



European Economic and Social Committee



Hungarian Economic and Social Council

*JOINT CONFERENCE OF THE
EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE
HUNGARIAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL*

**Improving national ownership of the Lisbon Strategy:
Is organised civil society sufficiently involved?**

Budapest, 9 and 10 March 2006

Closing Session

Presentation of recommendations to the EU institutions

by

Anne-Marie SIGMUND

President of the European Economic and Social Committee

As President of the European Economic and Social Committee, I would like to draw a number of conclusions that are particularly important to me from the very rich contributions to and discussions at our conference in Budapest. With your permission, we will pass these conclusions on to political decision-makers in the European Union.

My ten points are as follows:

1. All the EU institutions must portray the Lisbon Strategy for what it is – i.e. a decisive project for the future of European society.
2. All the EU institutions must communicate this project for the future of Europe to the public in such a way that they can understand it, identify with it, and support it with conviction.
3. In order to achieve this, the EU institutions must first and foremost come up with simpler, more easily understandable language so as to communicate with words, metaphors and symbols that speak to people, help them to understand the message and inspire them to engage in dialogue.
4. The EU institutions should use, determinedly and in a spirit of cooperative partnership, the knowledge, potential and commitment of organised civil society for the ongoing implementation of the Lisbon Strategy and to make it a reality – at all levels.
5. The structural, strategic and especially the economic significance of the large sectors of organised civil society needs to be fully recognised and documented so as to provide a basis on which to assign an appropriate political role to this level.
6. In implementing the Lisbon Strategy, the EU institutions must determinedly resist the pressure of vested interests and must ensure that the pillars of this strategy are balanced in favour of the common good of society.
7. The open method of coordination should be given a more significant role in implementing the Lisbon Strategy. In this context it is indispensable that, in particular, the affected civil society organisations, parliaments, and regional and local authorities are much more heavily involved.
8. The EU institutions must show much greater political will and political leadership in the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy. This includes using a coherent communications strategy to support a large number of multipliers in key positions.
9. Among these important multipliers are first and foremost the members of the European Economic and Social Committee and the Economic and Social Councils in the Member States of the EU. They also include the leaders of the EESC's other civil society partner organisations, such as European NGO networks with their national and local structures.
10. The EU institutions must not treat the Lisbon Strategy as a time-limited project, but rather communicate it as a long-term process of European development. In particular, this includes a constant critical assessment of the implementation instruments and adapting them to new circumstances. This must take place in dialogue and in partnership with organised civil society.

N.B.: These recommendations were unanimously welcomed and strongly supported by conference participants at the closing session.
