



European Economic and Social Committee

Brussels, 13 November 2006

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

24, 25 AND 26 OCTOBER 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

This session marked the renewal of the EESC for the 13th four-year term of office, 2006-2010. The 430th plenary session was therefore an inaugural session, during which the Assembly elected Mr Dimitris Dimitriadis as EESC President and installed the new Bureau, the sections, and the Committee's various bodies and working structures.

1. MONETARY POLICY AND TAXATION

- ***BEPG and economic governance***

- Rapporteur: Mr Nyberg (Employees – SE)

- **References:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1369/2006

- **Key points:**

On 16 and 17 June 2005, the European Council in the Presidency Conclusions adopted the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines (2005-2008) as part of the Integrated guidelines for growth and jobs. Against the background that growth and employment creation in Europe has not been sufficient also after the realisation of the EMU, the opinion examines the role of the ECB and its interaction with other policy makers, especially fiscal policy, but also social partners that are responsible for wage policy.

The European Central Bank and ECOFIN should consider the same set of policy objectives. It is especially important for the ECOFIN euro group to take the same approach as the ECB. The price stability objective should become a symmetrical objective, e.g. 2 percent +/- 1 percentage point. Core inflation is the measure that should be used. The main focus of the three-yearly economic guidelines should be a minimum level of economic growth, a downward trend for unemployment and the Lisbon Agenda percentage objective for the workforce. The interval between Cologne Process meetings should be used to carry out joint studies on economic links, the impact of various policy measures and similar questions. Prior to each meeting the European Parliament should adopt a resolution on the economic situation and the policy required. Both ECOFIN and the euro group should be present.

- **Contact:** *Mr Gilbert Marchlewitz*
(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 93 58 – e-mail: gilbert.marchlewitz@eesc.europa.eu)

- ***Practical preparations – future enlargement of the euro area (third report)***

- **Rapporteur:** Ms Roksandić (Employees – SL)

- **References:** COM(2006) 322 final – CESE 1370/2006

– **Key points :**

The EESC believes that the Commission Communication accurately and exhaustively sets out the current process of preparing for the Euro in Slovenia, as well as the progress made by the ten other Member States that are due to adopt the Euro once they meet the necessary conditions. It therefore endorses the Commission Communication.

The Committee proposes that the Commission recommend that in their preparations for adopting the Euro and in addition to the necessary information campaigns, Member States pay special attention to ensuring that all interest groups are involved in the process, with the support of civil society organisations. To this end, Member States and the EU should provide financial resources to train and prepare the various interest groups for work and life with the new Euro currency.

- **Contact:** *Mr Gilbert Marchlewitz*
(Tel. : 00 32 2 546 93 58 – e-mail : gilbert.marchlewitz@eesc.europa.eu)

• **Action programme for customs**

- **Rapporteur-general:** Ms Batut (Employees – FR)
- **References:** COM(2006) 201 final – 2006/0075 COD – CESE 1374/2006

- **Contact:** *Ms Magdalena Carabin*
(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 83 03 – e-mail : magdalena.carabin@eesc.europa.eu)

2. **CITIZENSHIP AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

• **Green Paper – European Transparency Initiative**

- **Rapporteur-general:** Ms Sánchez Miguel (Employees – ES)
- **References:** COM(2006) 194 final – CESE 1373/2006

– **Key points:**

The Committee welcomes the presentation of the Green Paper but regrets the confused definition the Commission gives for interest groups, which means that the specific nature of civil society organisations in relation to pressure groups is denied, above all the role that civil society organisations play in the development of participatory democracy at European level. Moreover, the Committee feels that a distinction should be made between access to information, to which all EU citizens have a right, and consultation which is limited to those that have a legitimate interest in Community policies.

As regards the various aspects covered by the Green Paper, the Committee:

- is in favour of mandatory registration for interested parties as a precondition for the acquisition of a right, such as the right to compulsory consultation of the interested parties on the subjects that concern them;
 - is in favour of the Commission drafting and implementing a code of conduct to which all interest groups wishing to be registered should subscribe; this code of conduct would be similar to the one established by the European Parliament, but with a content adapted to the type of consultation sought and in particular with regard to the consequences of failure to comply;
 - feels that feedback on the minimum standards for consultation could be improved by making it mandatory for each Directorate General to undertake an impact assessment of consultation for all proposals which are the subject of public consultation and not just strategic proposals, as is the case at present. Moreover, the Commission is urged to look at several aspects such as the languages in which the consultations are carried out, the neutrality of questions raised and the deadlines for replying; and
 - advocates making it compulsory for all Member States to disclose all information relating to beneficiaries in the framework of the EU funds under shared management and also to publish this information on the internet.
- **Contact:** Mr Patrick Fève
(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 96 16 – e-mail: patrick.feve@eesc.europa.eu)

3. COMPETITION

- ***Green Paper on breach of antitrust rules***
- **Rapporteur-general:** Ms Sánchez (Employees – ES)
- **References:** COM(2005) 672 final – CESE 1349/2006
- **Key points:**

The EESC considers that Community guidelines could be drawn up establishing the conditions for bringing an action for damages arising from infringements of the Treaty.

This action must compensate those who have suffered losses, within reasonable limits, for economic loss or loss of profit resulting from prohibited competition practices. Above all however, it must enable consumers - in the broadest sense of the word - to exercise their economic rights, recognised in the laws designed to protect them, and this is why we welcome the Green Paper on the matter. We do, however, wish to highlight the need for proceedings to be made shorter, in order to ensure the best outcomes as swiftly as possible.

The EESC would like to help to guide the debate by making some remarks on the wide range of questions raised by the Commission in its Green Paper, such as access to evidence, damages, collective actions, funding of damages actions, the passing-on defence and indirect purchasers' standing, and jurisdiction and applicable law.

- **Contact:** *Mr Luís Lobo*
(Tel .: 00 32 2 546 97 17 – e-mail: luis.lobos@eesc.europa.eu)

4. SOCIAL PROTECTION

- ***Implementing regulation for the new Regulation 883/2004 on the coordination of national social security systems***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr GREIF (Employees – AT)

- **References:** COM(2006) 16 final – 2006/0006 COD – CESE 1371/2006

- **Key points:**

The EESC welcomes the presentation of the implementing regulation as an important step towards improving free movement within the EU.

Furthermore, the EESC:

- welcomes the wider scope of the regulation - to cover more persons and more areas of social security - and all the provisions to improve cooperation between social security institutions;
- recognises the potential for cost savings in administration and the advantages to insured persons of speeding up procedures for cross-border cases. However, speeding up the transfer of data alone will not constitute a breakthrough. The desired efficiency in processing times will only be achieved if the institutions in the Member States have sufficient and properly qualified staff with appropriate technical resources;
- emphasises, in connection with the future transfer of data largely by electronic means, its concerns that the data in question are of a sensitive, personal nature (relating, for example, to health, incapacity and unemployment). It is therefore essential to ensure that these data are properly secure and cannot fall into the wrong hands;
- calls for lessons to be learnt from the implementation of the European health insurance card;
- welcomes all those measures in the implementing regulation that are intended to offer more legal certainty and transparency to all users of the new coordinating regulation. In the past, there have been instances between Member States where debts arising between institutions were not paid even after several years;
- calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen measures to raise awareness among all potential users of the regulation of the arrangements for and advantages of

coordination of social security systems. The necessary preparations for this should, in the Committee's view, be started immediately.

- **Contact :** *Ms Susanne Johansson*
(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 84 77 – e-mail : susanne.johansson@eesc.europa.eu)

5. AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND LIVESTOCK

- ***Locally absent species in aquaculture***

- **Rapporteur general:** Mr Espuny Moyano (Employers - ES)
- **References:** COM(2006) 154 final – 2006/0056 CNS – CESE 1355/2006

- **Contact:** *Ms Yvette Azzopardi*
(Tel. : 00 32 2 546 98 18 – e-mail : yvette.azzopardi@eesc.europa.eu)

- ***Action plan - Protection and welfare of animals***

- **Rapporteur general:** Mr Nielsen (Various Interests – DK)
- **References:** COM(2006) 13 final – CESE 1356/2006
- **Key points:**

Interest in the protection and welfare of animals is on the increase in many parts of the EU and in some non-EU countries as well. It is appropriate, therefore, to give support to market forces and to make any necessary adjustments to EU minimum requirements. This need not involve more restrictive requirements, but improved and more relevant rules based on scientific and socio-economic studies. It is also important to establish a joint quality labelling scheme for products that meet specific animal-welfare requirements. Substantial improvements are also needed for animals used in research and testing and in statutory safety tests.

In broad terms, the Commission action plan reflects these requirements and may form the basis for further priority-setting in this field. The Committee backs the proposed strategy as a starting point, but will, in due course, also be looking closely at the Commission's specific proposals with an eye to ensuring that a proper balance is struck between animal welfare on the one hand and social and economic factors on the other. It is vital in this regard that imports from non-member countries with lower standards do not drive out EU products. If that were to happen, livestock farming would relocate to places with lower standards, thereby forcing EU players to cease production.

Concerning trade in agricultural products, it is essential that, in the longer term, animal welfare be recognised as a non-trade concern. In the shorter term, the Commission and civil society must put

pressure on the EU retail sector and food industry to impose equivalent requirements on imports from outside the Union through certification schemes and similar safeguards.

- **Contact :** Ms Annika Korzinek
(Tel. : 00 32 2 546 80 65 – e-mail : annika.korzinek@eesc.europa.eu)

- ***Expenditure in the veterinary field***
 - **Rapporteur general:** Mr Nielsen (Various Interests – DK)

 - **References:** COM(2006) 273 final – 2006/0056 CNS – CESE 1357/2006

 - **Contact:** Ms Yvette Azzopardi
(Tel. : 32 2 546 9818 – e-mail: yvette.azzopardi@eesc.europa.eu)

- ***Quality of shellfish waters (codification)***
 - **Rapporteur general:** Mr Kallio (Various Interests – FI)

 - **References:** COM(2006) 205 final – 2006/0067 COD – CESE 1358/2006

 - **Contact:** Ms Yvette Azzopardi
(Tel. : 00 32 2 546 98 18 – e-mail : yvette.azzopardi@eesc.europa.eu)

- ***Protection of calves (codification)***
 - **Rapporteur general:** Mr Nielsen (Various Interests – DK)

 - **References:** COM(2006) 258 final – 2006/0097 CNS – CESE 1359/2006

 - **Contact:** Mr Arturo Iñiguez Yuste
(Tel. : 00 32 2 546 87 68 – e-mail : arturo.iniguez@eesc.europa.eu)

- ***Veterinary programmes (codification)***
 - **Rapporteur general:** Mr Coupeau (Various Interests – FR)

 - **References:** COM(2006) 315 final – 2006/0104 CNS – CESE 1361/2006

 - **Contact:** Mr Arturo Iñiguez Yuste
(Tel. : 00 32 2 546 87 68 – e-mail : arturo.iniguez@eesc.europa.eu)

- ***Forest Action Plan***
 - **Rapporteur-general:** Mr Wilms (Employees – DE)

- **References:** COM(2006) 302 final – CESE 1362/2006

- **Key Points:**

The Committee points out that an EU Forest Action Plan must be drawn up in an economically, ecologically and socially (sustainably) balanced and equivalent way. The same applies to the practical implementation of the key functions.

The Committee takes the view that the number of objectives should be increased from 4 to 5, by adding "the forest as a work place" which would include the "safeguarding and extension of the vocational skills of those employed in forests" and the "strengthening and maintenance of rural areas".

The EESC sees the strengthening and maintenance of rural areas as an important factor in ensuring that the EU Forest Action Plan can be successfully implemented on the spot in the Member States.

The Committee proposes that the subject of safeguarding and extending vocational skills of those employed in forests should be taken into account when considering the forest as a workplace.

The Committee attaches importance to the fact that the EU Forest Action Plan is a totally reliable project and not a mere declaration of will. Reliability is the key to the acceptance and credibility of an EU Forest Action Plan.

- **Contact:** *Ms Filipa Pimentel*
(Tel: 00 32 2 546 84 44 – e-mail : filipa.pimentel@eesc.europa.eu)

- ***Circulation of compound feedingstuffs***

- **Rapporteur general:** Mr Nielsen (Various Interests – DK)

- **References:** COM(2006) 340 final – 2006/0117 COD – CESE 1363/2006

- **Key points:**

The EU feedingstuffs industry is well aware of the Court of Justice ruling and the Commission recognises that the correction has no practical implications. However, the EESC feels that the rules must reflect the current legal position and thus supports the Commission's proposed correction.

The EESC also supports the principle of "open compounds" which facilitates user choice and is also conducive to competition in this area. It is important for agricultural producers to know as accurately as possible what is contained in the compounds, not only in terms of the actual feed composition alone, but also so as to be able to compare prices and quality.

The EESC feels that, in the interests of intra-Community trade and compliance with EU rules in this field, it is vital that Member State authorities monitor the relevant provisions and observe them fully. The Commission should, with the help of the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO), show more commitment to meeting its obligations in this regard than it has done so far.

- **Contact :** *Ms Filipa Pimentel*
(Tel: 00 32 2 546 84 44 – e-mail : *filipa.pimentel@eesc.europa.eu*)

6. PROTECTION OF HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- ***Labelling of spirit drinks***

- **Rapporteur-general:** Mr Dorda (Employers – PL)
- **References:** COM(2005) 125 final – 2005/0028 COD – CESE 1354/2006
- **Key points:**

The EESC welcomes the initiative of the Commission to update the current rules on the definition, description and presentation of spirit drinks and in particular the proposed changes to bring the system of "Geographic Indications" (GI) into line with WTO requirements . The Committee supports the proposal to place individual definitions of spirit drinks in an Annex and then to allow these to be changed after agreement in a Management Committee for Spirit Drinks without opening the full text of the regulation for discussion, as this will allow the regulations to be more responsive to innovation.

The Committee does not support the proposal's division of spirits into 'categories' since it could be misleading , and could provide a basis for discrimination between various spirit drinks, possibly in labelling or in taxation.

The EESC considers ingredient listing for spirit drinks as unnecessary and unrealistic at this time, but would however support ingredient listing if it were to be applied to all alcoholic drinks in the same manner and if it could be done in such a way that it had meaning for the consumer. The Committee notes that the draft proposal does not touch on the question of "authenticity indicators", and believes that these are important in the fight against fraud and counterfeit products and provisions for their use need to be included in the draft.

The definition of vodka is particularly contentious, notably as to the raw ingredients from which it may be produced. The Committee proposes that the raw materials used should be restricted to cereals, potatoes and beet molasses and that consequently there should be no need to indicate the raw materials used on the labels . The Committee also believes that provision must be made for those products that would no longer be eligible for the description 'vodka'; such products should

be allowed a transitional period of about 3 years from agreement being reached on the new Regulation in order to change their category and to adjust their marketing.

- **Contact:** Ms Yvette Azzopardi
(Tel. : 00 32 2 546 98 18 – e-mail : yvette.azzopardi@eesc.europa.eu)

- ***Genetically modified micro-organisms (codification)***

- **Rapporteur-general:** Mr Chiriaco (Employees – IT)
- **References:** COM(2006) 286 final – 2006/0100 COD – CESE 1360/2006

- **Contact:** Ms Filipa Pimentel
(Tel. : 00 32 2 546 84 44 – e-mail : filipa.pimentel@eesc.europa.eu)

7. **TRANSPORT**

- ***Codification – elimination of controls – road and inland waterway transport***

- **Rapporteur general:** Mr Simons (Employers - NL)
- **References:** COM(2006) 432 final – 2006/0146 COD – CESE 1368/2006

- **Contact:** Ms Maria José Lopez Grancha
(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 87 13 – e-mail: mariajose.lopezgrancha@eesc.europa.eu)

- ***GALILEO – GNSS Supervisory Authority – New management***

- **Rapporteur general:** Mr Buffetaut (Employers - FR)
- **References:** COM(2006) 261 final – 2006/0090 CNS – CESE 1366/2006

- **Contact:** Ms Maria José Lopez Grancha
(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 87 13 – e-mail: mariajose.lopezgrancha@eesc.europa.eu)

- ***Rear registration plate of motor vehicles***

- **Rapporteur-general:** Mr Janson (Employees-SE)
- **References:** COM(2006) 478 final – 2003/0161 COD – CESE 1353/2006

- **Contact:** Mr Luís Lobo
(Tel. : 00 32 2 546 97 17 – e-mail: luis.lobo@eesc.europa.eu)

- ***Codification – transport***

- **Rapporteur general:** Mr Toth (Various Interests – HU)
- **References:** COM(2006) 284 final – 2006/0099 COD – CESE 1364/2006
- **Contact:** Ms Anna Wagner
(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 83 06 – e-mail: anna.wagner@eesc.europa.eu)

- ***Amending the statutes of the Galileo Joint Undertaking***

- **Rapporteur general:** Mr Pezzini (Employers - IT)
- **References:** COM(2006) 351 final – 2006/0115 CNS – CESE 1365/2006
- **Contact:** Ms Maria José Lopez Grancha
(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 87 13 – e-mail: mariajose.lopezgrancha@eesc.europa.eu)

8. TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA

- ***Misleading advertising (codified version)***

- **Rapporteur general:** Mr Westendorp (Various Interests – NL)
- **References :** COM(2006) 222 final – 2006/0070 COD – CESE 1352/2006
- **Contact:** Mr Luís Lobo
(Tel. : 00 32 2 546 97 17 – e-mail: luis.lobo@eesc.europa.eu)

- ***Public mobile networks - roaming***

- **Rapporteur general:** Mr Hernández Bataller (Various Interests – ES)
- **References:** COM(2006) 382 final – 2006/0133 COD – CESE 1367/2006
- **Key points:**

On 12 July 2006, the Commission presented a proposal for a regulation on roaming on public mobile networks within the Community. The objective of this proposal is to limit the price that operators charge each other to manage calls made outside the country or origin, and the price charged to users for making and receiving such calls (whilst within the European Union).

The Committee believes that the Commission's proposal is necessary and proportionate, and raises the level of consumer protection.

The aim should be to remove all differences in roaming-related charges between Member States, without undermining competition between the products offered by the different operators. In other words, customers should be able to pay the same price as in their home country, regardless of where they are (the "home pricing" principle). The EESC regrets that the current proposal will not achieve this aim.

The Committee regrets that the Commission has not assessed the possible social impact on employment of adopting this measure. The Committee views the six month delay before the entry into force of the retail charge limits – the price paid by final users – to be excessive. Given that operators can easily adapt to the new situation, this delay should be removed.

- **Contact:** Ms Maria José Lopez Grancha
(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 87 13 – e-mail: mariajose.lopezgrancha@eesc.europa.eu)

9. CULTURE AND MULTILINGUALISM

- ***A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism***

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

- **References:** COM(2005) 596 final – CESE 1372/2006

- **Key points:**

The EESC recommends that:

- the Commission should give *the Member States* precise indications about the *links which could be established and additional measures which could be taken in the national plans*, stressing that multilingualism or plurilingualism can help to promote cultural and political integration, and foster understanding and social inclusion;
- in order to achieve long-term results, *the language training on offer* needs to be coordinated at EU level, with the potential pool of language skills spanning a wide range of languages;
- *multilingualism in the professional, cultural, political, scientific and social fields should be developed and promoted*;
- the *experts involved in this work should be drawn not just from the ranks of specialists in social and scientific disciplines but should also include* linguists, interpreters, translators, teachers and other language professionals;

- greater account be taken of today's young and older adult generation in developing this action, via *life-long learning* and, when the Commission reaches the programming stage, through *their cultural rights*;
- the Commission not only draws on university research but also on the work carried out by the networks of *associations working* in this area, and that it supports the grassroots initiatives taken within the civil society network.

Contact: Stefania Barbesta

(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 95 10 - e-mail: stefania.barbesta@eesc.europa.eu)

10. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

- ***Intellectual property – rental right (codified version)***

- **Rapporteur-general:** Mr Retureau (Employees-FR)

- **References:** COM(2006) 226 final – 2006/0073 COD – CESE 1350/2006

- **Contact:** *Mr Luís Lobo*

- (Tel .: 00 32 2 546 97 17 – e-mail: luis.lobo@eesc.europa.eu)

- ***Term of protection of copyright (codified version)***

- **Rapporteur-general:** Mr Retureau (Employees-FR)

- **References:** COM(2006) 219 final – 2006/0071 COD – CESE 1351/2006

- **Contact:** *Mr Luís Lobo*

- (Tel .: 00 32 2 546 97 17 – e-mail: luis.lobo@eesc.europa.eu)