

INFORMATION BULLETIN OF THE WORKERS' GROUP

# WORKERS

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## *The Workers' Group exchanges views with Council president Herman Van Rompuy*

George Dassis, the president of the Workers' Group, said he shared some of the Council president's optimism about the future of Europe, in view of certain positive signs such as the **stabilisation of the eurozone**. However, he noted that the difficulties had not been overcome as yet, since political leaders at the highest level continued to be overwhelmed by events that were disastrous for ordinary people and endangered the very existence of the European Union.

Dassis reminded Mr Van Rompuy that since 2010 the EESC had on several occasions made proposals in its opinions aimed at getting Europe out of the crisis. The EESC's opinions deserved to be taken into account more often and more rapidly.

He then said he regretted that **austerity policy** had been the only response to the economic and financial crisis, even though it had been **challenged** by the IMF itself. He stressed that, once again, it was the general public who were suffering the consequences of this **political error**.

Mr Dassis stressed that, to overcome the crisis, there was an urgent need for the economic dimension of European unification to be complemented by a **social dimension**. He called upon Mr Van Rompuy to place himself at the **forefront** of efforts to promote the social dimension.



Council give in to **British blackmail** and renegotiate the Treaties in order to allow more **opt-outs** for the UK?

Pierre Jean Coulon drew attention to certain manifestations of **selfishness** within the European Union which were harmful to European integration. Something had to be done to oppose the selfishness of some states which ignored **Community solidarity** by negotiating **bilateral agreements** with non-EU countries in the fields of energy, transport, immigration and new technologies. It was also necessary to block the selfishness of certain occupational groups which were using the crisis as an **excuse** to "**drag down**" **basic social rights**. The EESC's representatives wanted a new start for Europe: "*and that means there is no room for selfishness.*"



# Towards a renewed EU-Pacific development Partnership

The EESC considers that the EU's underlying objectives for the renewed EU-Pacific development Partnership are ambitious, but believes that the implementing arrangements, which mainly concern environmental protection and biodiversity conservation in the region, are not clear.

Issues associated with the impact of climate change should be incorporated in the area's comprehensive environmental policies and ensure coherent behaviour and actions. To this end, the active involvement of all local stakeholders is necessary.

The proposed renewed development partnership should be used as an opportunity to set out principles and preconditions which should serve as EU guidelines for all beneficiary countries of EU assistance, based on a full application of the Cotonou Agreement. The effective exercise of democracy through the full enjoyment of fundamental and labour rights and democratic participation must be guaranteed in all the countries. Particular attention should be paid to the extremely

serious and worrying situation of women in all the countries in this region, who are deprived of the most basic rights.

The EESC views the growth of the social partners and of civil society in general as a fundamental in this region. Participatory instruments to promote stronger social dialogue, and improve capacity building for all local stakeholders through specific funding, including a fully-fledged ESC.



Carmelo Cedrone

## A delegation of Egyptian trade unionists visits the EESC

On 4 and 5 February 2013, a delegation of Egyptian independent trade unionists visited the European institutions. Their aim was to seek the support of trade unions and the European institutions for the democratic process in Egypt which is still in danger.

Democratic freedoms and union rights are not yet fully recognised and the recent decisions taken by the Presidency go in the opposite direction.

During their meeting with Georges Dassis, President of the Workers' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee, the Egyptian union re-

presentatives asked the European Union to fully support the democratisation efforts undertaken in the country and to press the government to recognise trade union rights. Georges Dassis answered that during his life as an activist he had never been a passive spectator and that the Egyptian friends could count on the support of the Workers' Group of the EESC.

Group II will send a delegation to Egypt to collect as much information as possible on the situation there as regards union and democratic rights. The delegation will also participate in a seminar on social dialogue and participatory bodies, including economic and social councils.



# Forty years of the European Trade Union Confederation

Juan Moreno\*



With the emergence of the first European institutions, advisory committees were also set up, making it necessary for trade unions to create the groupings and coordination committees which would eventually lead to the founding of the ETUC. The first of these was the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC), created in 1948 to accompany the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) which resulted from the Marshall Plan.

When the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was created in 1951, the miners' and metal workers' unions also grouped together and were represented in an advisory committee to the ECSC's High Authority. Furthermore, when the EFTA and EEC

treaties were signed (in 1960 and 1957 respectively) trade unions took part in their respective advisory bodies.

In the run-up to the first enlargement of the EEC, with the accession of the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark which was to take place in 1973, the leaders of certain major national trade unions argued that an independent confederation needed to be created.

A consensus was reached between the ICFTU trade unions of the countries of the EEC and EFTA, the free trade area to which the United Kingdom and the Nordic countries, amongst others, belonged. To the same end, parallel negotiations were held between

those trade unions and trade unions of Catholic tradition, affiliated to the WCL, but it was decided to move ahead firstly with just the 17 confederations of the ICFTU.

The constituent assembly and first congress of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) were finally held on 8 and 9 February 1973 in Brussels, under the presidency of the Secretary-General of the Belgian FGTB trade union federation, Georges Debunne.

The key post of president was held by Victor Feather, from the United Kingdom, secretary-general of that country's TUC, while Theo Raschaert, from Belgium, was elected secretary-general. The

## HISTORY OF THE ETUC

### Key dates

- 1952** Miners' and metal workers' unions belonging to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) set up a coordinating committee for the European Coal and Steel Community.
- 1957** In response to the Treaty of Rome, the ICFTU establishes a European Trade Union Secretariat (ETUS) bringing together its members from the Europe of Six. At the same time, the International Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (CISC) sets up a European Organisation (OE-CISC).
- 1960** The ICFTU trade unions from countries belonging to the European Free Trade Association in turn join together in a European secretariat.
- 1969** The ETUS becomes the European Confederation of Free Trade Unions.
- 1973** The ICFTU trade unions of the EFTA countries and the trade unions of the OE-CISC join together, leading to the creation of the European Trade Union Confederation.
- 7 and 8 February 1973:** founding congress in Brussels.

### General Secretaries

- 1973: Theo Rasschaert  
1976: Mathias Hinterscheid  
1991: Emilio Gabaglio  
2003: John Monks  
2011: Bernadette Ségol



Juan Moreno and Emilio Gabaglio are the authors of the book “The challenge of social Europe. 30 years of the European Trade Union Confederation”.

ETUC can be said to have been created between 1973 and 1974, since it was in that latter year that an extraordinary congress was held to admit the Catholic trade unions and the Italian CGIL. It was at that point that the ETUC achieved its true ambition of becoming the “common trade union home”.

From its inception, the ETUC was intended to provide unity, but it was to be many years before it would include the great majority of trade unions of all kinds and from all geographical areas of the continent, thus finally becoming that common trade union home. Trade unions which had initially been excluded gradually joined, such as the Spanish CCOO, the French CGT and the Portuguese CGTP, and when the democratic changes took place in Eastern Eu-

rope, the ETUC, which had held an important congress in 1991 to reform its statutes, implemented a significant programme in support of the new trade union movement in Central and Eastern Europe, whose trade unions gradually became full members as well.

European sectoral federations were also developed and joined the ETUC, having initially been excluded, making it possible to foster European sectoral social dialogue and European works councils.

The ETUC has been actively involved in all of the reforms of the European treaties, mobilising workers in favour of a social and democratic Europe and facing up to neo-liberal threats to the social model and to current austerity plans.

MADRID, 28 JANUARY 2013,

# STATEMENT BY EMILIO GABAGLIO ON THE 40th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ETUC

The ETUC traces its origins to a meeting held by the DGB in Frankfurt in the summer of 1971 for the leaders of the European member unions of the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions), which brought to light a shared dissatisfaction with the virtual absence of EU social initiatives and scant trade union influence.

The results obtained in previous years under the ECSC in terms of social and labour policy, such as trade union representation – including the explicit inclusion of a trade union member among the members of the High Authority – were not replicated in the 1957 Treaties of Rome, which established the EEC. Until that time, the only achievements under the Common Market concerned rules on the free movement of workers, the establishment of the Economic and Social Committee, and the first modest steps towards the European Social Fund.

The trade union movement was divided. Members of the ICFTU as well as those of the WCL (World Confederation of Labour) created their own representative organisations which, even when they had the same demands, such as when they shared a platform on social policy in 1969, nevertheless remained prisoners of the two international bodies' competitive rationale. Nor should we forget that two important confederations, the CGT in France and CGIL in Italy, which were still members of the WFTU (World Federation of Trade Unions), were cut off from mainstream European trade unionism.

The Frankfurt discussions sketched out the idea that trade unions that subscribed to European integration should join forces to lend greater weight to the labour movement in this process. The plan was made public at a subsequent meeting, held in Oslo at the end of 1971, while, at a meeting held in the Hague at the beginning of 1972, the European branches of the ICFTU

and the WCL merged into a new confederation, independent of international confederations, opening the way to the affiliation of other democratic trade unions that subscribed to European integration. The constituent congress was convened for the end of the same year but ultimately took place in Brussels on 7-8 February 1973, but without the participation of the WCL trade unions.

During 1972, a dispute developed between the two international confederations over alliances for elections to the ILO's Governing Body, which led ICFTU members to proceed alone. It was a confirmation of the reservations and difficulties that a joint project still faced.

The founding congress of the ETUC was attended by EEC ICFTU members that already belonged to ECFTU, and EFTA members, which had set up the EFTA-TUC in the meantime. However, the Spanish UGT was among the 17 founding organisations. The political significance of this decision, at a time of rising struggle against the Franco dictatorship and for a return to democratic freedoms in Spain, is obvious. The labour movement was among the protagonists of this struggle. It took action through members who identified with the historical UGT, whose leaders were still in exile but whose activists began to organise themselves from within, as did the ELA-STV activists from the Basque country. Other sectors of the movement also played a part, creating new groupings such as the Workers' Commissions and the USO. The ETUC became a reference point for all of them, and eventually, the common base.

The original plan, which could not be achieved at the congress of February 1973, was carried out the following year. The extraordinary congress held in Copenhagen in the spring of 1974 brought the WCL into the ETUC, and later on in July the executive committee

was instructed by the congress to take steps to affiliate Italy's CGIL, which had left the WFTU. This was an important choice, which extended the ETUC's reach beyond social democratic and Christian trade unions to include communist trade unions as they progressively lent their weight to European integration. For a very long time, CGIL's membership remained an isolated case and it was only much later that other confederations with similar leanings – the Spanish Workers' Commissions, the Portuguese CGT and the French CGT – joined the ETUC.

Nevertheless, a quarter of a century would have to elapse, following the 1973 congress, before the ETUC's aspirations for unity and pluralism could be said to be fully realised at the Helsinki congress of 1999.

This was all the more significant since the European political landscape had changed completely in the meantime. The fall of the Berlin Wall accelerated history in a way that nobody would have dared imagine when the ETUC was created, but also later, in the early 1980s, when many observers mistook the extraordinary Solidarność movement for a brief spark that would be extinguished, yet again, under the weight of totalitarian repression, as had happened in Hungary in 1956, in Prague in 1968 and also in Poland in the 1970s. However, a chink had now opened up, unleashing a chain of events that ended in the collapse of the communist regimes of the Central and Eastern European countries in the late 1980s, reopening their path to establishing free and democratic trade unions, whose representatives attended the Helsinki congress as delegates. At a later stage, once the tragic war in former Yugoslavia was over, trade unions from this region also joined the ETUC, which had not failed to show its solidarity with the region in those desperately trying times. Europe's trade unions had united before the European Union incorporated the nine new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe.

For most of its history, the ETUC remained an exception in an international trade union movement dominated by division, and it did not escape difficulties in affirming its originality and autonomy. However, once conditions were ripe for united international trade unionism, it was the prior experience of the united and pluralist ETUC that served as a benchmark for negotiations leading up to the establishment of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) in Vienna in 2006. Moreover, it was from the podium of the 2003 congress in Prague that the secretaries-general of the ICFTU and the WCL outlined the prospect of new unity in the international trade union movement.

In parallel with these developments, which led the European Commission to recognise it as the only representative trade union confederation at the European level, the ETUC carried out internal changes over the years to accentuate its supranational character.

In this case, the turning point was the reform approved by the Luxembourg congress of 1991 and completed at the Brussels congress of 1995. Statutory changes were adopted which reflected the delegation of the national confederations' sovereignty to the ETUC's governing bodies and its secretariat, which would be elected by the congress and would therefore have a political as well as a technical mandate that included steering delegations through social dialogue negotiations, while the executive committee would reach decisions by a qualified majority, evidence of the acknowledgement of a common European interest that went beyond individual national choices.

Another important change to the internal structure was the transformation of sectoral trade union committees, which up to that point had had fairly loose ties with the ETUC, into proper European category federations, affiliated to the confederation in that capacity and represented in the confederation congress and governing bodies with voting rights. New bodies were established to represent European professional and managerial staff – Eurocadres – and retired workers – FERPA – while Interregional Trade Union Councils were developed and the European Trade Union Institute and the European Trade Union Technical Bureau for Health and Safety were enhanced, and joined by the European Trade Union College in 1990.

During the 1990s, the ETUC took the image and role of a European level trade union even further than had previously been the case, developing the frontline role it had played throughout its existence in parallel with the different stages of European integration.

When the ETUC founding congress was held in Brussels, only a few weeks had elapsed since the Heads of State and Government had met in Paris in December 1972 to issue a declaration recognising that “vigorous action in the social sphere is to them just as important as achieving Economic and Monetary Union”. It was a signal that the Community intended to give itself a social dimension to fill the vacuum of the previous period.

Thus the ETUC took its first steps in a favourable environment. This was confirmed by the approval in 1974 of the Community's first social action programme, which over the next ten years translated into

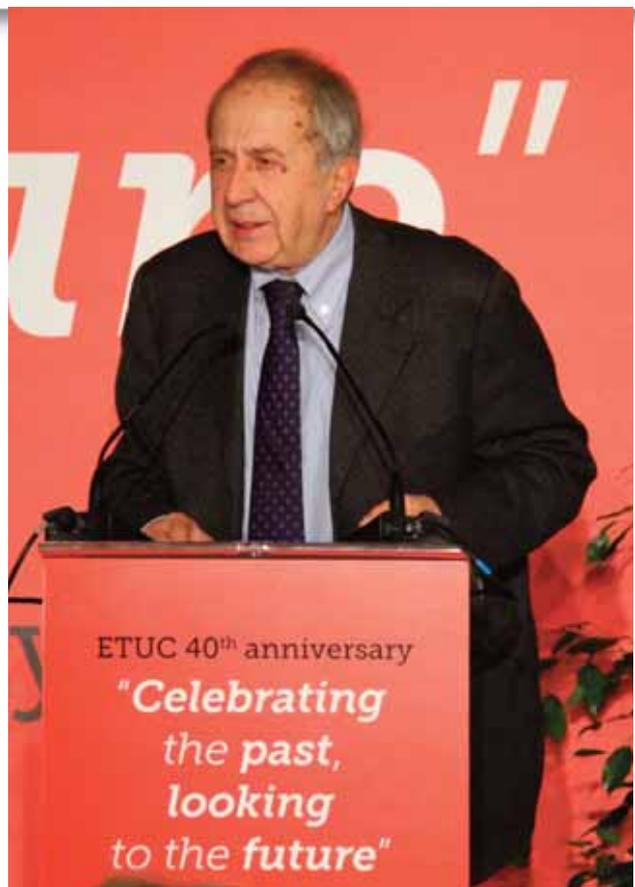
the adoption of various social directives on health and safety, equal treatment, collective redundancies, and the safeguarding of employees' rights in the event of transfers of undertakings. Meanwhile, Cedepof was set up for the development of vocational training and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions was set up in Dublin, involving the participation of the social partners in their respective administrative boards, and which were followed by the Agency for Safety and Health.

However, there were no similar developments for employment. The ETUC realised that consultation within the annual Tripartite Social Summit and the Standing Committee on Employment was not delivering tangible results so it decided to stop participating in them in order to launch an action campaign for employment.

A European day of action on employment, held on 5 April 1978, and the Euro-demonstration held in Venice to coincide with the European summit of 1980 were the first steps in this struggle, which eventually became and remains an important aspect of ETUC action to this day.

However, ETUC recommendations on employment, which were discussed with the Commission as well as with individual national governments (which the leaders of the time used to call the "round of the capitals") and reiterated at an important conference held in Strasbourg in 1984 attended by political and business representatives, were met with interest but found no resonance in Community decisions. This led to a chill if not a breakdown in relations between the ETUC and the Commission.

There was a distinct change in the situation when Jacques Delors was elected president of the Commission in 1985. It was during his ten-year tenure that social Europe received a decisive boost. There were three significant events. The first was the Single Act in 1986, which in addition to introducing social dialogue, laid the foundations for structural and cohesion policy by significantly strengthening related instruments, including the Social Fund. The second was the Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers, adopted in Strasbourg in 1989, which Delors had promised a year earlier in a speech to the ETUC congress in Stockholm. This charter, although only a political declaration since Margaret Thatcher refused to sign it, became the basis for the EEC's second social action programme, which led, inter alia, to the directives on working time, the posting of workers, and the information and consultation rights of employees. The latter, in particular, made it possible to organise



European Works Councils in transnational companies, thus creating new areas for trade union initiatives, and primarily the European federations by category. The third event was the Maastricht Protocol on Social Policy in 1991, from which the UK once again excluded itself until the Labour government of 1997. The protocol not only broadened the Union's social remit and the majority vote for related decisions but also strengthened social dialogue, giving effect to the social partners' ability to negotiate framework agreements at the European level. Since then, social Europe has had two routes open to it, the legislative route and the contractual route.

There is no doubt that the introduction of social dialogue strengthened the social partners' legitimacy and was a qualitative leap in terms of their role in the governance of the European Union.

At the root of this innovation lay Delors' conviction that the involvement of the social partners needed to be increased in order to ensure the success of the new objectives the EU had set itself at that time: the internal market, and the prospect of monetary union. This explains why one of his first acts as president of the Commission was to convene the heads of the ETUC, UNICE and CEEP in January 1985 to request their collaboration in a permanent consultation process. This led to the establishment of the social dialogue which was first legally recognised by the Single Act and which, over the years, has resulted in a series of joint opinions and recommendations from the social partners to the Commission on important



issues such as growth, employment, the introduction of new technologies, and the training of workers.

When in 1991, the idea of a new reform of the Treaties began to take shape, it was once again Delors who called on the social partners to come to an agreement which would give effect to the provision in the Single Act allowing the social partners, if the two sides so agreed, to stipulate framework agreements at the European level, which had remained a dead letter up to that point. After months of difficult negotiations, a joint document was concluded on 31 October 1991 and, having been assimilated by the Commission as its own mainly thanks to the support of François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl, was included in the Treaty, forming the legal basis of the contractual side of social dialogue.

From the ETUC's perspective this was an undoubted success since it fulfilled its founding objective of establishing fully-fledged industrial relations with their partner employer organisations in Europe so that its action was no longer limited to lobbying. UNICE, however, made no secret of the fact that its reasons for entering into this agreement had more to do with strengthening its voice during the preparation of European social laws and even limiting their number since, contrary to all empirical evidence, it believed that there were too many of them. The difference in

approach did not fail to have its influence on the long-term dynamics of social dialogue.

In the wake of the Delors Commission, the new Santer Commission presented a raft of proposals that put social dialogue to the test. Between 1995 and 1998 three framework agreements were concluded on parental leave, part-time work and fixed-term contracts, which eventually became EU directives. Although only minimum requirements, they brought added value by extending social rights and protection to workers in countries that did not have them and improving the situation for all the others.

At around the same time, faced with growing unemployment and following the stability pact, which ignored, in all but name, the need for economic growth, the ETUC reiterated the need for Member States to coordinate their economic policies and for the Union to take on the task of supporting development and jobs, echoing the suggestions made in the Delors White Paper of 1993. Unfortunately, this document was destined to remain a brilliant intellectual exercise with no operational outcomes.

The ETUC's demands were only partially met with the inclusion in the Treaty of Amsterdam of 1997 of a chapter on employment, which resulted in the launch of the "European employment strategy". Although, on the one hand, this created jobs, at least

initially, on the other hand, it promoted labour market reforms which in many cases led to more flexible working arrangements that were not combined with equivalent protection rights for workers and effective active labour market policies. In a certain number of countries, flexicurity actually became flexi-insecurity.

The ETUC took the opportunity of the euro's introduction in 1999 to reiterate, in its public positions, as it did during the macroeconomic dialogue between itself, the European financial authorities and the Central Bank, and at successive social summits, the need for the governance of the single currency to be backed by European economic governance and, therefore, by joint instruments for promoting development and employment. These recommendations clearly heralded demands that are now widely shared although still unheeded.

At the turn of the century, the political climate changed and this could also be seen in the new Commission, headed by Romano Prodi. The narrow neo-liberal mindset predominated and ultimately had a blanket influence on European politics, even among its progressive components. The European social model itself was thrown back into question. EU governance gave preference to soft law over hard law, to recommendations over decisions, to guidelines and good practices over binding provisions. This could be seen in the Lisbon Strategy, where the flagship objective to make Europe the most competitive economy within ten years contrasted with the dearth of crucial instruments and resources to achieve it.

Previously experienced social growth gradually began to weaken. The Commission never failed to promote debate through green papers and other documents but in practice the moratorium on social legislation that employers had always wanted was gaining ground. For example, when negotiations aimed at regulating temporary work failed, the Commission delayed the presentation of a draft directive by many years. These changing circumstances were also felt in social dialogue. There were still binding agreements – e.g. on teleworking or on stress – but these were the product of the social partners' autonomy and were becoming rarer than other social dialogue outcomes, which although numerous, did not have the same binding character between the partners. The open method of coordination seemed to be infiltrating social dialogue.

More recently, there have been other ominous signs for the European social model: the Bolkestein directive, where the ETUC managed to limit the most harmful consequences, in terms of social dumping, through a strong mobilisation campaign and the support of the European Parliament, and the judgments of the Court of Justice on the cases of Viking, Laval and others, which confirmed the primacy of economic freedoms over wor-

kers' rights, without in the meantime finding an adequate response to counter their regressive nature.

All this took place against the backdrop of the serious setback to European integration presented by the failure of the draft constitutional treaty, which the ETUC had supported not only because it incorporated the Charter of Fundamental Rights, including social and trade union rights which the ETUC had long fought for, but also because despite certain obvious limitations it included significant social and democratic developments, such as new powers for the European Parliament, which had proved an important ally to the trade union movement on not a few occasions. These developments were at least partially retained in the Treaty of Lisbon.

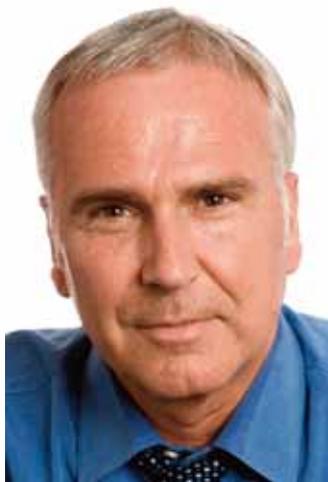
In ensuing years, Europe, especially the euro area, has been in the grip of an exceptionally serious and prolonged crisis, with devastating social consequences of which you need no reminder. A crisis which the Union is addressing with belated and misguided decisions, as the ETUC warned at its last two congresses in Seville and Athens. But this brings us to your very real present and to the end of my tale. I would just like to add that it is the crisis itself that brought the inadequacies of the Union's current configuration to light, clearly revealing the need for it to be completed, going well beyond the decisions of recent months, by pushing forward with economic, fiscal, social, and therefore, necessarily, political integration. This is an argument the ETUC has always maintained through its firm but, at the same time, critical Europeanism. The European Union cannot tread water midstream for long without sinking into a decline, for which workers will be among the first to pay.

In conclusion, I ask myself how the founders of the ETUC would assess the progress we have made over the last 40 years. I think that I can dare to believe that, with a few allowances, they would recognise that we have remained true to the original plan. Needless to say, we have further to go, a point that is well-reflected in the title of this conference. Yes, dear friends and colleagues, the future can have no heart but an old one.

# The great guidelines for the economic policies

The EESC points out the need for a fundamental rethink of economic policy. Instead of the current policy, which has made the recession worse, we should have a credible expansionary programme to reduce debt and unacceptably high unemployment levels and enable the financial markets to return to full viability. We therefore call for a new growth model for Europe in which budget consolidation is not seen as the prerequisite for growth, but rather as the outcome of a successful economic policy.

The Committee's opinion sets out a series of measures to ensure the necessary public revenues. It also recommends that differences in the multiplier effects of consolidation measures be used to free up resources for future investment without increasing the deficit. Such expansionary



measures would also stimulate imports in surplus countries. EU-wide coordination would make this all the more effective.

Domestic demand should also be used to cut the import deficit of the surplus countries and we should be wary of overestimating the role of price competitiveness and labour costs. One reason for this is that wage restraint in all countries would be a recipe for a *race to the bottom*. A second is that other price factors tend to be underestimated, as does the importance of non-price competitive factors.

Finally, the Committee calls for the guidelines to reflect the importance of the social security system as a stabilising factor and to strengthen the role of the social partners and other representative interest groups.

Thomas Delapina

## No hope without digital energy!

Cloud computing is going to radically transform information technology, turning it into tomorrow's **digital energy**! We will get computing power by connecting to the internet, just as we connect to the electricity network to get electric power.

Whether you are for or against it, this transformation is inevitable, and is already in progress. However, the success or failure of Europe (and its Member States) to anticipate and ride this wave will have a **major impact** on our economies, our jobs and our lifestyles, and also on our continent's digital independence or alienation.

The cloud strategy proposed by the European Commission aims to develop Europe as a cloud **consumer**, by facilitating and regulating use, through contracts, data protection, etc. This is certainly necessary, but not sufficient, as Commission vice-president Neelie Kroes is



evidently aware, given that she has shown greater ambition in calling for a **cloud-active Europe** that can develop its own cloud services. The Committee is alarmed: even if we develop our own services, we will still be using other parties' clouds. Where will the new jobs, and the strategic and digital independence, come from? Europe needs to **produce its own digital energy** by building and operating its own cloud centres – by having its own digital industry.

The US has been successful in this, and now boasts the world leaders in cloud computing (Microsoft, Amazon, Google, etc.). **Why not Europe?** Europe has failed with the internet; it cannot afford to fail with the cloud. And we need to move fast, because our competitors outside Europe have already entered the field and will not wait for us.

**We need to mobilise** to ensure that the European institutions and our Member States can take action to build a **leading, independent and world-beating** European digital cloud computing industry!

Eric Pigal

## Funding of European political parties

The EESC supports both the creation of a single European statute for European political parties and foundations and the review of how their operation is monitored, with a view to improving their effectiveness, visibility, transparency, accountability and internal party democracy.

As such, the EESC particularly stresses the need for parties and foundations covered by this statute to subscribe to the objectives of the European project and to the fundamental values underlying it, as laid down in the European treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

The EESC suggests that representativeness should be referred to in a way that is less likely to create arbitrary discrimination. It suggests taking inspiration from the criteria established for European Citizens' Initiatives (ECIs) in this connection, and setting the requirement of having obtained at least one million votes across at least seven countries at the last European elections.

With regard to compliance with the fundamental values enshrined at European level, the EESC highlights the need to respect those set out in the European treaties, particularly in the preamble to the Treaty on European Union, and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Article 21 of which prohibits discrimination based on any ground. The principle of equality between women and men in all areas – which is also laid down in Article 23 of the Charter – should also find practical application in all the governing bodies of European political parties and foundations.

The EESC also takes issue with the inequality of treatment between European political parties and foundations, on the one hand, and European-level associations and foundations with more general objectives, on the other (e.g. economic, trade-union, social, humanitarian, cultural, environmental or sporting associations, etc.). The EESC therefore once again laments the Commission's decision, several years ago, to withdraw the draft statute for a European association.

## The gender dimension in the Europe 2020 Strategy



In this opinion, adopted on 17 January 2013, the EESC endorses and welcomes the principle that the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Strategy for equality between women and men should be mutually reinforcing. It analyses the seven flagship initiatives contained in the Europe 2020 Strategy and puts forward proposals for mainstreaming the gender dimension in them, stressing the importance of involving civil society throughout this process.

The opinion notes the Europe 2020 Strategy's serious shortcomings as regards equality, but welcomes the significant possibility for the National Reform Plans to incorporate equality objectives in all their measures and in all fields. It recommends that the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework should make separate funds available to ensure its implementation, and that the European semester monitors it so that the results can be seen, enabling an eva-

luation based on criteria and indicators which make the integration of the two strategies clear.

In its proposals, the EESC has sought to suggest various possible paths for action to ensure that, within the context of the flagship initiatives and with help from Community funds, the Member States can adopt measures to improve training and the quantity and quality of women's employment, as well as their involvement in fields where research and innovation offer significant added value, especially in emerging and future sectors. It also proposes taking the social measures needed to alter the more difficult context created by the economic crisis: this has been exacerbated by the austerity measures being implemented by governments, making it particularly hard for women to find and keep jobs.

Joana Agudo

# Thousands of demonstrators take to the streets in Brussels demanding equal pay for equal work

Workers in the construction, transport and agricultural sectors took to Brussels' streets on 23 January demanding that European decision-makers face the social dumping phenomenon and take effective and concrete actions to end it. To ensure better monitoring of the European labour market, the trade unions called for a social "Europol", a European social identity card, European liability for clients and principal contractors, strict criteria as regards the status of self-employed workers and the establishment of stringent national controls.

The President and other members of the Workers' Group of the EESC joined the demonstrators.



## **WORKERS** • Information bulletin of the Workers' Group (Group II)

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[http://eesc.europa.eu/groups/2/index\\_fr.asp](http://eesc.europa.eu/groups/2/index_fr.asp)

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