenger ship liability based on the IMO (International Maritime Organisation) Athens Convention and civil liability.

The EESC reiterates its earlier calls in response to the Erika I and II packages for another maritime safety package dealing more specifically with the human element and deplores the fact that the human element has not been sufficiently addressed at EU level in the Third Maritime Safety Package. It proposes that the maritime labour code convention adopted by the International Labour Conference (Maritime Session) of the ILO in 2006 should serve as the basis for framing appropriate provisions.

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- ***GALILEO – European supervisory authority***

– **Rapporteur:** Mr Buffetaut (Employers - FR)

– **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1179/2006

– **Key points:**

The Galileo Joint Undertaking (GJU) was established in March 2002 for a four-year period, to ensure the coordinated administration of funds for the implementation of the development and validation phase of the Galileo programme.

The Joint Undertaking is due to be dissolved on 28 May 2006. It will then have to transfer all of its assets to the European Supervisory Authority (GSA).

It is proposed that the own-initiative opinion study the conditions for transfer before the Joint Undertaking is dissolved, identifying problems linked to the transition and drawing up recommendations for the implementation of the transitional phase, which is very important for the future success of the Galileo programme.

The European Economic and Social Committee recommends:

- setting up a plan for the transfer of activities from the Joint Undertaking to the Supervisory Authority in order to ensure the legal certainty of the operation;
- providing legal and practical solutions for the issue of the transfer of activities carried out by third country entities (China and Israel) associated with the Joint Undertaking to the Supervisory Authority;
- ensuring that the Joint Undertaking's remaining appropriations are effectively handed over to the Supervisory Authority;
- making sure that there is no overlap of responsibilities between the Joint Undertaking and the Supervisory Authority before the date of winding up of the Joint Undertaking;
- avoiding any interruption in the negotiations on the concession contract;
- guaranteeing the international liability arrangements for the launching States of the Galileo constellation satellites.

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• ***Promotion of inland waterway transport "NAIADES"***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Simons (Employers - NL)
- **Reference:** COM(2006) 6 final – CESE 1180/2006

– **Key points:**

The proposed programme can be considered as a solid basis for the development of inland waterway transport (IWT), however, the EESC reproaches the Commission for failing to pay attention to the recommendations set out by the EESC in its opinion on social policy.

A constructive social dialogue must be entered into at European level as a means of mapping out a strategy for locating people who wish to work in inland shipping and for establishing comparable social conditions and working conditions in all EU Member States. There is also a need to invest in training and traineeships in inland navigation with a view to offering prospects and career possibilities to persons undergoing training.

The EESC calls upon the European Commission not to subject the liability of carriers of passengers in inland waterways to a new regime, as proposed in the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the liability of carriers of passengers by sea and inland waterways in the event of accidents (COM(2005) 592).

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• ***Modification – accelerated phasing in of double hull***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Simons (Employers - NL)
- **Reference:** COM(2006) 111 final – 2006/0046 COD – CESE 1182/2006

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11. TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INTERNET

- ***TV without frontiers***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr. Hernández Bataller (Various Interests – ES)
- **Reference:** COM(2005) 646 final – 2005/0260 COD – CESE 1178/2006
- **Key points:**

The European Commission proposes to update the 1989 "TV without Frontiers" Directive to keep pace with rapid technological and market developments in Europe's audiovisual sector. The modernisation of the EU rules on audiovisual media content is part of the i2010 strategy which aims at a European Information Society for growth and jobs.

The EESC believes that the definition of "audiovisual commercial communication" proposed by the Commission is too restrictive, mechanically reproducing the definition of "audiovisual media services". It would be preferable to define audiovisual commercial communication as "images and/or sounds accompanying audiovisual media services designed to promote, whether directly or indirectly, the goods, services or image of a physical or legal person for economic purposes".

The EESC believes that the concept of "subliminal techniques in audiovisual commercial communication" should be developed, making reference to the use of visual or acoustic stimuli broadcast at levels that border on the limits of sensory perception and are perceived subconsciously.

With regard to protecting children, the EESC regrets that the Commission has not considered tutelary protection schemes as have proved effective in some Member States, such as the "five minute rule" which forbids advertising before or after transmission of a children's programme.

The Committee would emphasise the role of consumers' and viewers' organisations in both self-regulation and co-regulation. It would also like to see responsible governance, with the quality of both legislation and services safeguarded by ethics and participation by those concerned by the law.

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- ***Bridging the Broadband Gap***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr McDonogh (Employers - IE)

- **Reference:** COM(2006) 129 final – CESE 1181/2006

- **Key points:**

The Committee considers that the The Commission's Communication – COM(2006) 129 "*Bridging the Broadband Gap*" – lacks sufficient ambition, and it doesn't include enough concrete recommendations to demonstrate a serious commitment to closing the broadband gap.

The Committee believes that because of the growing importance of broadband service to economic and social development, broadband connectivity should be included within the scope of the universal service definition, as the service of significant public interest. The Commission should take whatever measures possible to ensure that Member States rigorously enforce the regulatory framework for electronic communications and should consider special sanctions to accelerate the process of effective Local Loop Unbundling LLU in Member States.

To bring clarity to the reality of broadband availability in Europe, the Commission should stipulate the minimum acceptable effective download speed for a connection to be called broadband. Also the Commission should emphasise support for R&D efforts into finding broadband technologies for effective solutions to the problem of providing high speed broadband connectivity in areas not served by adequate telecommunications infrastructure.

Finally, Policy makers should issue consumer protection guidelines on broadband services which simplify the terminology and explain the service offerings and benefits in clear language. This would make it easier for consumers to make good buying decisions.

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12.DEVELOPMENT AID

- ***New international resources for Development and the fight against Poverty***

- **Rapporteur:** M. ZUFIAUR (Employees – ES)

- **Reference:** Information Report – CESE 1166/2006

- **Key points:**

- Current levels of Official Development Assistance (ODA) are insufficient and new funds are needed in order to increase the stability and predictability of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and to fulfil the commitments of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);

- A number of principles and criteria for new international financing should be taken into account when reviewing the various possibilities for new resources. Among these principles can be included: additionality (the new funds should be supplementary to ODA), progressivity (demanding more from those who have more), transparency, accountability and public control, economic feasibility, etc.;

- Most of the existing proposals for new international resources are technically feasible. Proposals include: taxes on foreign exchange transactions, taxes on air tickets, the creation of a European lottery, etc.;

- The European Union should adopt a more decisive stance and take political leadership on the various proposals;

- The contribution of civil society to the debate is crucial, for example, their role in communicating the need to establish new funds, in raising awareness of development issues and in calling on EU governments to establish new sources of funding.

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13. TOURISM

- *Social tourism in Europe*

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Mendoza Castro (Employees – ES)
- **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – EESC 1155/2006
- **Key points:**

Social tourism is an environmentally, economically and socially sustainable activity; it can also be a highly valuable tool for the creation of a Citizens' Europe, an activity that displays some of the values which can be incorporated into the European tourism model.

The EESC therefore makes the following recommendations:

- **potential users of social tourism** should participate in tourism activities, to which they are entitled as individuals;
- the **practitioners involved in managing the various social tourism programmes** should go on improving their products and services, investing in improvements to infrastructure and innovating with new products, especially with a transnational dimension;
- **businesses in the tourism sector** should take part in social tourism activities, as they are compatible with good business management, and make it possible to secure the jobs of many workers;
- **national, regional and local institutions and governments** should promote the establishment of social tourism programmes on account of their social but also economic benefits;
- **the European institutions** should bear in mind that social tourism is an important activity which shares objectives with tourism and social policy. Guidance, technical coordination, dissemination of experience and a forum for signing transnational agreements are among the tasks that the Commission especially can provide with its own resources in order to set up an effective **European social tourism platform**.

Lastly, given its political, social and economic dimensions, the European Parliament should launch initiatives to promote a debate and resolutions encouraging social tourism in Europe.

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