



*European Economic and Social Committee*

Brussels, 29 October 2007

## **PLENARY ASSEMBLY**

**24 AND 25 October 2007**

### **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](http://eesc.europa.eu/activities/press/summaries_plenaries/index_en.asp)

The plenary assembly included an open session on "climate change and the Lisbon strategy". It was attended by **Commissioner Orban, who spoke on the subject of "Multilingualism – a policy for and with all stakeholders"**.

## **1. CLIMATE CHANGE**

- ***Climate Change and the Lisbon Strategy***

- **Rapporteur: Mr Ehnmark (Employees – SE)**

- **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1458/2007

- **Key points:**

Climate change is not only a threat to welfare, but also to our very survival. It is a truly global threat, and it is accelerating, as emissions continue to increase. The European and Social Committee (EESC) urgently asks the European Commission to launch programmes and measures to implement the ambitious objectives set out by the European Council in March this year. Citizens are waiting for clear signals on priorities and measures. Europe should take the lead in implementation, not only in planning.

The EESC strongly recommends that the Lisbon Strategy for competitiveness and jobs include a major effort against climate change. Using the Lisbon Strategy as a tool – and making the Strategy “green”, means that the EU can use an existing structure, with a well-established methodology and a well-functioning system of coordination. The EU has to maximise efficiency and use existing synergies whenever possible. Fighting climate change can generate positive competitive effects. Global markets are searching for new, energy-saving solutions, for example, in the transport arena. Investments in research and development should be upgraded.

It is important both in economic terms but also from a climate change perspective that measures under the Lisbon Strategy goal of "sustainable growth" be adopted. The new Lisbon Strategy's three-year programme should therefore carefully examine the definition of "growth". Growth that is carbon-neutral, or even has a positive carbon balance should be promoted. The Committee has pointed out on several occasions that growth can no longer be seen in purely quantitative terms; rather, a new concept of growth is needed, which puts qualitative objectives based on sustainability criteria first. These sustainability criteria of course include a decoupling from growth in GHG emissions.

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## 2. ENERGY

- ***Biofuels progress report***
- **Rapporteur:** Mr Iozia (Employees - IT)
- **Reference:** COM(2006) 845 final – CESE 1449/2007
- **Key points:**

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

- The Committee in general agrees with the conclusions of the Spring European Council of 8 and 9 March.
- The use of first-generation biofuels, entails many difficulties, and they do not fully meet European aims. The production costs are high, as are the environmental costs, they take cereals away from human and animal consumption and they are in part responsible for increasing cereal prices on world markets.

Particular attention should be given to the following problems concerning bio diesel:

- limited productivity,
- high cost (EUR 0.4-0.7/L),
- stability problems (presence of oxygenated groups), resulting in storage problems.

Ethanol, in turn, is affected by the following problems:

- limited productivity (albeit less than for biodiesel),
  - high consumption of water and fertilisers,
  - unsuitability for transit through existing pipelines for oil-based fuels (corrosion problems).
- The Committee emphasises the need for the social, environmental and economic impact of the development of biofuels, together with the related technical issues, to be carefully assessed. The specific question arises of the biofuel yield from raw materials: 1 tonne of beet yields some 400 litres of bioethanol (approximately 1 500 Mcal). Given the energy required to convert biomass into biofuel, this ratio appears uneconomic and inefficient.
  - The Committee points out that, from a strictly environmental point of view, thought needs to be given to risks of deforestation and those arising from the storage of raw materials. The related biological and biochemical issues must be clearly and carefully examined.
  - The Committee considers special care and protection of the soil to be essential.

- The Committee urges the Commission and all the European institutions to focus closely on water consumption in the production of biofuels.
- The Committee believes that further support should be given to research and development of second- and even third-generation biofuels such as biobutanol.
- The Committee also believes that the development of biofuels could provide the European economy with opportunities, and thereby help to achieve the objectives of the Lisbon agenda.
- The opportunities that the farming sector detects in the development of biofuels should be encouraged.
- The Committee suggests that the Commission examine the possibility of extending the emissions certificates system to transport, as they may provide a further spur to enhance efficiency in the search for new solutions to reduce harmful emissions.
- The Committee calls on the Commission to introduce a mandatory and comprehensive certification scheme allowing the sustainable production of biofuels at all stages.

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- ***Results of the review of the Community Strategy to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from passenger cars and light-commercial vehicles***

– **Rapporteur:** Mr Ranocchiari (Employers – IT)

– **Reference:** COM(2007) 19 final – CESE 1450/2007

– **Key points:**

The EESC supports the European Commission's initiative and believes that improvements in passenger car performance must be reconciled with the manufacturers' capacity to apply them both economically and technologically and with the spending capacity of potential buyers. The most socially, economically and environmentally effective legislative framework possible should be established. A detailed impact assessment should take into account factors like costs/benefits of the various options, alternative fuels, tax incentives, low rolling resistance tyres etc. The EESC also hopes that the impact of the legislative instrument chosen will be as neutral as possible when it comes to competition between manufacturers. Finally, the EESC is concerned at the Commission's plan to introduce legislation for light commercial vehicles.

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### **3. THE LISBON STRATEGY**

- ***Entrepreneurship mindsets and the Lisbon Agenda***

- **Rapporteur:** Ms Sharma (Employers – UK)
- **Co-rapporteur:** Mr Olsson (Various Interests – SE)
- **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1460/2007
- **Key points:**

The Committee

- finds that entrepreneurship in its broadest sense should be highlighted in the Lisbon Agenda as one of the key tools to generate more growth and better jobs as well as to achieve social cohesion and combat social exclusion;
- finds that education and training across all ages and abilities must stimulate the creativity and potential of all individuals;
- stresses that public and private actors should be mobilised to develop the entrepreneurial mindset in its broadest sense; within communities, organisations and individuals;
- calls for the European Commission to develop a framework for reviewing progress and disseminating best practice; exchange of best practice is important and progress could be monitored through annual "stock-taking" conferences;
- would like the social partners to consider the benefits of fostering an entrepreneurial mindset and to find common ground for holistic action;
- stresses that the social economy and non-governmental organisations' role in developing the entrepreneurial mindset for societal purposes and social innovations must be promoted;
- supports the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities initiative to launch an "Inclusive Entrepreneurship Strategy" and intends to participate in it actively;
- underlines that the media plays a crucial role in shaping a Europe with an entrepreneurial mindset;

- would encourage Commissioner Figel and Commissioner Verheugen in a joint venture of DG Education and Culture and DG Enterprise and Industry to promote the benefits and value of the entrepreneurial mindset skills and attitudes in the context of the Lisbon Agenda by making 2009 as the "Year of Creativity, Innovation, and the Entrepreneurial Mindset".
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#### **4. TRANSPORT**

- ***Reducing greenhouse gas emissions - road transport***
- **Rapporteur:** Mr Osborn (Various Interests – UK)
- **Reference:** COM(2007) 18 final – 2007/0019 COD – CESE 1454/2007
- **Key points:**

The EESC strongly supports the Union's plans to tackle climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). In the transport sector the Committee believes that action must start at the fundamental level of tackling the pressures that have led to a continuous growth of traffic of all kinds over many years. The Committee also believes that there is still substantial scope for improving energy efficiency in the performance of all kinds of transport. The Committee deplores the apparent weakening of the Commission's original intentions in relation to efficiency of car engines, thus relieving the pressure on the car industry to achieve higher standards.

The Committee endorses in principle the expansion of biofuels in the Union. It believes however that the overall CO<sub>2</sub> impact of biofuels needs very careful assessment, and that the pace and balance of expansion needs to be kept under review. Specifically, the European Commission should specify how it expects to achieve the target for 10% use of biofuels by 2020 bearing in mind the conditions attached to the achievement of that target by the Council, and should be prepared to modify the approach if it appears to be less effective in carbon reduction than has been hoped, or is having other undesirable effects on the structure of world agriculture or on biodiversity.

The EESC accepts that it is nevertheless appropriate that the fuel specification rules should be altered as proposed in the present Directive so as to enable a new high biofuel petrol to be produced and marketed, provided that concerns about potential pollution impacts are met.

The Committee strongly supports the proposal to require the fuel industry to monitor and report the life-cycle GHG emissions from the fuels it places on the market, and that they should be required to reduce those emissions by 1% per annum from 2010 to 2020. The Committee sees a strong case for this to be operated at European level, rather than being left to the member states.

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- ***Motor vehicles - rear registration plate lamps***  
Category C opinion
- **Reference:** COM(2007) 451 final – 2007/0162 COD – CESE 1447/2007
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- ***Agricultural tractors - suppression of radio interference***  
Category C opinion
- **Reference:** COM(2007) 462 final – 2007/0166 COD – CESE 1448/2007
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- ***Transport of dangerous goods by road (implementing powers)***  
Category C opinion
- **Reference:** COM(2007) 509 final – 2007/0184 COD – CESE 1453/2007
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## **5. INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND INNOVATION**

- ***Setting up the Innovative Medicines Initiative Joint Undertaking***
- **Rapporteur:** Mr Dantin (Employees – FR)
- **Reference:** COM(2007) 241 final – 2007/0089 CNS – CESE 1441/2007
- **Key points:**

The EESC welcomes the wide-ranging consultation that preceded the drafting of this regulation and supports the proposal that an annual report on the results of the IMI JU be submitted. However, the Committee regrets the absence of a detailed assessment of the operation and the results achieved by the former European Technology Platforms.

The pharmaceutical industry is considered as a key strategic sector, and its products are crucial to the health and well-being of European citizens. In the light of this situation, and of the decline of pharmaceutical research in Europe, the decision to set up the IMI JU (Innovative Medicines Initiative Joint Undertaking) is very much justified.

The EESC recommends:

- improving the prediction of the safety and the efficacy of new drugs;
- avoiding the waste of resources caused by the duplication of research efforts, both in the private and public sector;
- bridging skills gaps; and
- providing a focal point for developing the required synergies.

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- ***Technology initiative in embedded computing systems/establishment of the joint undertaking (ARTEMIS)***

– **Rapporteur:** Mr Dantin (Employees – FR)

– **Reference:** COM(2007) 243 final – 2007/0088 CNS – CESE 1442/2007

– **Key points:**

The EESC stresses the importance of the innovative strategy that is being proposed in terms of investments, pooling the resources of the EU, businesses, different Member States, and participating R&D bodies.

The EESC considers that the ARTEMIS joint undertaking, which is based on a public-private partnership, represents a strong basis for the creation of a European research area and a major contribution to the competitiveness of European businesses.

The EESC recommends:

- a genuine simplification of procedures;
- an information programme aimed at encouraging the necessary funding to be released;



- the establishment of appropriate vocational training programmes to ensure that the skills of workers match the jobs created by ARTEMIS.

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- ***Setting up the Clean Sky joint undertaking***

– **Rapporteur-general:** Mr Dantin (Employees – FR)

– **Reference:** COM(2007) 315 final – 2007/0118 CNS – CESE 1443/2007

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- ***Setting up the ENIAC Joint Undertaking***

– **Rapporteur-general:** Mr Dantin (Employees – FR)

– **Reference:** COM(2007) 356 final – 2007/0122 CNS – CESE 1444/2007

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## **6. AGRICULTURAL POLICY**

- ***The health of the CAP and its future after 2013***

– **Rapporteur:** Mr Kienle (Employers – DE)

– **Reference:** Exploratory opinion – CESE 1457/2007

– **Key points:**

In the EESC's view, the priorities for the health check should be a thorough review of the administrative rules for farm subsidies and the implementation of cross-compliance. In future, the commitment to multifunctionality and the obligations arising from Article 33 of the EC Treaty (objectives of the CAP) will, the EESC believes, require measures which can:

- counter the risks of increasing instability on agricultural markets;
- guarantee that setting high standards for production is not rendered meaningless by allowing imports which do not comply with EU requirements;

- and help to ensure that a wide range of foodstuffs continues to be available in the future.
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## **7. REGIONAL POLICY**

- ***Compensation payments for disadvantaged areas beyond 2010***
- **Rapporteur:** Mr Kienle (Employers – DE)
- **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1456/2007
- **Key points:**

The EESC believes that areas with natural handicaps require and deserve special attention in both the public and political arenas. This also applies to the "other disadvantaged areas (intermediate zones)" considered in this opinion. The EESC regards compensation, which is funded jointly by the EU and Member States, as an indispensable tool for preserving the cultivated landscape and agriculture in those areas, and points out that the granting of payments must become more reliable over time.

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## **8. DEVELOPMENT AID**

- ***EU immigration and cooperation policy with countries of origin to foster development***
- **Rapporteur:** Mr Pariza Castaños (Employees – ES)
- **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1461/2007
- **Key points:**

Since 2006, by analysing the links between migration and development, a new way of observing migrations been conceived which takes into account the interests of the countries of origin, overriding the view reigning in Europe whereby migration policy was defined only in terms of the needs and interests of the host countries.

Until now, the EU's development cooperation policies have focused little on the role of migration as a factor to combat poverty.

Although they do not directly aim to boost or control migratory movements, the fight against poverty and inequality is one way to help reduce the underlying causes of unwanted emigration.

The EESC proposes that the Commission, the Parliament and the EU Council promote, within the framework of external policy, an international legal framework for migration, on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The EESC supports a new approach for European policies: immigration policy should be managed in cooperation with the countries of origin, so that migration can be a factor for their development. This would require the review of many aspects of these policies, including those relating to admission criteria and the possibilities for mobility of immigrants.

In order to maximise the benefits provided by remittances, the EESC believes that the cost of financial intermediation in such transfers should be reduced.

The EU must support transnational diaspora networks as a way of fostering the development of the countries of origin.

The EESC is in favour of return and greater possibilities for movement, as a way of recovering human capital and preventing the brain drain. It calls for a migrants' entry policy in keeping with development aims: allowing entry contributes to development.

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## **9. SOCIAL PROTECTION AND PROTECTION OF WORKERS**

- ***Credit and social exclusion in an affluent society***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Pegado Liz (Various Interests – PT)
- **Reference:** Own initiative opinion – CESE 1459/2007
- **Key points:**

In the absence of any Community guidance in this area, the various Member States have developed their own national legal systems for preventing individuals and families from falling into over-indebtedness, processing the cases of those who do, helping them get out of debt and providing them with support.

The opinion suggests that a European Indebtedness Observatory should be set up to monitor developments in the phenomenon at European level, providing a forum for dialogue between all the parties concerned, and proposing and coordinating measures to prevent and limit it, then assessing the impact thereof.

The Committee is aware, however, that coordinating steps of this nature and scope can only be achieved if the Commission, European Parliament and Council – in close dialogue with organised civil society, representing the bulk of those concerned by the issue (families, workers, consumers, financial institutions, etc.) – decide to make this a priority for action.

It is strongly recommended that the necessary follow-up be given in terms of basic research, consultations and legislative and other relevant proposals, starting with the publication of a Green Paper defining and identifying the terms of the issue and giving a voice to all the parties concerned, by means of extensive public consultation.

The EESC calls on the European Parliament and the Council to take on board the major concerns that this opinion attempts to address on behalf of civil society and make them a priority in their respective political agendas.

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- ***Elder abuse***

- **Rapporteur:** Ms Heinisch (Various Interests – DE)

- **Reference:** Exploratory opinion – CESE 1465/2007

- **Key points:**

The Committee

- underlines that Article 25 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union recognises and respects the rights of older people to lead a life of dignity and independence; the challenge of the future will be to tackle the demographic change in an affirmative way;
- stresses that elder abuse is a much-neglected issue; particular risks are faced by older people who are dependent on care and/or are isolated within their own homes or resident in care facilities;
- therefore urges the EU Council presidencies, the European Commission and Member State governments to address the issue of elder abuse, particularly within a care setting;
- feels that a pan-European strategy is needed; this pan-European strategy must be underpinned by an EU-wide study of elder abuse, particularly within a care setting;

- considers that a national and EU-wide exchange of good practice procedures and models is absolutely vital both to securing quality assurance and to promoting the development of care standards;
- finds that elder abuse, particularly within a care setting, can only be effectively prevented by action at the appropriate national level; thus, national action plans must be drawn up that take particular account of the following points:
  - it is essential to break the taboo of elder abuse in a care setting by raising public awareness;
  - general guidelines and appropriate legal bases should be established that are consistent with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;
  - national reports are needed on the prevention of elder abuse in a care setting, whether provided at home or in a care facility;
  - steps must be taken to improve the information available to individuals and institutions directly involved in care, to boost their scope for action and to enhance cooperation;
  - a broad-based, readily accessible and confidential advisory service should be set up;
  - arrangements must be made to provide respite for family carers and advice and support for professional carers;
  - networks should be established among all players and institutions directly involved in care.

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• ***Community statistics on public health and health and safety at work***

– **Rapporteur:** Mr Retureau (Employees – FR)

– **Reference:** COM(2007) 46 final – 2007/0020 (COD) – CESE 1463/2007

– **Key points:**

The Committee supports the proposed Regulation and its legal basis; the proposal complies with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, whilst allowing for the collection of statistics that are useful to the implementation of the Community strategy on health and safety at work, for which a clear legal framework has become necessary.

It stresses the importance of common definitions and systems for recognition, not least because of the mobility of workers, as regards:

- occupational accidents and commuting accidents;
- occupational illnesses caused by working conditions and/or substances;
- partial or permanent incapacity and invalidity caused by work-related accidents and illnesses, and the working days lost.

When collating statistics as to the number of people involved in each type of incident, the Committee believes that it would be helpful to take account of the gender and age of the victims and, as far as possible, the nature of their contractual relationship. Particular attention should be paid to the confidentiality of personal data collected.

The Committee believes that cooperation with the ILO and the WHO should be developed. In the Committee's view, the proposed regulation constitutes one of the most useful means of bringing about convergence of the nature of the definitions and data to be recorded, and the methods of collecting and analysing these data.

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- ***Social security/workers and their families***

– **Rapporteur:** Mr Rodríguez García-Caro (Employers – ES)

– **Reference:** (COM(2007) 159 final - 2007/0054 (COD) – CESE 1464/2007

– **Key points:**

The European Economic and Social Committee endorses the amendments put forward in the Annexes to Regulation No 1408/71 and is convinced that these will help to improve the Regulation's content and benefit individuals in the EU who fall within its scope. This support applies most specifically to those changes that help to bring certain benefits into the field of coordination, meaning that they will no longer be exceptions or non-exportable rights.

As the representative of the social partners and organised civil society, the European Economic and Social Committee also wishes to highlight the slowness of the legislative process for the proposal for a Regulation implementing Regulation No 883/2004. The Committee would not be delivering this opinion if the Regulation referred to above had entered into force. The EESC, therefore, urges the European Parliament and the Council to speed up the decision-making process as much as possible and strive to ensure that the new coordination of social security systems enters into force as swiftly as can be achieved.

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## **10. ENLARGEMENT**

- ***Croatia on the road to accession***
  - **Rapporteur:** Ms Sigmund (Various Interests – AT)
  - **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 1468/2007
  - **Key points:**

The Committee welcomes the speedy progress of the negotiations and the broad-based participation of Croatian civil society in this process but stresses that the contribution of all the representative civil society organisations concerned is needed, and in particular the comprehensive involvement of the social partners in the negotiation of all the relevant chapters.

The economic situation in Croatia is stable, although it varies significantly from region to region. With regard to the social situation, there is, despite laudable progress over the last few years, still work to be done, e.g. in tackling labour market problems. The Committee considers it important to create a favourable environment for business –especially for SMEs, which are drivers of growth and job creation, notably in disadvantaged regions.

A change in Croatian civil society can be observed in the activities of NGOs. With the previous predominant orientation of civil society towards the protection and promotion of human rights and humanitarian work, today there is a shift towards the realisation of social policy and social rights.

In the context of civil society activities in Croatia, the dialogue between the social partners at various levels merits particular attention. The institutional framework for a tripartite social dialogue (employers and trade unions as partners of government) is formally well developed through the Croatian Economic and Social Council. So far, however, it has produced few concrete results.

The Committee offers its assistance and cooperation, which could take the following form:

- sectoral meetings with representatives of Croatian organised civil society for the purpose of sharing information, views and experience;
- participation of EESC members in seminars or other initiatives under the IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance);

- cooperation with the organisers of the Croatian information and communication campaign on accession, cooperation on drawing up case studies, which will illustrate the consequences of accession for specific groups in a transparent and easily understandable way.
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## 11. TAXATION

- ***Tax arrangements/gas oil***
- **Rapporteur:** Mr Burani (Employers – IT)
- **Reference:** COM(2007) 52 final – 2007/0023 CNS – CESE 1466/2007
- **Key points:**

The proposal for a directive seems justified – subject to a number of reservations expressed by the EESC.

The EESC recommends among others the consideration of the generalised increase in costs, of consequences for industrial policies, of the conditions in peripheral regions, of external competitiveness of the EU, of employment, of the overall productivity and efficiency of the road transport sector and of the specificities of the refund system.

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- ***Temporary provisions VAT***
- **Rapporteur:** Mr Burani (Employers – IT)
- **Reference:** COM(2007) 381 final/2 – 2007/0136 CNS – CESE 1467/2007
- **Key points:**

The EESC congratulates the Commission on its work. In terms of technical accuracy the proposal cannot be criticised: as the decision-making process progresses, only the political aspects will play a role. The EESC draws the decision-makers' attention to the needs of the market and the public, which require transparent, fair laws to be adopted without delay.

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## **12. CONSUMER PROTECTION**

- ***Protection of consumers/ timeshare***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Pegado Liz (Various Interests – PT)

- **Reference:** COM(2007) 303 final – 2007/0113 COD – CESE 1445/2007

- **Key points:**

Although the EESC broadly agrees with the Commission proposal, it considers this to be an area that would justify maximum harmonisation, as suggested in the Green Paper on the Review of the Community *Acquis*, because of the unique nature of the right in question and because of the discrepancies in the specific characteristics of its legal nature.

The Committee considers that the bar for measures protecting consumers' rights has been set too low. It therefore calls on the Commission, with due respect for the principle of subsidiarity, to regulate other, equally important aspects in the proposal, taking as its premise a higher level of consumer protection.

The EESC thus:

- suggests that improvements be made to a number of provisions concerning the legal system applying to the rights in question, the content of the main contract and its relationship with complementary contracts;
- highlights the importance of providing contracting parties – particularly less well-informed consumers – with proper information, whilst not excluding the possibility of Member States adopting criminal sanctions;
- specifically proposes a range of amendments and recommendations aimed at improving legal aspects of the proposal and at consolidating and harmonising ideas, concepts or practices already contained in other directives.

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### **13. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

- ***European research area (Green Paper)***
- **Rapporteur:** Mr Wolf (Various Interests – DE)
- **Reference:** COM(2007) 161 final – CESE 1440/2007
- **Key points:**

The Committee welcomes the Commission's intention to strengthen and expand the European Research Area. The objectives defined and proposals made are broadly correct and worthy of support, but they need to be supplemented and in some cases clarified or corrected.

In this opinion, the Committee analyses several points related to this issue and makes a series of suggestions concerning: the creation of an attractive labour market for researchers, making Europe the global leader in research and development by putting in place the requisite measures needed to achieve this goal, the use of Structural funds for R&D infrastructure measures, the objective of creating world-class science and technology infrastructure, and the attractiveness of the European Research and the halt of the current "brain-drain", amongst others.

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### **14. TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

- ***Mobile satellite services***
- Rapporteur-general: Mr Opran (Employers – RO)
- Reference: COM(2007) 480 final – 2007/0174 COD – CESE 1452/2007
- **Key points:**

The EESC endorses the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the selection and authorisation of systems providing mobile satellite services and recommends that it be immediately adopted and brought into effect.

The EESC strongly supports the main objective of the proposal, as set down in Title 1, Article 1(1), to create a single, Community-coordinated procedure for the selection and authorisation by Member States of mobile satellite communications systems.

The EESC considers that this decision must be immediately adopted, owing to:

- the natural capability of satellite communications systems to cover large parts of Europe and several EU Member States at the same time;
- the relatively limited amount of radio spectrum made available for such communications;
- the diverging selection and authorisation solutions in effect at national level in the Member States.
- the current reduced effective use of the available radio spectrum.

The EESC stresses that the creation and use of satellite communication systems constitute, due to the nature of the area that they cover, major initiatives for the expansion of the European space industry and development of specific applications in the field of communications, and are fully in line with the Lisbon Strategy to promote sustainable development, including by directly helping to create new jobs in the context of enhanced competitiveness.

The EESC is pleased to note that, beneficially for this proposal, the EU possesses significant technical resources in this area: three of the world's biggest satellite systems operators are European, and satellite communications account for 40% of current revenues in the European space sector.

The EESC welcomes the consensus obtained by the Commission in promoting this proposal, which gained the support of all the interested parties consulted, even during the drafting phase: the satellite industry, telecommunications network operators, the European Space Agency and Member States' national regulatory bodies.

In parallel, the EESC notes that the decision – in its current, final form – fairly resolves the diverging opinions expressed during the consultation phase, concerning: selection methods and criteria, the need for greater national flexibility with regard to the length of time needed to obtain authorisation and the validity period thereof, and closer coordination of national authorisation procedures.

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## **15. COMMUNITY STANDARDS**

- ***Weighing instruments***  
Category C opinion

- **Reference:** COM(2007) 446 final – 2007/0164 COD – CESE 1446/2007

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  - **Modification – Application of certain provisions to Estonia**  
Category C opinion
  
  - **Reference:** COM(2007) 411 final – 2007/0141 COD – CESE 1451/2007
  
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