



European Economic and Social Committee

**Joint conference  
of the Luxembourg ESC and the EESC**

*For a competitive, social and sustainable Europe – making  
the Lisbon Strategy a success through a pact with organised  
civil society*

*Luxembourg, 26 and 27 January 2005*

**CLOSING SPEECH**

**by the President of the  
European Economic and Social Committee**

**Anne-Marie Sigmund**

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Mr Juncker,

Once again, your comments have made an impression on me.

I think that we are all familiar with the lasting achievements of the Luxembourg Council presidency. I remember for instance that it was during your presidency that a key instrument was introduced, the European Employment Guidelines; and with good reason the process of coordinating these guidelines at European level is known as the Luxembourg Process. You were already in office then, and I believe that if real progress with the Lisbon strategy is at all possible in the European Council, then this will happen during the Luxembourg presidency. It is often said that real political breakthroughs can more easily be achieved under the presidency of a small country. Whether or not this is true, I am absolutely convinced that if we have reason to feel optimistic now, that is above all because we know that you have personally taken the initiative to make the summit a success.

Mr Juncker, I hope that this conference will give you something that you can use in the forthcoming discussions. The key message is: Real progress can only be achieved if organised civil society plays a stronger and broader role in implementing the Lisbon strategy. The Lisbon strategy cannot be implemented effectively without the active involvement of national and European socio-occupational organisations, the national Economic and Social Councils and the European Economic and Social Committee. We need a pact with organised civil society.

What does this mean in concrete terms?

- As the representatives of organised civil society, we will push the reform debate forward at European, national, regional and local level. In doing so we will try to develop synergies between economic, social and environmental reforms. We will conduct the debate in public and at grassroots level, in order to reach Europe's citizens at local level.
- Our organisations will be involved in implementing the reforms, for instance on the job market, in education and training, the social reforms.
- We will help to tap the potential of the European internal market, e.g. through voluntary standards or cross-border self-regulation on the part of the relevant interest groups.
- We will support initiatives at grassroots level, for instance participation of public-private partnerships in projects, cross-border cooperation in the sphere of research and development, lifelong learning, vocational training, and sustainable development programmes.

Mr Juncker, there are of course two parties to any pact. In return, we ask for something from you, our political representatives:

- You must strengthen the trust of socio-occupational interest groups, for instance by implementing the reforms without delay, by ratifying the European Constitution, by supporting the reforms with a European growth policy, and by consolidating the position of the EU in international organisations.

- You must provide the European Union with the resources it needs. This does not mean purely financial resources. It is also about adequate reform of the stability and growth pact, completion of the European financial markets and establishment of a political basis for approximating tax systems, so that Europe attracts investment and innovation.
- You must define the responsibility for reform more precisely, by allocating tasks clearly, introducing annual implementation plans with timetables and annual reports on progress made in the reform efforts.
- Above all at European level you must untangle the various procedures and processes and define policy areas clearly; an example is the distinction between the Lisbon strategy and the sustainable development strategy, with each of the three pillars of the Lisbon strategy continuing to have equal weight.

In our capacity as European Economic and Social Committee we are going to summarise these and other points that you will have noted during this conference in a resolution that will be communicated to you after our plenary session in early March. We are planning to expand our socio-occupational network and to step up our cooperation with the various organisations at every level. We will be drawing up a code of conduct for our work in this area and in future will also hold a conference before the spring summit.

As you know, in its conclusions last spring the European Council explicitly called on the European Economic and Social Committee to explore ways of implementing the Lisbon strategy more effectively, in preparation for the European Council's mid-term review in spring 2005. You are familiar with our opinion from October last year and with the joint declaration with the Economic and Social Councils of the Member States. In addition, I have promised you another resolution.

I believe that our work will help you to take better decisions in the European Council, so that we can further Europe's development together. I therefore hope that this year's European Council conclusions at the spring summit will also take account of our work and that we will be encouraged to step up our efforts. Mr Juncker, we ask you to take the hand that we hold out to you. Make this pact with organised civil society, so that we can strengthen Europe together in order to safeguard and build on the European social model.

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues,

At the beginning of the conference I said that I was counting above all on you to make the discussion a success. I said that it would be your contributions that determined the quality of this conference. I do not know what your feelings are, but I personally not only learned from the debate, I also enjoyed it. I would like to thank all the speakers for their excellent contributions. I would like to thank all the participants for their contributions to the general discussions. And above all I would like to thank you all in advance for taking a part of Europe home with you from the debate and making it a reality in your local organisation.

Thank you very much.