



**European Economic and Social Committee**  
**Workers' Group**  
**The President**

Brussels, 17 December 2013

## **Georges Dassis' statement, president of the Workers' Group: Why we want a European minimum income**

I deeply regret that the President of the Employers' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee considered it advisable to publish immediately after the adoption by the plenary session of the opinion of the "European **minimum income and poverty indicators** "a "declaration and reaction "entitled "To address minimum income ? Yes, but at national level ".

I regret this for two reasons: firstly, the President of the Employers' Group contests for the second time a text that has been democratically adopted in plenary session - the first time it was about the social dimension of economic and monetary union. Moreover, while I regret this way of accentuating divisions within the Committee, I regret even more the fact that the European Union keeps on being divided at a time when it has the least need of it.

If civil society and tens of millions of citizens who belong to unions or associations are in favor of a binding European instrument - the effect of which will obviously be modulated according to national economies, since Member States are unfortunately far from being cohesive –, it is because:

- it is urgent to do something for those who , throughout Europe, have been plunged into poverty by the crimes of a handful of speculators and the inability of our decision makers to take, together and united, effective and courageous decisions ;
- it is time for the European Union to be presented to its citizens in a positive way . What those who have contributed to fostering total despair will eventually achieve is to have parliaments full of egoists, extreme nationalists and even avowed Nazis. They run the risk to regretting this bitterly, but it will be too late.

I would like to reassure all those members of the Employers' Group who have not voted in favour of this opinion that the trade unions' dream is not to turn welfare assistance into the rule : we are workers' unions and what we want is work : decent work in Europe with companies taking on our young people. Moreover, those who are in poverty do not even have the means to buy basic foodstuffs, and it is our companies that produce them.

The time has come to do some serious thinking about these questions. Will we continue to watch the European project collapsing without doing anything? Shall we put it in a grave, burying along with it the medal it received for saving the peace and the economy in the distant past, even becoming a beacon of hope for people who could not yet be part of it ...

or ... do we have the courage now to give it human and social meaning, if only so as not to run the risk of feeling ashamed in view of the final judgment of history?

It is perhaps time to preserve peace on our continent by ensuring that the union of our countries sends concrete messages to citizens, rather than giving them the impression that it is content to watch a growing number of people forced to live under atrocious conditions and poverty.