



European Economic and Social Committee

Brussels, 4 June 2007

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

30 AND 31 MAY 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

The Plenary Assembly was attended by **Mr Marcos Peña**, President of the Spanish Economic and Social Council, who spoke about "Europe: social involvement and deliberative democracy"; by **Mr Günter Verheugen**, Vice-president of the European Commission, who explained action already taken and progress made on the "Better Lawmaking" initiative; and by **Ms Margot Wallström**, Vice-president of the European Commission, who spoke about the "Roadmap for the constitutional process" and the strategic objectives set by the Commissioners for 2008. Together with EESC President Mr Dimitriadis, Ms Wallström went on to sign the Addendum to the Cooperation Protocol between the European Commission and the EESC concluded by the two bodies in November 2005.

1. RESOLUTION ON THE ROADMAP FOR THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS – EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF 21 AND 22 JUNE 2007

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Frerichs (Employers – DE)
- **Reference:** CESE 640/2007 fin

- **Key points:**

The EESC supports the German Presidency in its intention to present a roadmap for future endeavours to solve the crisis on the occasion of the meeting of the European Council on 21 and 22 June 2007, and welcomes the fact that in the Berlin Declaration of 25 March 2007 the European Parliament elections of 2009 were set as a deadline for the entry into force of the new Constitution.

There is an urgent need for a speedy resolution of the present crisis by the adoption of a treaty that meets the requirements of a Union of 27 or more Member States. For new challenges make it essential that the European Union reaches agreements on new policies and takes the necessary decision.

Since the Constitutional Treaty has been ratified by a two-thirds majority of the Member States with a population representing a clear majority of the citizens of the European Union, the EESC insists that the Treaty continue to be the basis for future negotiations and that the outcome of these should be to preserve the substance of what was decided at the European Convention and signed by all the Heads of State and Government.

The EESC reaffirms its support for the Constitutional Treaty and reiterates the stance it has taken earlier regarding the Treaty, which it continues to regard as a vital instrument which will enable the Union to meet the challenges it faces and the institutions to operate more efficiently.

This is why it believes, on the one hand, that the Treaty must continue to be the basis of negotiations underway to find a way out of the current political and institutional impasse and, on the other, that its substance be preserved, especially the democratic, institutional and procedural innovations as well as the introduction of Fundamental Rights. This means: Part I (Objectives, Institutions, Framework of the Union), Part II (The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union) and Part IV (General and Final Provisions) must remain as they are. The institutional and procedural provisions of Part III should, where they go further than existing law, be incorporated into Part I.

Regarding the substance of the new version as being more important than its name, the EESC is not opposed to the new treaty being given a new name, given the numerous misunderstandings the term "constitution" has given rise to in some Member States.

The Committee also affirms its intention to shadow the negotiation of the new Treaty by helping to ensure, in keeping with its institutional remit, that the voice of organised civil society is heard. It is prepared, for example, to join with the Portuguese Council Presidency to stage meetings with civil society organisations, as it did during the work of the European Convention, to provide information and engage in dialogue.

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2. THE EUROPEAN UNION AND GLOBALISATION

- ***Challenges and opportunities facing the EU in the context of globalisation***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Malosse (Employers – FR)
- **References:** Exploratory opinion – CESE 804/2007
- **Key points:**

This opinion was requested by the German presidency, on the subject "Challenges and Opportunities Facing the EU in the Context of Globalisation". The opinion was adopted in the REX section of 4 May 2007.

The opinion considers that, at international level, the EU response to the globalisation must be to contribute more forcefully to the establishment of a "state governed by the rule of law" promoting a humanist globalisation based on the multilateralism, the fundamental rights of individuals, greater transparency on the financial markets and a high level of health and food safety for all population groups. In the field of international trade, the EESC takes the view that bilateral approaches are beneficial only insofar as they are complementary to the multilateralism pursued by the WTO.

Inside the EU, globalisation should be a source of opportunity for the European integration by stepping up economic integration and solidarity, which are core aspects of the Lisbon Strategy.

Organised civil society should promote the achievement of globalisation "with a human face". The EESC stresses the need to fully involve the social partners and the various players representing organised civil society.

The achievement of both globalisation with a human dimension and European integration are matters which involve the people and organised civil society. If they are better informed and consulted and

systematically involved, the peoples of Europe will take on board a strategy which they have shaped and which they can make their own.

Results of the opinion will be presented in 12th June conference on globalization in Berlin, organized by the German Presidency. The opinion will also make a contribution to the debate initiated by publishing of the Communication "Global Europe: Competing in the World".

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3. SOCIAL INDICATORS AND COMMUNITY STATISTICS

- ***Quality standards – Social impact assessments***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Retureau (Employees – FR)
- **Reference:** Exploratory opinion – CESE 794/2007

- **Key points:**

On 19 September 2006 the German Presidency of the European Union asked the European Economic and Social Committee to draw up an exploratory opinion on *Quality standards for the contents, procedures and methods of social impact assessments from the point of view of the social partners and other civil society players*.

The request illustrates the will of the German government to focus on better regulation.

It is vital to draw the attention of political decision-makers to the social impact of proposed legislation, but the European Economic and Social Committee considers that particular emphasis should be placed on the methodology, which has yet to be determined.

The Committee considers that, at this stage of the reflection process, it is vital to draw the attention of the Commission, and other players, to the quality standards that must be met by all indicators.

The Committee calls on the Commission to incorporate the evaluation of the social impact of EU legislative and policy initiatives in all Community policies. This is vital if we genuinely want to create a "social Europe" and gain public support.

It is vital to conduct regular assessments of all legislation for which prior impact assessments were conducted and, where necessary, to make adjustments to the way the legislation is implemented and to involve the social partners and, if necessary, stakeholder NGOs in this process.

In certain specific and highly socially sensitive cases (such as labour law), consultations with the social partners should take place at a still earlier stage.

There is no doubt that the "Better lawmaking" initiative offers a suitable springboard for pushing ahead in this direction, i.e. proposing vital and effective legislation, whose consequences are both predictable and stable for its addressees and more closely incorporated in the impact analysis and evaluation process conducted by the EU's consultative bodies (the EESC and the CoR).

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- ***Statistical Programme 2008-2012***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Santillan Cabeza (Employees – ES)
- **References:** COM(2006) 687 final – 2006/0229 (COD) – CESE 790/2007

- **Key points:**

The EESC welcomes the Commission proposal. Harmonised and comparable statistics are indispensable for the understanding of Europe among the general public, for the participation of citizens in the debate and for the participation of economic operators in the single market.

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- ***Statistics job vacancies***

- **Rapporteur:** Ms Florio (Employees – IT)
- **References:** COM (2007) 76 final – 2007/0033 COD – CESE 791/2007

- **Key points:**

Through the proposal for a regulation (COM(2007) 76 final), which was drawn up on the initiative of the Employment Committee, the Commission hopes to introduce a regulation that will make it possible to obtain timely and comparable quarterly statistics on job vacancies.

The EESC emphasises the importance of having EU employment statistics that are as coherent and reliable as possible. For this reason, it supports the Commission's efforts to set up a legal framework for obtaining up-to-date, comparable and relevant job-vacancy statistics at EU level, and endorses the choice of instrument, i.e. an EU regulation.

The EESC believes that due to the need to simplify and reduce the cost of data collection, a not entirely clear choice has been made to make data collection optional for sectors defined as "seasonal", namely agriculture, fishing and forestry.

Furthermore, in all EU countries, work contracts currently provide for dozens of different forms of employment relations. It would therefore be useful to know the types of job vacancy involved (open-

ended contracts, fixed-term contracts, part-time contracts, projects, partnerships, etc). A framework that was closer to the real potential of the labour market, its trends and weaknesses in certain sectors and regions, would make it possible to focus better on the strategies to be implemented in order to achieve the Lisbon goals.

This is why the EESC believes that consultation with the European social partners and their direct involvement is particularly necessary in these areas.

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- ***Bulgaria and Romania (NUTS)***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Burani (Employers – IT)
- **References:** COM(2007) 95 final – 2007/0038 (COD) – CESE 792/2007

- **Key points:**

The EESC takes note of the Commission's proposal. Given that the need for the proposal has arisen following the accession of new Member States, and that it is of a purely technical nature, the Committee gives its full agreement.

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4. LABOUR LAW

- ***Modernising labour law***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Retureau (Employees – FR)
- **References:** COM(2006) 708 final – CESE 805/2007

- **Key points:**

The Committee condemns the tight timescale under which this consultation is being carried out and that a whole lot of preparatory work is lacking. The various ingredients of the Kok Report's conclusions (November 2003) that were adopted by the Council give a more complete picture of the labour market reforms intended to respond to the revised Lisbon Strategy than does the Commission's Green Paper, which focuses on limited points relating to individual labour law.

The Committee is concerned about the implication that labour law is currently incompatible with the revised Lisbon Strategy in that it is an obstacle to employment. The Committee considers that the Commission should frame the debate about modernising labour law and about the protection normally

structured around an employment contract, such as health and safety, occupational accidents, arrangements for working time, paid leave, etc.

Any argument that considers protective labour law as an obstacle to growth and employment would be a simplistic vision.

The Committee points out a number of significant deficiencies, which significantly undermine the reasoning and perspectives advanced by the Green Paper. In this opinion it therefore highlights a number of points that it regrets have not been looked at in greater depth or emphasised:

- the social dimension;
- collective labour law;
- the concept of decent work;
- the social partners and collective agreements;
- social dialogue is a means of co-regulation;
- job security.

The Committee believes that the time has come to undertake a comprehensive, rigorous analysis, based primarily on:

- an assessment of the legal systems in the Member States;
- the contribution of social dialogue;
- consideration of public services;
- consideration of corporate governance and worker participation;
- the recognised role of genuinely self-employed workers;
- promoting ILO Recommendation 198 (2006) on the employment relationship;
- the impact of undeclared work;
- the impact of migratory flows;
- win-win situations;
- basic and lifelong education and training of workers.

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5. COMPANY LAW

• *Mergers or divisions of public limited companies*

- **Rapporteur:** Ms Sánchez Miguel (Employees – ES)
- **References:** COM(2007) 91 final – 2007/0035 COD – CESE 796/2007

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6. TAXATION

- ***Approximation of the rates of excise duty on alcohol***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Iozia (Employees – IT)
- **References:** COM(2006) 486 final – 2006/0165 (CNS) – CESE 789/2007

- **Key points:**

The Committee thinks it would be wrong to apply an automatic adjustment for the rate of inflation in the EU-15 since 1992, given that another three countries joined the Union in 1995, a further ten on 1 May 2004 and two more on 1 January 2007.

In a hearing held at the Committee, all the participants not only declared their own opposition to the Commission proposal, but also called on it to carry out a thorough impact assessment in the future. The Committee wishes the proposal to be withdrawn.

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7. INTERNAL MARKET

- ***The internal market in services***

- **Rapporteur:** Ms Alleweldt (Employees – DE)
- **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 793/2007

- **Key points:**

The EU Services Directive has been the cause of considerable controversy. This is largely due to the fact that the effects of the Directive on national labour markets are far-reaching.

The responses to the SMO questionnaire show there is considerable interest in tackling the new challenges for labour markets, employment and consumer protection in the internal market in services.

Information on the possible impact on employment of the new internal market strategy would appear to be inadequate; above all, people expected job relocations as well as job losses.

A majority, however, expected changes in national work and employment conditions, such as an increase in short-term and flexible modes of working. Expected benefits included improved employment opportunities, language training and training generally.

Inadequate implementation of the provisions on posting was often presented as a problem.

The increased worker mobility will create more demand for consultation services.

Consumers rate quality and legal certainty highly, but these are not sufficiently promoted in the Directive.

More attention must be paid to consumer concerns in the internal services market and there must be an information strategy at national and EU level.

The EESC intends to look at the effect of the internal market in services, especially on employment and consumer protection.

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8. TRANSPORT – TECHNICAL AND SAFETY STANDARDS

- **Road safety – professional drivers**
 - **Rapporteur:** Mr Etty (Employees – NL)
 - **Reference:** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 809/2007
 - **Key points:**

European road safety policy, including *the Third European Road safety Action Programme* (2003) and *the European road safety action programme mid-term review* (2006), aimed at a target audience consisting, amongst others, motorcyclists, pedestrians, and young people, as well as professional drivers. However, the Commission omitted several relevant issues, one of them even being crucial in the eyes of the social partners. That is, as part of road infrastructure safety, rest areas for professional drivers. And in particular; safe and secured rest areas.

For reasons of road safety, road freight crime, and health and safety of truck drivers, therefore, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) recommends in the present own-initiative opinion, that more safe and secured parking places for professional drivers should be made available throughout the EU.

The International Road Transport Union (IRU) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) have formulated common criteria which are well taken and practicable and which should be taken into account when rest facilities are constructed.

The EESC welcomes the initiative taken by European Parliament and supported by the European Commission to set up a pilot project with a view to test the feasibility and to provide start up and to create safe and secure parking areas for professional drivers.

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- ***Agricultural tractors – lighting devices (codification)***

- **References:** COM(2007) 192 final – 2007/0066 COD – CESE 798/2007

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- ***Air transport services - common rules***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr McDonogh (Employers – IE)
- **References:** COM(2006) 396 final – 2006/0130 COD – CESE 808/2007

- **Key points:**

- All PSO airlines should be required to enter into a performance bond.
- There should be a Service Level Agreement between the airports served by the PSO flights and the Contracting State.
- Higher compensation than that outlined in Regulation [EC] 261/2004 should be available to PSO passengers, as no other alternative transport may be available.
- The tender process for PSO *should* have a minimum of two *tenders*.
- For European flights, the return leg should cost the same as the outward leg. If there is a considerable difference between the outward and homeward leg this must be justified.
- PSO tickets should be refundable as all other airline tickets are, subject to conditions.
- Fare calculations should be clearly displayed on tickets like taxes, airport charges, etc.

- The approach to intermodality should ensure a level playing field for all modes of transport;
Aviation bears a disproportionate burden in security costs. This shall be rectified.
- The reference to high-speed trains should remain as in some Member States they do not exist.
- The Commission should carry out audits to see that the national aviation regulators are carrying out their duties in the even handed and fair manner and that none of their actions distort competition.
- One stop security as originally proposed by the Commission should be introduced for those passing through European airports.
- This should include a modification of passenger screening at airports to include a fast track system (biometrics) to facilitate regular passengers.
- Tickets purchased in advance of 1 month should have a cooling-off period to allow customers to cancel them without penalty within 48 hours. In the event of a cancellation of a ticket the customer should also be entitled to a refund of all air taxes.
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9. AGRICULTURE

• *Fruit and vegetables*

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Campli (Various interests – IT)
- **References:** COM(2007) 17 final – 2007/0012 CNS – CESE 802/2007
- **Key points:**

The EESC supports the Commission's strategy aimed at turning the entire first pillar into a consistent and balanced whole by 2013; to this end, it calls on the Commission to put in place an appropriate transition programme for the fruit and vegetable sector so as to bring all the operators in the sector up to speed with the new system.

The EESC notes that the Commission has made its proposals within the constraints of a budget that has not been increased. It also notes that by abolishing market withdrawals and export refunds the Commission is bringing about an increase in the resources potentially available for future operational programmes, but that these resources risk being left unused and will not be available for investment by more efficient POs.

The EESC further notes that the proposal a) introduces new, politically and economically highly significant measures (management of market crises, environment policy, promoting consumption) into operational programmes and b) raises (to 60%) the co-financing of certain measures that are considered strategic. This innovative policy, combined with the maintenance of the upper limit to Community aid for operational programmes of 4.1% of the value of the production marketed by each PO, results, de facto, in a reduction in the resources available for investment.

For all these reasons, the EESC believes it necessary to introduce at least two corrections, whilst keeping to the principle of genuine budget neutrality:

- leaving the management of market crises out of the accounts relating to the PO's operational programme;
- derogating from the 4.1 % limit when actions are co-financed at 60%, inter alia to allow POs that are already consolidated to continue fulfilling their role as a counterweight to the buying power of the Large Multiples;
- including joint measures by two or more producer organisations among those which receive 60% Community co-financing, so as to promote cooperation between producer organisations and group supply.

The EESC also notes the Commission proposal to entrust crisis management to POs and calls on the Commission to put in place transparent criteria for crisis management to support non-member producers and ensure that the instruments made available for this purpose can be used by all producers, so that any intervention in the event of a crisis will be effective and enable the markets in question to recover.

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10. HEALTH AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

- ***European strategy on alcohol-related harm***

- **Rapporteur:** Ms van Turnhout (Various interests – IE)
- **Co-rapporteur:** Mr Janson (Employees – SE)
- **References:** COM(2006) 625 final – CESE 807/2007

- **Key points:**

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) welcomes the Communication from the Commission, *An EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm*. However, the EESC regrets that the Communication falls far short of a "comprehensive strategy" which was invited in the *Council Conclusions* of 5 June 2001.

This Opinion addresses the public health issue of reducing alcohol related harm: harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption as well as under-age drinking contributes to alcohol related harm.

The EESC urges that a reduction in the exposure of children to alcohol products, advertising and promotions be included as a specific objective to provide greater protection to children.

The EESC urges the Commission to address the economic consequences of alcohol related harm. The negative effects go against the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy and have implications for the workplace, society and the economy.

The EESC urges that education and awareness raising initiatives should be part of an overall integrated strategy to reduce alcohol related harm.

The EESC recognises that cultural habits differ across Europe. These differences should be taken into account by the various initiatives and actions proposed.

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- ***Protection of consumers – distance contracts***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Pegado Liz (Various interests – PT)
- **References:** COM(2006) 514 final – CESE 795/2007

- **Key points:**

Whilst noting the delay in the publication of this communication in relation to the deadlines set down in the directive, the EESC welcomes the initiative and agrees with a great number of the Commission's comments. The EESC is of the view, however, that it would be valuable for a review of these rules to be carried out immediately, in conjunction with a review of those on the distance selling of financial services and certain aspects of electronic commerce, without waiting for work on the review of the Community acquis concerning consumer contracts to be concluded.

The EESC therefore:

- urges the Commission to carry out a more detailed analysis of the responses to its public consultation exercise that have been received in the meantime and to hold a public hearing of the interested parties;
- reaffirms its position that the directive's scope should not be confined to business/consumer relations and that it would be extremely useful to reconsider this aspect in order to bring it into line, in fundamental aspects, with the scope of the regulations on electronic commerce.

The EESC disagrees with the Commission's assessment of the consequences of the use made of the "minimum clause", which it does not consider to be the cause of the directive's implementation problems – which are rightly highlighted. The Committee does not, however, reject the possibility of envisaging a move towards total harmonisation, by means of regulation, provided that consumers are guaranteed a higher level of protection.

Finally, the EESC points to the need for a particular focus on providing contracting parties - particularly less well-informed consumers – with real information, and also that there should be an effective system for sanctioning practices that breach existing legal provisions.

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- ***Food hygiene/abolition of price discrimination***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Gkofas (Various interests – EL)
- **References:** COM(2007) 90 final – 2007/0037 COD – CESE 797/2007

- **Contact:** *Mr Jean-Pierre Faure*
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11. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

- ***Dangerous chemicals – export and import***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Pezzini (Employers – IT)
- **References:** COM(2006) 745 final - 2006/0246 COD – CESE 799/2007

- **Key points:**

The Committee agrees that a harmonised approach by the Commission is necessary, aimed at improving the protection of human health and the environment in importing countries, especially developing countries. It also agrees on the need to use streamlined, clear and transparent mechanisms based on smooth, uniform procedures to ensure the prompt provision of proper information, to countries that import dangerous chemical products and substances.

The Committee considers that the more stringent provisions under Regulation (EC) 304/2003, and reinstated in the present proposal for a new regulation are a key element in overall safety and the management of dangerous chemicals.

The Committee supports the Commission's aim to use the opportunity provided by the correction of the legal basis of the regulation in order to increase the effectiveness of the Community instrument and boost legal certainty, tying in closely with Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 on chemicals legislation (REACH) which is to come into force in June 2007.

In the Committee's view, the new legislation should include provisions on, firstly, the drafting of practical guides and information documents and, secondly, the organisation of training courses based on Community standards, intended primarily for customs officials, with contributions from relevant Commission and, in particular, Joint Research Centre (JRC) staff. Furthermore, the Committee emphasises the importance of using the language of the importing country on labelling and the safety data sheets.

The EESC is convinced that the key to the effective, smooth and transparent functioning of the proposed mechanisms lies in the customs control arrangements, and in full cooperation between the customs authorities and the national authorities designated to apply the regulation (DNAs).

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• ***Placing plant protection products on the market***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr van Oorschot (Employers – NL)
- **References:** COM(2006) 388 final – 2006/0136 COD – CESE 800/2007

– **Key points:**

The EESC welcomes the European Commission's proposal to introduce a new Regulation on the placing of plant protection products on the market. The Committee believes that express mention should be made in the preamble to the proposed Directive, of the importance, in respect of the reliable supply of safe and high-quality food to demanding European consumers, of having available adequate quantities of plant protection products.

The EESC expresses its concern over the introduction of criteria for the approval of plant protection products. The application of such approval criteria, based solely on the intrinsic properties of their active substances without taking account of actual use and levels of exposure, would undermine the principle that decisions are to be taken on the basis of risk assessments. The EESC cannot endorse these provisions since they would unnecessarily curtail innovation in respect of new and better products.

The EESC believes that the proposed introduction of zonal authorisation and mutual recognition represents a first step along the road towards complete harmonisation of authorisations in Europe. The Committee proposes that provision be made for mutual recognition of authorisations also on a cross-zonal basis, in the case of neighbouring countries having comparable conditions of production.

The EESC supports the principle of carrying out comparative assessments of plant protection products containing substances that are candidates for substitution. The Committee, however, calls for evaluations to be carried out at less frequent intervals and for the application of the normal period of data protection in the case of candidates for substitution in order to maintain a degree of readiness to

invest in these substances on the part of industry and thereby prevent bottlenecks in the agricultural sector.

The EESC considers that the proposal for a Regulation contains too few incentives for the authorisation of plant protection products for minor uses, and proposes two measures for improving this situation: (i) the initial applicant could be granted a longer period of data protection, the greater the number of minor uses that are included; (ii) the drawing-up, by the Commission, of an up-to-date list for the benefit of the Member States, setting out all the authorised (minor) uses.

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- ***Greenhouse gas emission allowances***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Adams (Various interests – UK)
- **References:** COM(2006) 818 final – 2006/0304 COD – CESE 801/2007

- **Key points:**

The Committee welcomes the proposed Directive which offers a carefully considered and pragmatic approach to moderating and compensating for the rapidly growing volume of greenhouse gases emitted by the aviation industry.

By bringing aviation within the remit of the European Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) the scheme is itself potentially strengthened and made more robust as the pre-eminent model for tackling CO₂ emissions at a global level.

The Committee finds the proposal realistic. It recognises the strength of political, economic and consumer pressures for the continuing development of air travel and transport whilst using the market mechanism of the ETS to compensate for one of the main, damaging external impacts of the aviation industry.

The EESC welcomes the inclusion in the scheme of all flights into or out of Europe from 2012 but believes that the emissions cap – set approximately at the 2005 level – should be lower and more consistent with levels required of other sectors in the ETS.

The Committee recognises that this is a complex issue but feels the proposal is somewhat opaque and fails to present its advantages clearly. The proposal appeals in different ways and at various levels to the EU as a whole, to individual Member States, to different sectors of industry and to the public. In particular the positive potential of the Directive to support and reinforce the ETS should be emphasised. It is also noted that active and complementary support will be required from other parts of the Commission, particularly Transport and Energy and Research.

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- ***Waste batteries and accumulators***

- **References:** COM(2007) 93 final – 2007/0036 COD– CESE 803/2007

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12. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

- ***The future of eAccessibility***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Hernández Bataller (Various interests – ES)

- **Reference:** Exploratory opinion – CESE 810/2007

- **Key points:**

At the Commission's request, the EESC has drawn up this exploratory opinion on the future legislative framework for eAccessibility, with particular focus on older people.

The overall aim is to identify the type of secondary legislation that will form the basis for the EU to achieve its objective of a fully inclusive society, within today's context of rapid economic and social change.

The EESC believes that, owing to the major political and social changes which have occurred in recent years, Community action on eAccessibility must become a priority and access to ICT must be confirmed as a civil right within public services.

This Community action should combine a legal instrument that would reinforce current legislation with other non-binding measures in various policy areas, given the added value that EU action can have.

The EESC stresses that the involvement of civil society organisations is a key factor in the implementation of a proper eAccessibility policy, through the promotion of support measures, for example, with regard to codes of conduct or co-regulation.

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13. EDUCATION

- ***Lifelong learning***

- **Rapporteur:** Mr Rodriguez Garcia-Caro (Employers – ES)
- **References:** COM(2006) 479 final – 2006/0163 (COD) – CESE 806/2007

- **Key points:**

The Committee believes that there is a need for the proposal establishing a European Qualifications Framework, given that adequate transparency of qualifications and competences boosts mobility within the EU and ensures standardised, widespread access to the European labour market.

The EESC notes that the legal form chosen for the proposal's adoption is the recommendation which, as set out in Article 249 of the Treaty Establishing the European Community, is not legally binding.

The EESC believes that greater clarity and simplicity are needed in the model's descriptors, especially where professional qualifications are concerned, in order to make them easier to understand by the general public, businesses and experts.

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