



European Economic and Social Committee

Brussels, 30 June 2006

ACTION TAKEN ON OPINIONS

adopted by the European Economic and Social Committee
at its plenary sessions
in the fourth quarter of 2005

Quarterly review presented
by the European Commission

COMMISSION FOLLOW-UP TO
EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE OPINIONS
DELIVERED IN THE FOURTH QUARTER OF 2005
(October and December 2005)

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PART A: exploratory opinions

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| <p>3. The road to the European knowledge-based society – the contribution of organised civil society to the Lisbon Strategy Exploratory opinion at the request of the Austrian Presidency – EESC 1500/2005 – December 2005 Rapporteur : Mr OLSSON (Act. Div./SU), corapporteurs: Ms BELABED (Work./AT) and Mr van IERSEL (Empl./NL) SG – The President</p> |
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Follow-up to this opinion is deferred to the next quarter.

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| <p>19. Security of modes of transport Exploratory opinion – EESC 1488/2005 – December 2005 Rapporteur: Mr Simons (Empl./NL) DG TREN - Mr BARROT</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC opinion</p> | <p>Commission Position</p> |
| | <p>The Commission appreciates the prompt reply of the EESC to its request for an own opinion of 2 June 2005. It would like to underline the quality of the report which is complete in that it addresses maritime, aviation and land transport, and lists all the measures taken up to now. The Commission also would like to thank the EESC for the good collaboration during the draft process.</p> <p>The Commission appreciates that the opinion examines in detail the issue of security in public transport and underlines that work still has to be undertaken as regards inland transport. It also takes note that the Committee recognises that as regards measures of such a great public interest the costs involved should be met by the whole community.</p> |
| <p>2.1 : Highlights the issue of subsidiarity and addresses the responsibilities and competences of the modes of transport themselves, i.e. those of passengers, employees and management.</p> | <p>The Commission shares the Committee's view on the importance of subsidiarity and the responsibilities and competences of the modes of transport themselves.</p> |
| <p>2.3.3 and 2.3.4 : Takes the view that security is a shared responsibility of the Member States and the European Union and considers the role of the European Union above all to coordinate measures at international level.</p> | <p>The Commission shares the Committee's view as regards the shared responsibility, stresses however, that the role of the European Union goes beyond simple coordination, as the Commission has clear mandates for establishing EU-wide legislation in certain areas such as maritime and aviation security.</p> |

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| <p>2.3.5 : Highlights that the national governments should realise that a great deal of work remains to be done concerning the inland modes of transport and that cooperation is necessary.</p> | <p>The Commission fully shares the Committee's view of the necessity of working on inland transport security and the importance of cooperation.</p> |
| <p>4.4 : Highlights that the costs should ultimately be met by the activity from which the costs arise, but that measures could sometimes be of such a great public interest that the costs involved should be met by the whole community.</p> | <p>The Commission intends to adopt in the following weeks a communication on the security of modes of transport which will address the issue of the financing of the measures taken in this respect.</p> |

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| <p>43. Ethical Trade and Consumer Assurance Schemes Exploratory opinion from the UK Presidency - EESC 1257/2005- October 2005 Rapporteur : Mr Adams (Var. Act./UK) DG DEV, TRADE, SANCO, EMPL Messrs MICHEL, MANDELSON, KYPRIANOU, ŠPIDLA</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC Opinion</p> | <p>Commission Position</p> |
| <p>2.7 There is therefore need for authoritative quality assessment of consumer assurance schemes. Since schemes will have a wide range of aims, it is not feasible or desirable to have a central definition of "ethical trade". Instead there can be a high level framework defining how quality is to be assured. The framework must be defined by a body free from commercial/operational pressures; for example a multi-stakeholder group.</p> | <p>It is not clear to the Commission that the case is made of a need for "a high level framework defining how quality is to be assured", though the Commission is willing to examine the question further (see below, against 7.2). It seems to the Commission that the most important need is for consumers to have access to transparent information about what assurance schemes are claiming to achieve and the extent to which it can be shown that they do indeed achieve it.</p> |
| <p>4.4 A common approach to assessing the impact, the extent to which this reflects the understanding of the consumers and justifies the costs they bear will allow a more open valuation of such schemes.</p> | <p>The term "impact" corresponds more closely to the Commission's perception of what information would be most useful. This is more results-oriented than the more easily (and perhaps more misleadingly) satisfied process-orientation of the term "quality".</p> |
| <p>5.9 It is not appropriate for the EU or Member States to attempt to prescribe centrally the definitions or substantive standards for the various strands of "ethical trade" – such central control will lack flexibility to take account of improving performance and changing circumstances. It also militates against the right of consumers to exercise choice according to their own changing values. What can – and should – be set centrally is the basis on which consumers can be assured that such schemes achieve what they claim.</p> | <p>The Commission shares this underlying analysis that the field of assurance schemes is very diverse and operates essentially by empowering consumers to have their values reflected in the production conditions of the goods they purchase. Private commercial initiatives are not the right tool for public authorities to use in setting standards. Whether consumer information is best achieved by a centralised approach or in a more market-responsive way requires further discussion.</p> |

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| <p>6.1 The EU and Member States should not endorse any specific brand but provide the authority for an assurance scheme to which all reputable consumer assurance initiatives can subscribe.</p> | <p>The Commission agrees that it is not appropriate for public authorities to offer endorsement of specific commercial brands or labels that are tantamount to brands. But the danger of similarly endorsing any umbrella framework is that this itself might favour one approach over another when the choice should ideally fall to a well-informed and well-advised consumer making his or her own value judgements.</p> |
| <p>7.2 It is recognised that the EU and some individual Member States may wish to continue to support the development of specific initiatives in this area. It is recommended that such support is focused on those that both offer consumer assurance and are able to objectively demonstrate that they are also contributing to tangible improvements in socioeconomic and environmental conditions in communities affected by the supply chains involved. Schemes that encourage capacity building in Southern countries should certainly be encouraged.</p> <p>7.3 In order to facilitate this, it is recommended that the EU commissions exploratory research to establish clear and widely-applicable quality criteria against which such consumer assurance schemes can be assessed. This research should involve, apart from consumer organisations, the participation of a variety of environmental and social labelling and other schemes and engage with stakeholders throughout the supply chain to ensure wide applicability, and to facilitate the development of coherent quality tools within the sector.</p> | <p>In line with these recommendations the Commission will continue to support the development of specific initiatives in this area, paying especial attention to initiatives that are able to demonstrate their worth in terms of sustainable development for affected communities.</p> <p>A study is also under consideration which would aim to further explore the question of clear criteria for the quality of ethical and fair trade. The study would engage with stakeholders to ensure wide applicability and to facilitate adoption of the criteria.</p> <p>In response to a request by the European Parliament, the Commission is also currently investigating the legal and practical aspects of child labour labelling schemes, including the feasibility of such schemes with respect to WTO trade rules.</p> <p>Finally, the Commission is currently funding an ILO pilot project that aims to develop decent work indicators in developing countries for examining the relationship between decent work and trade liberalisation. This programme can be used in future aid programmes with developing countries to help them manage social adjustment to further market opening.</p> |

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| <p>8.1 A continuing dialogue between key stakeholders, including consumer associations, across the EU (and globally where appropriate) on reaching policy coherence in "ethical trade" and consumer assurance schemes. Establishing the feasibility of establishing a comprehensive information database under which the social, environmental and other factors underlying product quality and performance can be gathered, objectively confirmed using clear assessment protocols and made publicly available. DG Development has already signalled interest in making available critical, evaluating data about "ethical trade" schemes to assist producers and exporters to access the European market.</p> | <p>The Commission welcomes further dialogue between stakeholders with a view to improve policy coherence in 'ethical trade' and consumer assurance schemes. The study mentioned under point 7.2 should also be seen in that context.</p> <p>The Commission foresees that its commodity action programme will contribute to making available data about ethical trade schemes through such means as an internet portal.</p> |
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| <p>44. How to integrate social aspects into the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations Exploratory Opinion - EESC 1497/2005 - December 2005 Rapporteur : Mr PEZZINI (Var. Int./IT) ; corapporteur : Mr DANTIN (Work./FR) DG TRADE and DEV – Mr MANDELSON and Mr MICHEL</p> | |
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| Main points of the EESC Opinion | Commission Position |
| <p>While the Committee recognises the opportunities EPAs offer to the development of ACP countries, it focuses on the risks, notably regarding the social situation. The Committee argues in favour of strong participation of civil society in negotiations and implementation of the EPAs. It suggests the setting up of regional social dialogue committees, which should ensure the development and implementation of social development programmes. The EC should support such regional structures of civil society actors.</p> | <p>The Commission negotiates EPAs with the objective of using trade as an instrument for development. The social impact of EPAs is a key parameter in reaching this objective. The Commission agrees with the Committee on the need to enhance further participation of civil society in negotiations and implementation of the EPAs. It notably welcomes the proposal of setting up regional social dialogue committees. However, ownership by the regions concerned is a key requirement for the success of such schemes. They have to be carried by the social partners themselves, including trade unions and employers' associations. The Commission stands ready to support such schemes through its development co-operation programmes.</p> |
| <p>The Committee suggests a mix of development co-operation programmes and trade policy instruments to promote employment in ACP countries, notably in the agricultural sector. The fundamental ILO conventions should form the basis of the EPAs.</p> | <p>The Commission agrees on the need to complement and closely link EPAs with targeted development support measures. The Regional Preparatory Task Forces, which have been set up with the six ACP regions, are dedicated to this purpose. Many of the points raised in the Committee's opinion should be dealt with in this context. ILO conventions and fundamental labour rights will be dealt with in the negotiations, in line with the Cotonou Agreement, Article 50.</p> |
| <p>The Committee focuses on the need to enhance education and training and support the private sector. EPAs should, among others, guarantee and improve non-discriminatory access to education and training and vocational training in ACP countries. The gender dimension should be addressed, for example in social areas such as education and health.</p> | <p>While development co-operation plays an essential role in the wider EPA process, EPAs will not replace the Cotonou Partnership agreement in the areas of development strategies and financial co-operation. The gender dimension of the EPAs, in its various aspects, will be taken on board in the negotiations. The Sustainable Impact Assessment of the EPAs includes gender as a main area of analysis.</p> |

PART B : opinions to which the Commission has given a substantive reply

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| <p>29. Proposal for a Recommendation of the Council and of the European Parliament on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education COM (2004) 642 final – EESC 387/2005 - April 2005 Rapporteur: Mr Soares (Work./PT) DG EAC – Mr FIGEL'</p> | |
| <p>Main Points of the EESC opinion</p> | <p>Commission Position</p> |
| <p>3.1.3 The EESC feels that assessment mechanisms must not be overly dependent on the immediate requirements of the market.</p> | <p>The Commission shares the view of EESC. The Commission considers that long-term objectives and prospects for education must be fully taken into account.</p> |
| <p>3.1.8 The EESC would reassert two key principles for achieving the objectives relating to mutual recognition, which should be expressly mentioned in the text of the Recommendation to Member States:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – quality assurance systems cannot be imposed, but have to be accepted by those involved, in particular lecturers and academic authorities, and must ultimately aim to help improve the higher education provided in the Member States; – higher education establishments must have access to the resources needed to fund structures for promoting, supporting and implementing quality methods and techniques, in particular for involving of those parties actually providing the education, which is indispensable. | <p>The ultimate aim of quality assurance to help improve higher education has been added in point 3 of the considerations.</p> <p>The funding aspects of quality assurance fall outside the scope of the Recommendation.</p> |
| <p>3.2.2 The EESC welcomes the proposal to draw up an ENQA Handbook of quality assurance procedures, containing a number of commonly accepted models or protocols, based on good practice in Member States.</p> | <p>The Commission welcomes the EESC support in this field. The Commission also considers that good practices in Member States have to be carefully analysed and promoted particularly in the context of quality in higher education. As EESC states, greater use of the handbook must be encouraged in all establishments. The Commission will promote this greater use.</p> |

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| <p>3.2.3 The EESC feels it is vital to ensure that the agencies carrying out external assessments of higher education establishments should meet high standards of independence and professionalism.</p> | <p>The Commission also considers that the independence and professionalism of the agencies carrying out external assessments is of vital importance. In the implementation of the recommendation, this should be a major concern for the Member States and the Commission.</p> |
| <p>3.2.4 The EESC feels that the Recommendation is not clear about the administration mechanisms for the Registry.</p> | <p>Even if the Commission shares the concern of EESC, the Commission considers that the recommendation should not enter in details. It should limit itself to the main principles. However, the EESC preoccupations will be fully taken into account.</p> |

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| <p>2. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – The Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond: Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate COM (2005) 494 final – EESC 1499/2005 – December 2005 Rapporteur : Ms van Turnhout (Act. Div./IE) DG COMM – Ms Wallström</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC opinion</p> | <p>Commission position</p> |
| <p>The Committee welcomes the European Commission's initiative in presenting its "Plan D" Communication. The Committee is however of the view that, whilst the plan is necessarily ambitious in its objectives, the real impact of the proposals made could be questioned, in particular in view of the absence of concrete indications of how the measures it proposes would be implemented.</p> | <p>Following the IIG meeting on 17 January 2005 dealing with the implementation of Plan D, an inter-institutional operational technical working group was set up. This group, in which the Committee is also represented, has the task of coordinating the implementation of the specific actions provided for in Plan D.</p> |
| <p>Building on the recommendations set out in its opinion to the European Parliament on the reflection period, the Committee will continue to encourage the institutions to anticipate the Constitutional Treaty's provisions on participatory democracy. The EESC notably:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - calls on the European Commission to put forward one or more proposals setting out new ways and processes enhancing the involvement of organised civil society in the policy-making and legislative processes of the European Union in the spirit of Article I-47 of the Constitutional Treaty; - calls on the Commission to take concrete steps to increase direct involvement of citizens in the political process at EU level by considering putting forward a proposal aiming at giving legal force to the European citizens' right of initiative as provided for in Article I-47(4) of the Constitutional Treaty; | <p>The Commission regrets that the Constitution – including the chapter on the democratic life of the Union – will not, as it stands or in an amended form, be able to enter into force in the near future. However, the Commission does not favour some provisions being put into early application. On the one hand, this would not respect the wishes of those who rejected the Treaty, or those who have already ratified it, and on the other hand it would be likely to make the general institutional balance achieved in the text more delicate.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Commission would point out that implementation in this way would be possible only on a voluntary basis without any legal safeguard.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - calls on the European Commission to consider putting forward a proposal for a true communication policy; | <p>On 1 February 2006, the Commission presented a White Paper on a European communication policy [COM(2006) 35</p> |

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| | <p>final]. This White Paper puts forward some ideas on how best to close the gap between the European Union and its citizens, and calls on all key players (Community institutions and bodies, Member States, regional and local authorities, political parties, civil society) to express their views.</p> <p>The Commission identifies five areas for consultation and future action: defining common principles, empowering citizens, working with the media and new technologies, understanding European public opinion, and developing a partnership approach. At the end of the six-month consultation period, the Commission will collate the contributions received and draw conclusions with a view to proposing plans of action for each working area.</p> |
| <p>Responding to the spirit of the European Commission's "Plan D", the Committee calls upon the European Commission and in particular its representations in the Member States fully to involve the Committee's members in all initiatives aimed at encouraging debate at the Member State level, thereby guaranteeing that the voice of organised civil society is more systematically and appropriately heard.</p> | <p>The Commission has on a number of occasions stressed the importance of collaborating with the Committee in the debate on the future of Europe, and has called on its members to become actively involved in the actions organised under Plan D.</p> <p>In addition, on 17 March 2006, the Commission published a call for proposals, involving a sum of €2 million, for the purpose of supporting civil-society initiatives aimed at stimulating the debate.</p> |

| <p>6. Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (2007-2013) COM (2005) 121 final – EESC 1485/2005 - December 2005 Rapporteur : Mr WELSCHKE (Empl./DE); corapporteur : Ms FUSCO (Work./IT) DG ENTR - Mr VERHEUGEN</p> | |
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| Main points of the EESC Opinion | Commission Position |
| <p>It is important that all target groups have access to CIP, also traditional SMEs and cooperatives.</p> | <p>The Commission concurs with this. This is for instance the reason behind proposing both equity and loan guarantees as Community financial instruments. As information is essential to accessing instruments CIP will further improve its support networks, mainly the EICs, which will ensure that beneficiaries do not meet closed doors. Moreover CIP introduces simplification of instruments through a “common toolbox” for all subprogrammes which should assist SMEs to become beneficiaries.</p> |
| <p>Stakeholder groups should be involved in the definition of annual programmes.</p> | <p>Stakeholder groups cannot be involved directly in the drawing up of the annual work programmes as there are potential conflicts of interest: beneficiaries defining actions in spending programmes. However, the Commission, in particular via the SME feedback mechanism, SME envoy, Enterprise Policy Group (EPG) Professional Chamber and Business Organisations meetings, will ensure that feedback to the Commission is available.</p> |
| <p>CIP needs to be linked with other actions to increase innovation, particularly FP7 RTD and the structural funds.</p> | <p>The Commission will ensure that the different Community programmes to increase growth and jobs will complement and not overlap each other by establishing appropriate coordinating mechanisms.</p> |
| <p>The invitation to tender for network partners should be transparent and open to all regional and sectoral organisations.</p> | <p>The selection process for host organisations will be transparent and competitive according to the rules of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Commission – part Procurement.</p> |

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| <p>The links between CIP and other related initiatives such as the European Charter for SMEs, the Entrepreneurship Action Plan and the SME Communication should be clarified.</p> | <p>The CIP will provide the legal base and budget for many of the actions foreseen in these policy documents. As CIP is a 7 year programme with an annual programming cycle, it would not be appropriate to detail how it will address these current priorities in the legal base, in order to keep the flexibility necessary to react to new needs. Actions supported through CIP will be justified with reference to these documents in the annual work programmes for the specific programmes.</p> |
| <p>CIP should support initiatives for cross-border cooperation of SMEs.</p> | <p>CIP foresees actions that encourage and facilitate cross-border cooperation including through financial instruments. Through its business support network CIP will support technology transfer and matchmaking.</p> <p>In order to draw lessons from MAP, particularly in respect of new member states participation, and explain new initiatives under CIP, the Commission will organise a conference for craft enterprises in a new Member State under the MAP in 2006, following a recommendation of Mr. Pezzini, rapporteur on the 2006 MAP prolongation.</p> |

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| <p>7. The State aid action plan - Less and better targeted state aid: a roadmap for state aid reform 2005-2009 COM(2005) 107 final – EESC 1483/2005 – December 2005 Rapporteur : Mr PEZZINI (Empl./IT) DG COMP – Ms KROES</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC Opinion</p> | <p>Commission Position</p> |
| <p>The EESC is in favour of modernisation of European state aid policy based on a new, proactive approach and on a new, general Community framework. In this connection it recommends, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a policy which can provide adequate responses and remedy or eliminate market failures • a policy which contributes substantially to the completion of the internal market, without leading to distortion of competition; • a more coherent, integrated policy which facilitates the achievement of the various strands of the Lisbon Strategy, to make businesses more competitive and innovative on the world stage while also improving the public's quality of life and work; • strengthening the industrial and service fabric by boosting enterprise and bringing industry and the labour market into line with the new industrial policy objectives and the new demands of globalisation; • strong support for all forms of product and process innovation²; • a proactive approach to make Europe more attractive to investors and better able to create jobs, to make businesses more competitive, to encourage research and innovation projects and, lastly, to promote the development and | <p>The Commission would like to thank the Committee for its support for State aid reform.</p> <p>The Commission is grateful for the Committee's recommendations, which are broadly in line with the objectives and proposals set out in the State Aid Action Plan. The Commission is pleased to note that the Committee believes the Commission's reform proposals constitute a good platform for reform. The Commission will take account of the Committee's very useful input as it implements the State Aid Action Plan over the coming months and years.</p> <p>In particular, the Commission will take into account the need to focus on factors which genuinely distort competition and to cut red tape. The Commission has two primary objectives for this reform: to make sure our state aid framework contributes better to the growth and jobs agenda and to reduce bureaucracy. These objectives are in line with the European Council's repeated calls for less and better targeted state aid. As the Committee notes, it is important to recall that state aid should be used appropriately and with moderation, given that all state aid distorts free competition in the internal market to some extent. The Commission intends to extend the use of block exemption tools to provide safe harbours for state subsidies in areas clearly affected by market failures such as research and development and innovation. These tools reduce bureaucracy (in particular the obligation to notify) whilst ensuring that state aid is targeted where it is most needed.</p> <p>The Commission is committed to include</p> |

² As called for in the Green Paper on Innovation (1995).

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| <p>dissemination of new skills and the training of human resources;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• greater focus on factors which genuinely distort competition in the internal and international markets, without creating unnecessary, costly red tape in efforts to deal with limited, local incidents which cause no significant distortion;• an approach based on simpler, transparent, unambiguous procedures and rules together with measures based on fixed, non-discretionary criteria which are compatible with the Lisbon agenda as regards harmonious, cohesive and competitive development at global level;• greater institutional involvement of enterprises in the decision-making and implementation processes, in assessing and monitoring effectiveness, and in enforcement;• a closer relationship between European regulations and legislation and those of the WTO international bodies and of the main European players on the global markets;• a participatory forward-looking exercise open to all political decision-makers and socio-economic players, with the objective of creating a shared vision and establishing in advance how and to what extent intervention is actually compatible with development. | <p>stakeholders in the reform of State aid policy, and believes that reform can only be successful if it is based on a genuine partnership between all stakeholders. The consultation process undertaken in 2005 should have contributed already to this objective. The Commission is grateful for the clear commitment of the Committee to contributing to this process. The Committee plays an important role in involving socio-economic partners with the objective of creating a shared vision.</p> <p>Finally, the Commission would reiterate its intention to pursue the objective of transparency and proper monitoring of State aid policy, as highlighted by the Committee. It is also committed to ensuring that the future rules are more predictable and user-friendly.</p> |
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| <p>8. Communication from the Commission – Consultation document on state aid for innovation COM(2005) 436 final – EESC 1498/2005 – December 2005 Rapporteur : Mr PEZZINI (Empl./IT) DG COMP – Ms KROES</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC Opinion</p> | <p>Commission Position</p> |
| <p>1.1: The Committee welcomes the consultation document on state aid for innovation, through which the Commission intends to establish a framework of legal certainty, as well as defining criteria for the granting of more targeted aid and achieving a simplification of the regulatory context.</p> | <p>The Commission would like to thank the Committee for its supportive and well-researched opinion on the consultation on State aid for innovation.</p> |
| <p>1.3 : The insufficient competitiveness of Europe is largely due to a modest level of innovation, often resulting from market failures. In these cases state aid can help to stimulate the actors of the market itself to invest more in product and process innovation³.</p> | <p>The Commission agrees with the Committee that market failures may hinder the innovation process and that properly targeted State aid is one tool to address such market failures to increase investment in product and process innovation. The Commission's forthcoming proposal for draft Guidelines for State aid for research and development and innovation, as well as new rules on risk capital and a General Block Exemption Regulation (see below), will seek to identify where State aid can fill these market failures whilst keeping in mind that State aid, in principle prohibited under the Treaty, should be a solution of last resort.</p> |
| <p>1.4 : The alternative to innovation is the decline of the Union in cultural and economic terms. The EESC is fully aware of this and, through the participation of its members in the various sectors of organised civil society, it is endeavouring to ensure that (partly through proper use of state aid):</p> | <p>The Commission agrees with the Committee as to the importance of stimulating innovation in Europe for the overall economic growth and future sustainability of the Union. As the Committee acknowledges, a wide range of policy tools are needed to address the priorities the Committee identifies.</p> |

³ In 2003 the export of high-technology products as a percentage of total exports was: for the EU-25 17.8%; for Japan 22.7%; for the USA 26.9% (Source: Eurostat, Science and Technology 8/2005).

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the externalities of the market are overcome or guided; • entrepreneurial initiative is strengthened; • suitable measures are identified in the various fields to help micro, small and medium sized enterprises and make them innovative; • entrepreneurs and operators working in the social sector are helped to understand and use the innovations which are constantly being made in the process of globalisation of the markets; • forms of private enforcement are developed, facilitating respect for, and full application of, the rules⁴; • practical form is given to the European Research Area (ERA), through the coordinated action of the technological poles and the advanced training schools, so as to disseminate and apply the results of the research • instruments and means are used to take action on initial and continuing training to adapt professional capacities to the constantly innovating requirements of the market, to help society to understand the constant changes and to disseminate and consolidate the principles of the social responsibility of enterprises⁵. | <p>Properly-targeted state aid is just one of these policy tools, alongside research policy, the Structural Funds including the European Social Fund, the proposed Globalisation Fund. The Commission welcomes the Committee's support for increased private enforcement of the EC competition rules, as a complement to public enforcement, and in this respect draws the Committee's attention to the recent Green Paper on damages actions for breach of the EC competition rules (COM(2005)672).</p> |
| <p>1.6 : On many questions raised here by the Commission the EESC has already given its views unanimously or by a large majority in earlier opinions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to grant the appropriate state aid to remedy market failures; • to take action to compensate for the limits of externalities; • to agree on shared criteria for drawing up ex-ante assessment criteria, particularly in the field of SMEs; to regard innovative | <p>The Commission is grateful to the Committee for its support for the Commission's approach that State aid for innovation should focus on market failures and should be based on ex-ante assessment criteria.</p> <p>As well as product and process innovation, the Commission intends to pay attention to innovation in the field of services, commerce and administration, as suggested by the Committee.</p> <p>The Commission would like to point out that there may be a trade-off between the objective to support areas with geographical difficulties</p> |

⁴ CESE 1483/2005, point 6.2.

⁵ Cf. Green Paper on the social responsibility of enterprises.

⁶ Cf. financial engineering and the social function of credit.

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| <p>processes as important not only in the technological field but also in the field of services, commerce and administration, product and process innovation;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to provide for increases in aid for innovation in the cohesion regions and in the areas with geographical difficulties (mountain areas, islands and isolated rural areas), partly through the proper use of "tax advantages" (less burdensome tax treatment) of a regional nature⁶; • to develop and maintain new forms of financial aid for SMEs, such as the development of micro-credits and support for operating credit, the securisation of credits, and sureties for micro and small enterprises, which find it difficult to obtain access to forms of risk capital given their company form which is generally personal; • to support organisations which assist the innovation activities of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises with advice and practical measures; • to train, partly with public funds, professional experts in the various fields of knowledge capable of assisting micro and small enterprises by guiding them towards innovation processes; • to strengthen the centres of excellence with public/private investments and encourage their links with enterprises and with the academic world. | <p>and the objective of developing centres of excellence in the Union. It considers that a balanced State aid policy needs to take account of the different needs of regions, and provide differentiated instruments to address these different needs, notably by distinguishing regional aid and aid for R&D projects.</p> <p>The Commission fully agrees with the Committee that innovation intermediaries can play an important part in supporting SMEs towards a more innovative path.</p> <p>The Commission takes note of the recommendation to develop or maintain new forms of financial aid for SMEs beyond the possibilities of using aid for risk capital. The Commission notes that possibilities to support SMEs will increase as a result of the State Aid Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new form of regional aid ('enterprise aid') can be granted to SMEs up to € million under the new Regional Aid Guidelines applicable from 1 January 2007; • The new Decision block exempting compensation paid for certain services of general economic interest favour SMEs which provide small and local public services, including small and local air and maritime transport; • The future research and development and innovation guidelines will improve the possibility for aid measures for SMEs by increased scope for state aid for innovation and for innovative start-ups; • 'Safe-harbour' tranches will be increased and rules rendered more flexible as regards access to risk capital; • The existing block exemptions and part of the R&D&I measures, together with part of the Regional Aid Guidelines and certain Environmental Aid measures will be consolidated in a new revised General Block Exemption Regulation, to simplify the existing rules and provide increased |
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| | coherence of the different measures that can be adopted in favour of SMEs. |
| <p>1.7 : The Committee has already had occasion to emphasise that state aid intended to encourage investment in innovative projects carried out by SMEs must also take account of the growth of the enterprises and of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• support for regional and trans-regional innovation networks;• promotion of the policy of industrial districts and technology parks;• the involvement of business angels and service intermediaries such as venture technologists, brokers and patent advisers;• the setting up of centres for transfer of technology and venture capital;• the training and hiring of skilled technical staff⁷. | <p>The Commission notes that most of the measures highlighted by the Committee could be supported through general measures without the need to resort to State aid. The Commission has explained in its Communication on innovation that it intends to support clusters as well as innovation intermediaries and is pleased that the Committee is supportive of the Commission's approach on these elements.</p> |

⁷ Cf. CESE 1483/2005.

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| <p>10. Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and the Council on the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (2007) COM (2005) 225 final – EESC 1507/2005 – December 2005 Rapporteur : Ms Herczog (Act. Div./HU) DG EMPL - Mr SPIDLA</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC opinion</p> | <p>Commission position</p> |
| <p>The Committee takes the view that, although indirect forms of discrimination are often discernible when they occur, they are difficult to prove. The programme for the 2007 Year of Equal Opportunities should pay attention to this.</p> | <p>In the course of the 2007 Year of Equal Opportunities for All, the Commission intends to improve measures to tackle direct discrimination, and also to raise as much awareness as possible about indirect or unconscious discrimination.</p> |
| <p>The Committee strongly recommends that discrimination on each ground – gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation – should be prohibited in the areas of employment, training, education, social protection, social advantages and access to goods and services. To do otherwise risks creating a hierarchy between the groups.</p> | <p>The Commission is aware of the views about harmonising anti-discrimination legislation and has already launched an in-depth study, the findings of which should be available in autumn 2007.</p> <p>This study will seek to pinpoint the relevance and feasibility of new measures designed to supplement the current framework of anti-discrimination legislation.</p> |
| <p>The EESC takes the view that the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All is an opportunity to highlight those who can be overlooked: for example young people, including children, who experience age discrimination; individuals who experience multiple discrimination on several grounds and inhabitants of remote or sparsely populated regions and towns who are affected by discrimination but may not have access to required services.</p> | <p>It is clear that, in the course of the Year, it will be possible where necessary to focus on children and young people suffering age discrimination and facing problems of multiple discrimination (such as Roma children). Multiple discrimination will also receive special attention in the course of the Year.</p> <p>Geographical location is not among the grounds for discrimination recognised in the Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.</p> |

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| <p>The mainstreaming of the different grounds of discrimination in all EU policies and initiatives, as well as the consideration of the specific requirements of a specific ground when developing actions related to other grounds (e.g. taking into account disability issues when considering the other grounds) is the key to advancing the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities. The experience already gained in this field regarding areas such as gender could be transferred to other grounds of discrimination.</p> | <p>The Commission has reached a similar conclusion to that of the Committee, namely that non-discrimination and equal opportunities should be incorporated into all relevant EU policies, and that experience of gender issues could be a useful source of inspiration.</p> <p>The Commission made recommendations along these lines in its Communication of June 2005 on non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all (COM(2005) 224 final). It has launched a study of this complex issue in order to examine how the various grounds for discrimination are taken into consideration in EU policies, and to look at various models which could enhance these considerations.</p> |
| <p>The Committee considers that special attention and recognition should be given to the role of the NGOs and organisations representing the groups facing discrimination. Their involvement in the European Year should be ensured at all levels (local, regional, national and European) and all stages (overall planning, implementation, enforcement, evaluation and follow-up of the Year). In particular, the role of Social Economy companies and organisations (cooperatives, associations, foundations and mutual funds) in the fight against discrimination should be highlighted and taken into account.</p> | <p>The Commission shares the Committee's view and attaches particular importance to NGOs, the social partners and groups representing victims of discrimination being fully involved in the European Year. A number of articles in the proposal for a Decision on the 2007 European Year already provide for them to be consulted and involved.</p> |

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| <p>11. Communication from the Commission to the Council on risk and crisis management in agriculture COM(2005) 74 final - EESC 1245/2005 - October 2005 Rapporteur : Mr BROS (Var. Int./FR) DG AGRI – Ms FISCHER BOEL</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC Opinion</p> | <p>Commission Position</p> |
| <p>The Committee welcomes the Commission proposal. The Committee considers this to be only a preliminary analysis, which will need to be expanded on in order to respond to the risks and crises listed in the introduction.</p> <p>The Committee notes that the reform of June 2003 is making agricultural prices much more volatile. This, combined with the volatility of farm input prices, is increasing the likelihood of economic crises affecting agricultural holdings. The Committee therefore wishes to comment on a number of the points raised by the Commission.</p> <p>The Commission has taken the positive step of proposing three schemes. These would be optional as far as the Member States are concerned, and complementary. They are interesting in themselves and none should be rejected automatically. However, each option needs to be analysed in more depth.</p> <p>Funding under the first pillar helps to stabilise incomes and markets, and this role has been guaranteed until 2013. Such funding is vital for the survival of many farms, and modulation of direct aid should not be increased.</p> | <p>The Commission has taken note of the French proposal which was, for those Member States with few modulation amounts but important crisis problems and new Member States, to calculate the amount available for risk and crisis management as a percentage of the value of the agri-production.</p> <p>The Commission is ready to examine the introduction of targeted risk and crisis management provisions in other CMOs on a case by case basis, when they will discuss their reform. This will be particularly important for the fruit and vegetables sector. The Commission is at the beginning of the process ; an RTD research project and the ISPRA study have been launched to deepen our thoughts on risk and crisis management.</p> <p>WTO is not closed.</p> |
| <p>Comments on the Commission's proposal in connection with rural development.</p> <p>The Committee draws attention to its opinion on a common system of agricultural insurance: a number of the</p> | <p>A study on national insurance schemes has been commissioned by DG AGRI to the CCR of ISPRA; this will draw the panorama of what is done in the Member States and the technical issues of insurance systems in agriculture. The Commission will therefore have some materials</p> |

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| <p>requests made in this opinion remain valid. Agricultural insurance is a useful tool for covering certain specific risks, but it cannot replace the public authorities when it comes to managing exceptional risks.</p> | <p>for the future discussions in order to decide to create or not a European insurance scheme.</p> |
| <p>Basic coverage against income crises</p> <p>This option needs to be tested, and further work is needed on the subject. The income support provided in the EU for many sectors takes the form of direct aid, and under no circumstances should the system now being proposed replace direct payments to farmers. However, this does not mean that the Commission cannot explore other avenues for the longer term.</p> | <p>A research project has been launched on the variability of income with the University of Wageningen.</p> |
| <p>Under the subsidiarity principle, rural development policy is implemented by the Member States. As a consequence, only the agri-environmental measures are binding. The Committee acknowledges that this approach is useful from the point of view of ensuring that policy is tailored to the actual needs of the EU's different regions. However, the probability of risks and crises occurring has increased throughout the EU. A degree of harmonisation is therefore essential, so that all farmers across the Union are treated fairly and have access to risk and crisis management schemes.</p> | <p>The Commission is ready to examine the introduction of targeted risk and crisis management provisions in other CMOs on a case by case basis, when we discuss their reform. This will be particularly important for the fruit and vegetables sector.</p> |
| <p>At EU level, promotion measures may be financed using various tools: rural development, internal market or non-EU country market. As mentioned above, early promotion measures are an extremely effective way of preventing a crisis from worsening.</p> | <p>The Commission is ready to examine the introduction of targeted risk and crisis management provisions in other CMOs on a case by case basis, when we discuss their reform. This will be particularly important for the fruit and vegetables sector.</p> |

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| 18. Current situation and prospects for traditional energy sources in a future energy mix Own-initiative opinion - EESC 1243/2005- October 2005 Rapporteur : Mr WOLF (Empl./DE) DG TREN – Mr PIEBALGS | |
| Main points of the EESC opinion | Commission position |
| <p>1.4. The use of oil and natural gas has led to Europe being heavily dependent on imports of these vital raw materials, and this is set to increase in future, particularly as regards oil and, increasingly, natural gas.</p> <p>1.5 Current developments on the oil markets mean that there could be virtually unpredictable price hikes, even in the very short term, which could have a considerable impact on national economies.</p> <p>1.3. Consumption of limited resources involves all kinds of harm to the environment, such as the emission of greenhouse gases.</p> | <p>The Commission has worked on a Green Paper on European energy policy, including the aspects of security of energy supply, competitiveness and sustainability. This was adopted by the Commission in March 2006.</p> <p>The Commission will take the EESC's views and observations into account in the consultations concerning the Green Paper.</p> |

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| <p>21. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Improving the Community Civil Protection Mechanism COM (2005) 137 final– EESC 1491/2005 – December 2005 Rapporteur : Ms Sanchez Miguel (Work./ES) DG ENV - Mr DIMAS</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC Opinion</p> | <p>Commission Position</p> |
| <p>The Committee notices that the CECIS system should be enhanced, moving to a satellite based system, with video, voice and data capability, which is secure and linked up via the MIC to specific knowledge centres , providing data, experts and models... useful in the circumstances of specific emergencies.</p> | <p>The Commission considers the development of the CECIS as one of the priorities. The work is ongoing on linking this system to the reliable sources of information useful during emergencies. Moreover, the Commission has already initiated the efforts to upgrade the CECIS so that it can support exchange of EU Restricted messages. The Commission will ensure the appropriate financing of this project in the framework of the Rapid Response and Preparedness Instrument currently discussed in the Council.</p> |
| <p>The Committee underlines the importance of Community support for assistance teams (need for EU coordination, communication equipment, and insignia) as well as for the Member States requesting assistance (need for additional resources and equipment at the European level – possibility of hiring or purchasing the necessary items by the EU).</p> | <p>The Commission shares this concern with the Committee. The political aspects of the coordination in the field as well as the problems of lack of equipment will be tackled in the Commission’s proposal for a Council Decision recasting the Council Decision 792/2002 establishing the Community Civil Protection Mechanism. As far as the appropriate financing of these proposals is concerned, the Commission will ensure it in the framework of the Rapid Response and Preparedness Instrument currently discussed in the Council.</p> |
| <p>Moreover, the Committee reiterates the need to ensure the transport for the interventions within the Mechanism in order to permit rapid action and minimize the consequences of disasters.</p> | <p>The Commission agrees with this position and has included the transport issues in its proposal for a Council Decision recasting the Council Decision 792/2002 establishing the Community Civil Protection Mechanism.</p> |

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| <p>25. Proposal for a Council Regulation establishing Community financial measures for the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy and in the area of the Law of the Sea COM (2005) 117 final – EESC 1490/2005 – December 2005 Rapporteur Mr. Sarro Iparraguirre (Act. Div./ES) DG FISH - M. BORG</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC opinion</p> | <p>Commission position</p> |
| <p>The Committee deeply regrets that, at the time of writing, no decision has been taken to adopt the budget for 2007–2013, and calls on the Commission to ensure that any variation in the budget, in the context of the financial perspectives, does not affect the [CFP] budget.</p> | <p>The Commission welcomes the Committee's support in safeguarding the common fisheries policy budget in the context of the negotiations on the financial perspectives for 2007–13.</p> |
| <p>The Committee believes that financing should also be provided, via the Member States, for expenditure incurred by the EU fishing sector in order to conduct the required studies to assess the environmental effects of fishing activities and the socio-economic situation in the sector. It considers that financial aid should also cover scientific advice to the fishing sector.</p> | <p>The Commission considers that it is up to the RACs to propose scientific studies. The Commission will examine the proposals on a case-by-case basis and possibly integrate them into its "Scientific opinion" programme. This will enable opinions to be coordinated and make for maximum use of budgetary resources.</p> |
| <p>The Committee takes the view that the financing period for the operating costs of the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) should be extended.</p> | <p>Extending the period is not in line with the regulation currently in force. Nevertheless, the Commission will look at this option during the evaluation which the regulation provides for three years after the creation of the RACs (in 2007).</p> |
| <p>The Committee deems it essential that the European Union participate in all international organisations relating to fisheries, and favours fisheries agreements, including partnership agreements. However, the Committee believes that arrangements should also cover the attendance of fisheries sector representatives at meetings of international organisations, at the request of the Member States or the Commission.</p> | <p>The Commission welcomes the Committee's support regarding the external component of the common fisheries policy. In principle, the Commission does not reimburse representatives of the Member States, industry, NGOs etc. for attending meetings of international organisations. Nevertheless, the Commission may, if it considers it appropriate, organise advance coordination meetings with the stakeholders.</p> |
| <p>The Committee believes that the financial instruments for other Community</p> | <p>The Commission will ensure consistency between the aims of the common fisheries</p> |

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| <p>policies, such as development, research, external trade and the environment, should also contribute to the CFP-related actions in the field of international relations.</p> | <p>policy and other Community policies. Accordingly, the other instruments may help to achieve the objectives of the common fisheries policy.</p> |
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| <p>27. Green Paper: Mortgage Credit in the EU COM (2005) 327 final – EESC 1503/2005 – December 2005 Rapporteur : Mr BURANI (Empl./IT) DG MARKT - Mr McCREEVY</p> | |
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| Main points of the EESC Opinion | Commission Position |
| <p>While agreeing with the aims proposed by the Commission, the Committee suggests that total integration will be very difficult to achieve in the short term.</p> | <p>The Commission welcomes the support of the EESC for its aims and agrees that the integration of European mortgage markets is a medium to longer term project.</p> |
| <p>According to the EESC, the Code of Conduct is by definition voluntary. It should however include sanctions mechanisms or be checked by national ombudsmen or registered with courts or chambers of commerce. The Code of Conduct should also expressly mention the fact that the provider of the service has signed the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>The EESC notes that the information provided to consumers should also include examples of failures to meet contractual obligations and the consequences of such failures. The information on the most frequent aspects should be included in the Code of Conduct.</p> | <p>The Commission notes the EESC's position and in particular its proposals on how the Code of Conduct's credibility and implementation could be enhanced.</p> <p>The Commission will take these proposals into consideration when drafting the White Paper.</p> |
| <p>The EESC believes that the requirements on the provision of information must also be applied to credit intermediaries.</p> | <p>The Commission takes note of the EESC's position and will take this into consideration when preparing the White Paper.</p> |
| <p>The EESC states that early repayment is always requested by the consumer and very rarely refused by the provider regardless of whether it is provided for in the contract. The key question is therefore how the fees should be calculated.</p> <p>The EESC notes that early repayment involves a burden for the provider: it is therefore necessary to calculate the effective burden borne by the provider as a result of early repayment. The rules should be based on financial mathematics and should be supplemented by the</p> | <p>The Commission takes note of the EESC's position however the Commission believes that, in some instances, the right to early repayment is restricted to certain instances. As such, the question of whether there should be a right to early repayment is one which should be addressed.</p> <p>In terms of the calculation of any early repayment fees, the Commission welcomes the EESC's detailed explanations.</p> |

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| <p>calculation of the profits or disadvantages for the financing institution. The payment of penalties should be excluded.</p> <p>The consumer should be informed about early repayment and the costs either in prior information, ongoing information or even better in the individual contract. The latter should also include the rules for calculation.</p> | |
| <p>The EESC believes that the APR is for information, transparency and comparability. Comparisons are however only possible on condition that the various lenders offer exactly the same product and have followed the same calculation and that the figures used for the calculation are specified in detail.</p> <p>The EESC believes that the following costs should be included in the APR: the cost of drawing up the file, the setting up of the mortgage, clearly identifiable administrative costs and the cost of insurance. There should also be a warning to consumers against making a choice based only on an APR calculated in this way.</p> | <p>This issue is also debated in the context of the Consumer Credit Directive. Where possible, common solutions to particular issues, will be sought. The Commission will have to decide whether a specific APR for mortgages is required and, if it is, whether the solution adopted for the CCD can be applied to mortgages too.</p> |
| <p>The EESC believes that the presentation of the APR in concrete terms such as cost per month or the overall cost of the loan is undoubtedly possible however there is the risk of confusion between such a presentation and the inclusion of mathematical formulas for the calculation of the APR.</p> | <p>The Commission acknowledges the dangers of information overload leading to customer confusion and will carefully consider the points raised by the EESC in the preparation of its White Paper.</p> |
| <p>The EESC does not believe that advice should be made compulsory as it would reduce the credit on offer however it cannot be excluded that certain providers or intermediaries offer advice as a service either free of charge or in return for payment. The EESC also underlines however information which is incorrect or concealed whether deliberately or by negligence involves the responsibility of a provider.</p> | <p>The Commission takes note of the EESC's position and the important points raised. As in the case of APR, this issue is central in the Consumer Credit Directive debate. Where possible, common solutions to particular issues, will be sought.</p> |

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| <p>The EESC believes that national rules on usury constitute an obstacle to integration however further investigation in a broader context is required. Regarding compound interest rates, the EESC thinks that further analysis is also required.</p> | <p>The Commission thanks the EESC for its comments and will take this into consideration when preparing the White Paper.</p> |
| <p>The EESC believes that classical harmonisation of the credit contract is at present premature. The idea of a 26th regime could only be a valid option after it has been ascertained through a study of the laws and contracts of all 25 countries that the parallel instrument does not contravene the rules and law of any of them. The EESC underlines that any standardisation should not hinder the supply of new products and thus innovation. At the same time, the EESC states it should not be difficult to reach an agreement on a basic draft contract which would include the clauses in most current use and common to all types of contract.</p> | <p>The Commission is also keen on avoiding standardisation with a view to maintaining product diversity. As regards the "26th regime", the Commission is still exploring its merits, but remains unconvinced that it is a satisfactory alternative to classical harmonisation in all cases.</p> |
| <p>The EESC is favourable in principle to mediation structures but not to arbitration structures since the latter do not come under the scope of consumer protection. Moreover, mortgage credit law is closely linked to other legal or administrative rules. The EESC states that the existing ADR systems give reasonably good results although there is room for improvement by accelerating decision making procedures. It should be underlined however that mediation or arbitration structures should be credible for both parties and not just for the consumer as decisions must be fair and unassailable even in legal terms to avoid a later appeal to the courts.</p> | <p>The Commission is still developing its views on this issue. The information provided by the EESC to this debate in this regard will be considered in the preparations of a White Paper.</p> |
| <p>The EESC notes that the 3 approaches presented on applicable law warrant further discussion in a separate EESC opinion as the subject is complex and each approach has its advantages and disadvantages. The EESC also draws the attention of the Commission to the</p> | <p>This issue has to be examined in the context of the ongoing process to revise the Rome Convention. The information provided by the EESC to this debate in this regard will be considered in the preparations of the White Paper.</p> |

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| <p>problem of language.</p> | |
| <p>The EESC's opinion is that the right to access databases cross-border on a non-discriminatory basis is necessary but appropriate rules are needed to establish who can enjoy the right, the relevant conditions and consumer guarantees. The EESC also points out that the property buyer may not be included in any database therefore the search for accurate information will be problematic, time-consuming and costly.</p> | <p>The Commission believes that the EESC draws attention to several important aspects which have to be considered carefully. The Commission is fully aware of the huge diversity of regimes in place in Member States. This issue is also of a particularly sensitive nature in some Member States where, for example, only "negative" (default-only) databases exist.</p> |
| <p>The EESC believes that a single EU standard or indeed any attempt at standardisation for property valuation should be rejected.</p> | <p>The Commission would not be, at this stage, categorically opposed to some standardisation of valuation standards. Such standardisation is, in any event, already taking place, in a self-regulatory way, at European and International level. The Commission will carefully assess the merits of the various solutions available such as standardisation (whether binding or through self-regulation) and mutual recognition of valuation standards (whether national or international). The Commission takes note of the EESC position and will take it into consideration when preparing the White Paper.</p> |
| <p>The EESC agrees in a gradual approach to encourage improvements in forced sale procedures through the collection of information and development of a scoreboard. The EESC believes however that more robust measures are unrealistic and may be disproportionate.</p> | <p>The Commission notes with satisfaction the EESC's support for its proposed gradual approach. The EESC raises several important issues to be considered should it eventually be decided that more robust measures are required.</p> |
| <p>The EESC emphasises its support for EC taking direct action against Member States which are in clear breach of the Treaties of Community legislation.</p> | <p>The Commission welcomes the EESC support.</p> |
| <p>The EESC states that the EC should continue to play a role in promoting cooperation in the field of land registries and should produce an annual report on the results obtained. The EESC does not believe however that joint projects should be financed by a single category of user. The EESC also underlines that EULIS project could be very useful in the new</p> | <p>The Commission will consider the EESC's comments regarding cooperation in the field of land registries carefully before making any proposals in a White Paper.</p> |

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| <p>Member States.</p> | |
| <p>The EESC notes that the Euromortgage concept is attractive and the project should be encouraged.</p> | <p>The Commission follows this project closely and pays close attention to the work underway in academic circles on the Euromortgage. The Commission will examine the merits of the Euromortgage and will also assess other options to create a more flexible relationship between the collateral security and the mortgage debt.</p> |
| <p>The EESC supports the EC's view that a pan-EU financing system would increase sources of funding, enhance market liquidity and allow for the diversification of risk. Moreover, it would promote the integration of secondary markets which is dependent on the integration of primary markets. The EESC however believes that this is a long term objective. As such, the EESC will clarify its position on this at a later date.</p> | <p>The Commission is pleased that the EESC agrees with its position on secondary markets and looks forward to receiving an EESC position at a later date. The Commission will be establishing an Mortgage Funding Expert Group to examine ways at promoting the integration of secondary markets in the near future.</p> |
| <p>On whether mortgage lending should be restricted to credit institutions or whether and under which conditions such activity could be performed by institutions which do not take deposits or repayable sums, the EESC states that all financial institutions irrespective of their type need to be effectively monitored. As such, institutions of the type described by the Commission must be subject to prudential controls. Moreover, a level playing field should be maintained and the rules applicable to credit institutions (especially solvency and liquidity) must also apply to any of the other institutions.</p> | <p>The Commission takes note of the EESC's position and will take it into consideration when drafting the White Paper.</p> |

| <p>28. Green Paper on Financial Services Policy (2005-2010) COM (2005) 177 final – EESC 1508/2005 – December 2005 Rapporteur : Mr RAVOET (Empl./BE) DG MARKT – Mr McCREEVY</p> | |
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| <p>Main points of the EESC Opinion</p> | <p>Commission Position</p> |
| <p>The Committee agrees with the Commission's overall policy objectives in the next five years. It advises that past initiatives should be monitored and evaluated, and any new initiatives should be introduced with caution and due consideration of the consumer angle. The Commission must be mindful that consumer protection and consumer confidence go hand in hand.</p> | <p>There was much support for the policy priorities in the Green Paper. It already took into account many convergent opinions expressed during the 18 months consultation exercise prior to its publication. Therefore, the Commission decided that the policy lines in the White Paper should not deviate significantly from the analysis in the Green Paper.</p> <p>On past initiatives, a fundamental question is whether the rules actually achieve their objective. The Commission will monitor annually the overall state of financial integration. Furthermore, <i>ex-post</i> evaluation of the Financial Services Action Plan and of all new legislative measures is a top priority for the Commission.</p> <p>The Commission agrees there is a need for increased awareness and direct involvement of citizens in financial issues and highlighted this in its priorities in the White Paper. It is essential to increase transparency and comparability and to help consumers understand financial products. Initiatives on consumer education and financial literacy can count on the Commission's full support. Furthermore, the Commission planned to release a periodic newsletter on user/consumer aspects and to establish a permanent group of consumer representatives within which financial services issues of particular relevance to consumers will be discussed.</p> |
| <p>The Committee would strongly advocate that a number of factors be taken into account before the "better regulation" approach is pursued. Impact studies should be carried out by independent and competent organisations. There should be</p> | <p>The Commission will deploy the most open, transparent, evidence-based policy-making based on a dual commitment to open consultation and impact assessments, so to ensure sound rules are drawn up, adding value to the EU's financial services sector and</p> |

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| <p>no overemphasis on financial services integration per se without taking consumers' interests into account. Social and employment aspects must be included into all assessments. Extensive consultation before the impact studies are finalised and a balanced, evidence based approach are needed.</p> | <p>consumers.</p> <p>Open consultations will continue to play a central role and will be required before any legislation is deemed necessary by the Commission. The Commission will continue to publish responses received to its consultations, practical summaries and feedback statements.</p> <p>Impact assessments will accompany any new Commission proposal. They will look at the scope of each issue and determine the most appropriate option. They will focus on costs and benefits across the broad economic, social and environmental dimensions, and, where appropriate, the impact on financial stability, proper functioning of markets and consumer protection.</p> <p>While externalising impact assessments will conflict with the Commission's right of initiative, the Commission will do whatever is possible in practical terms to allow timely external screening.</p> |
| <p>The Committee is pleased to see that the Commission is willing to make greater use of all its competition powers. However, it would call on the Commission to provide legal certainty, for example through the creation of a "safe harbour", regarding the conditions under which self-regulation is not deemed to breach competition law.</p> | <p>Maximum use of policy synergies between financial services and other policy areas is key. In the next 5 years strong cooperation, particularly with competition will be important. On the issue of "safe harbours", there is no "one size fits all" solution. The Commission might reflect on providing legal certainty under specific circumstances and which most often will be conditional.</p> |
| <p>The Committee calls on the EU institutions to come to an (inter-institutional) agreement on comitology in the context of the Lamfalussy approach.</p> | <p>The supervisory system must have the necessary instruments to make European financial services regulation work effectively and thus facilitate pan-European business. The outcome must ensure full democratic accountability to the Member States and European Parliament. In this context, the Commission highlighted in the White Paper that the debate on comitology reform is particularly important for the medium term continuity and sustainability of the Lamfalussy process.</p> |

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| <p>The Committee hesitates to express its support for applying the Lamfalussy process to retail financial services issues if Member States' discretionary powers in the field of consumer protection would thereby be called into question.</p> | <p>Although some retail business will remain local, firms are increasingly seeking pan-EU economies of scale, although often retaining physical presence locally: through centralisation of risk-management and back-office functions, cross-border mergers and the use of Internet. Regulatory and supervisory structures in the EU, therefore must adapt – and regulatory costs reduced where possible. The Lamfalussy process is widely supported and seen to be successful. Decision making and supervisory arrangements are now much more efficient and flexible. The Commission is to keep faith with this process and develop it over the next 5 years to fulfil its maximum potential in all areas, including retail financial services.</p> |
| <p>The Committee feels that the Commission must urge Member States to communicate clearly to their citizens the purpose of decisions taken at European level, and the reasoning behind them.</p> | <p>The Commission considers this a task Member States should take seriously. The Commission will do whatever it can to improve the sense of ownership felt by Member States regarding European initiatives.</p> |
| <p>The Committee encourages the Commission to make sure that the language used in the EU legislation is sufficiently clear. Furthermore, the Commission must be mindful to ensure that entrepreneurs and innovators in society are not stifled by bureaucracy and legislation.</p> | <p>The Commission is very much in favour of using clear language and we do so in many of our publications. However, when preparing legislation, the need to include technical details and the need to prevent ambiguities sometimes prevent us from using plain language. Although the Commission has tried to keep legislation in the area of financial services as simple and coherent as possible, there is room for improvement. Therefore, the Commission outlined in the White Paper that it will carry out sectoral and cross-sectoral consistency checks, reading across the relevant law to ensure coherence of terminology and effect. Furthermore, strict application of the Commission's "better regulation" agenda should ensure sound rules are drawn up, adding value to the EU's financial services sector and consumers.</p> |

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| <p>The single market must not increase consumers risk by removing existing, national-level protection. The Committee is not convinced that current national consumer protection provisions ordinarily distort competition and innovation as such or restricts the development of a cross-border market.</p> | <p>In principle, consumer protection provisions are needed and their relevance as such recognized by the Commission. One of the four overarching objectives in the White Paper is to remove the remaining economically significant barriers so financial services can be provided and capital can circulate freely throughout the EU at the lowest possible cost – with effective levels of prudential and conduct of business regulation, resulting in high levels of financial stability, consumer benefits and consumer protection.</p> <p>However, the Commission sees no valid reason for a patchwork of contradictory or overlapping national consumer protection provisions that can act as a heavy burden for cross-border investment and economic rationalisation within Europe. Eliminating or at least reducing such unjustified barriers will strengthen the competitiveness of the financial sectors and of the economy at large – and foster growth and job creation.</p> |
| <p>The Committee strongly feels that the Green Paper has missed an opportunity to set out clear and ambitious policy objectives on banking supervision and believes it is essential to outline a critical path.</p> | <p>The central policy of the Commission is to keep faith with the current supervisory (Lamfalussy) process and develop it over the next 5 years to fulfil its maximum potential. The large majority of financial institutions, other European and national associations as well as most Member States' authorities (especially those from the new Member States) support the Commission's line of an evolutionary approach. The more ambitious policy objectives asked for by the Committee, i.e. more centralised supervision, would possibly trigger difficult repercussions for financial stability.</p> |

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| <p>The Committee feels that the Commission paper is not clear on whether supervisory convergence is needed before consolidated supervision can be delivered. The Committee believes that the objective and eventual implementation of consolidated supervision should, within a short space of time, act as a catalyst for supervisory convergence.</p> | <p>Consolidating supervision and supervisory convergence are heavily interlinked. The more supervisory convergence, the more effective consolidating supervision will be. The Commission considers convergence of supervisory practices a key task in the next 5 years. Therefore, consideration must be given to a number of important issues such as developments in Member States' financial sector and in particular the emergence of important branch operations and markets with a high 'foreign' presence; and the implications of the division of responsibilities between supervisors for cross-border crisis management and other inter-related issues such as liquidity, lender of last resort and deposit guarantee arrangements or winding-up proceedings.</p> |
| <p>The Committee remains to be convinced about merits of a so-called "26th regime", especially for consumers.</p> | <p>The Commission fully agrees. The Consultation on the Green Paper has shown widespread scepticism about the feasibility and usefulness of "26th regimes" in the area of financial services. Its promoters need to explain their ideas and the legal and practical feasibility and advantages of such optional instruments in more detail.</p> |
| <p>The Committee strongly feels that the Commission's Green Paper should have explicitly tackled tax issues. The lack of neutrality of the VAT treatment of financial services and the lack of legal certainty under the current system have become increasingly problematic. This Committee urges the Commission to set out its forward agenda in this area.</p> | <p>The Commission is well aware that discrimination and uncertainty in tax rules are major obstacles for financial services integration, particularly VAT charges linked to restructuring. Therefore, the Commission's White Paper explicitly refers to the Commission's (DG TAXUD) intention, after a broad consultation process with all stakeholders, to present a legislative proposal to adapt the rules on VAT in financial services to the evolution of the Single Market.</p> |

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| <p>30. Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing for the period 2007-2013 the programme "Citizens for Europe" to promote active European citizenship COM (2005) 116 final – EESC 1247/05 – October 2005 Rapporteur : Mr Le Scornet (Act. Div./FR) DG EAC – Mr FIGEL'</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC opinion</p> | <p>Commission position</p> |
| <p>The EESC considers that the three types of response identified by the Commission as to why citizens feel increasingly removed (information and communication on European issues, awareness of the rights conferred by European citizenship and a feeling of belonging, and involvement of citizens in the European project) should be brought under an umbrella programme. The EESC regrets the lack of arrangements designed to ensure coherence between these initiatives (3.2).</p> | <p>The Commission shares the EESC's view of the importance of taking all three aspects into account, but considers that the three programmes represent the most effective operational response in such a wide and varied field.</p> <p>Coordination between these initiatives is provided for at the highest level through the Group of Commissioners for "Fundamental Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities". In addition, Article 9 of the programme makes provision for ensuring consistent coordination between this programme and other instruments. Cross-overs between the various activities are provided for.</p> |
| <p>In particular, the EESC would like to be sure that a robust information and communication campaign will also be organised to inform citizens about the institutions and their rights, including information about the role of the EESC itself (3.4).</p> | <p>The Commission plans to lend further impetus to its Internal Action Plan on Communication and to "Plan D for Democracy, Debate and Dialogue" (adopted in July and October 2005 respectively) by means of a White Paper on European Communication Policy (at the beginning of 2006).</p> |
| <p>The EESC is critical of the structural support granted to designated beneficiaries, and would like to see this replaced by an open-funding access procedure (3.6).</p> | <p>The Commission proposes to retain this restricted, rational and regulated list of six designated beneficiaries for specific reasons relating to the historical, political or trans-European dimension of their activities, and because of their major contributions to the various actions under the programme.</p> |

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| <p>The EESC would like the programme to be open, both in theory and in practice, to the social partners and other civil-society organisations such as mutuals and cooperatives, and would like to see these work more closely with the NGOs and associations (3.7).</p> | <p>The Commission considers that the proposed programme is open to these organisations both in theory and in practice: trade unions are referred to specifically, and other organisations are mentioned in general terms. The aim of incorporating support for all types of NGO under a single action is precisely to enable these organisations to work more closely together on projects.</p> |
| <p>The EESC considers that the concept of European citizenship should have its own specific attributes and makes some specific proposals such as the payment of a European tax, the creation of a European civil service, or the granting of European citizenship to long-term residents from third countries (3.9).</p> | <p>These proposals are outside the scope of the proposed programme.</p> |
| <p>The EESC is very much in favour of the new action Together for Europe, which will help to raise awareness of the existence of a "<i>homo europeus</i>", and considers that it has an important role to play as an institution of organised civil society (4.3.1).</p> | <p>The Commission welcomes this support and will continue to involve the EESC in these events by inviting it to take part as a contributor, and also by drawing on the EESC's experience and network of contacts within organised civil society.</p> |
| <p>The EESC suggests that an in-depth debate on the subject of European citizenship should be organised in 2006 in the form of a symposium (5.1).</p> | <p>The Commission welcomes this suggestion.</p> |
| <p>While regretting a certain lack of ambition in both quantitative (modest budget) and qualitative terms (too much continuity), the EESC fully supports this proposal and calls for the earmarked sum to at least be "ringfenced" irrespective of the outcome of the financial perspective debate (5.4).</p> | <p>Although it is relatively modest, the proposed budget represents a considerable increase on the previous programme, and should enable the proposed activities to be properly carried out.</p> <p>The Commission proposal achieves a balance between innovation (citizens' projects and events) and continuity (town-twinning, workings of European NGOs), given that the latter was widely advocated by the stakeholders during the open consultation.</p> |

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| <p>The EESC would like to see primary education and the Comenius programme being involved. It suggests that a primary level "Erasmus" programme should be considered in order to move beyond language exchange programmes (5.5).</p> | <p>The Commission is in complete agreement about the need to get children involved in these issues from an early age. One of the specific aims of the future integrated action programme in the field of lifelong learning is also to enhance this field's contribution to active European citizenship, particularly through the Comenius programme aimed at primary education. This is another example of fields in which it will be possible to make use of the planned cross-overs.</p> |
| <p>The EESC feels that the funds should be allocated to actions according to the sole criterion of their impact on active European citizenship, and urges that support for micro-projects should be maintained (5.6).</p> | <p>The Commission shares the view that the impact on active European citizenship is a very important criterion for allocating funding, but experience and the success of actions should also be taken into account in order to achieve the right balance. As regards new actions for which there is no existing point of reference, the innovation and potential of the proposed actions will also be taken into consideration as criteria.</p> |
| <p>The EESC stresses the importance of capitalising even more on the contribution to active European citizenship to be made by translational projects (6.7).</p> | <p>The Commission shares the EESC's view as regards building on existing achievements. The potential for this should in particular be included among the assessment criteria for proposals, as has been the case in the most recent calls for proposals (2006). The development of the citizenship portal will provide another opportunity to capitalise further.</p> |

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| <p>31. Communication from the Commission to the Council on European policies concerning youth – Addressing the concerns of young people in Europe – Implementing the European Youth Pact and promoting active citizenship COM (2005) 206 final – EESC 1248/2005 - October 2005 Rapporteur : Ms Van Turnhout (Act. Div./IE) DG EAC - Mr FIGEL'</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC opinion</p> | <p>Commission position</p> |
| <p>In its opinion, the Committee supports the strategic choices proposed by the Commission in its Communication on "Implementing the European Youth Pact and promoting active citizenship".</p> | <p>The Commission will take account, among other things, of the EESC's opinion in the communication on youth policy planned for June 2006.</p> |
| <p>1.4. More specifically, the EESC would like young people to become involved in the Pact and, more generally, in the Lisbon process.</p> | <p>The Commission will use all possible channels with a view to young people becoming more involved, at European and national level, in the Lisbon process, particularly in the context of the structured dialogue between young people and their NGOs on the one hand and policy-makers on the other.</p> <p>A specific example of good practice in this area is the European Youth Week's "parliament", where 200 young delegates held a debate on the Pact and met with all the European institutions.</p> |
| <p>4. The EESC stresses the need to make youth employment a specific objective of the Lisbon Strategy.</p> | <p>The Commission will ensure that there is a youth-orientated follow-up to the national employment reports, and that young people can contribute to the Lisbon process.</p> |
| <p>5.6. The EESC encourages the Commission to continue its work on the recognition of youth work, particularly through the introduction of the "Youthpass" as part of Europass.</p> | <p>The Commission will continue with measures concerning the recognition of non-formal education, including the development of a "Youthpass" and, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the preparation of two reference documents, one concerning the principles for validation of non-formal education and the other on key skills in Youthpass; - consultation of key players in the field; - development of an information strategy. |

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| <p>Supports the Commission proposal to confirm the priorities of the OMC for youth and to implement the objectives identified.</p> | <p>The Commission will prepare an assessment report on the priorities of participation and information and will draw up a communication on these joint objectives.</p> |
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| 32. Refund of VAT to persons not established in the territory of the country COM (2004) 728 final - EESC 1260/2005 - October 2005 Rapporteur : Mr Burani (Empl./IT) DG TAXUD - Mr KOVACS | |
| Main points of the EESC Opinion | Commission Position |
| 2.6: The EESC proposed that Article 8 of the Commission proposal be amended to the effect that the interest on the delayed payment should be calculated in each country on the basis of the rates applied by national laws to taxpayers who are in arrears. | The Commission notes the favourable opinion of the EESC. In the context of discussions with the United Kingdom presidency, the Commission accepted that the proposal could be amended in the context of a presidency compromise in line with the opinion of the EESC. The current compromise text proposes that the rate of interest payable be the same as that which is applied by Member States in respect of late payments of VAT by taxable persons. This fully reflects the position of the EESC. |

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| 35. Proposal for a Council Directive laying down minimum rules for the protection of chickens kept for meat production COM(2005) 221 final – EESC 1246/2005 - October 2005 Rapporteur : Mr Nielsen (Var. Int./DK) DG SANCO - Mr KYPRIANOU | |
| Main points of the EESC Opinion | Commission Position |
| Importance of skills and training for producers and inspectors, appropriate setting of lighting and maximum gas concentrations in poultry houses, setting of limits for mortality rates and guidance for the scoring of foot pad lesions. Further efforts to promote animal welfare internationally. Performance of a detailed economic study after the Directive enters into force and the promotion of further research in this area. | The Commission appreciates the Committee's endorsement of the proposal's detailed provisions and the importance of gaining consensus on animal welfare internationally. The Commission agrees on the importance of further research and economic assessments. The Committee's specific technical suggestions have been carefully analysed and brought to the attention of Council and European Parliament so that they can be taken into account before adoption of the final proposal. |

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| <p>37. Green Paper : succession and wills COM (2005) 65 final – EESC 1242/2005 - October 2005 Rapporteur : Mr Retureau (Work./FR) DG JLS – Mr FRATTINI</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC opinion</p> | <p>Commission position</p> |
| <p>4.2 and 3.3.1: General approach chosen: compatibility of European rules with the Hague Conventions, the Basel Convention and the Washington Convention, in order to achieve a consensus that is broadly acceptable to as many Member States and third countries as possible</p> <p>2.8 and 2.8.1: Proposal to encourage broader ratification of these conventions given that it is not currently possible to formulate uniform substantive law on succession and wills that could be applied throughout the European Union.</p> | <p>The international instruments mentioned, and the manner in which they have been implemented, form part of the legal foundations which the Commission will take into consideration when drawing up its proposal.</p> |
| <p>2.9: Intended form of the new Community instrument and general source of inspiration: a regulation following the precedent set by Regulation 2201/2003 (Brussels II).</p> | <p>The Commission also takes the view that the regulation would be the appropriate legal form.</p> |
| <p>2.5: Scope of the regulation: the EESC is in favour of including as many issues as possible in the scope of the rules concerning conflicts of law, always making them functionally and essentially subordinate to the issue of succession (avoid adding, for example, issues which are basically matters for the legal arrangements concerning real rights).</p> <p>2.11: Proposal: the EESC feels that it would be appropriate to begin by dealing with the form of wills, international jurisdiction, and resolving conflict of law issues relating to applicable law, the registration of wills, as well as the mutual recognition of rulings by the courts and other competent authorities and endorsement, areas where precedents have already been set in European and international law.</p> | <p>At this stage, the Commission takes the view that it is too soon to state which fields of inheritance law will be covered by the first instruments adopted.</p> |

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| <p>Rules on conflict of laws:</p> <p>- Connecting factors:</p> <p>Proposals: The EESC generally feels that the connecting factors laid down in the Hague Convention of 1961 on conflict of laws relating to the form of testamentary dispositions should be retained since they offer sufficient diversity, making it possible, in most cases, to recognise the applicability of the law under which the will was made. (4.3)</p> <p>- More specifically:</p> <p>a) the EESC advocates allowing the testator, subject to certain limits, to choose which law should be applicable to his estate, for example that of his nationality (or one of his nationalities), or that of his usual place of residence; this freedom of choice would be in line with the succession law reforms introduced in a number of countries (Germany, Switzerland, France). (4.7, 2.8.2 and 2.8.3)</p> <p>b) In the EESC's view, certain matters, such as agreements as to future successions or trusts, should remain under national jurisdiction. (2.7)</p> | <p>The connecting factors to be proposed by the Commission will be set out at the end of the detailed consultations already under way, and will draw on the results of the work of the group of experts which is due to begin in February 2006. A hearing will also have to be held in 2006.</p> <p>The Commission recognises that the question of the choice of applicable law by the testator must be approached and defined with care.</p> |
| <p>2.12: Single connecting factor or breakdown? The Committee feels that a unitary system (single law of succession and single set of rules governing inheritances) is preferable to having various scattered rules for settling a succession; however, for practical reasons, this principle should be subject to exceptions in certain cases, particularly for buildings or certain types of property (ships, aircraft, goodwill, etc.) located abroad.</p> | <p>The Commission also hopes that a system which is both simple and effective will meet with a very broad consensus.</p> |

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| <p>3.4: Recognition and implementation of acts:</p> <p>Proposal: Once status as heir has been established and the estate has been administered and distributed, administrative formalities should be as straightforward as possible. The Committee is in favour of mutual recognition for all acts and documents issued by officials recognised under local law, and the direct registration in a land register (or with the appropriate authority for registering title to real estate) of title to property as well as any easements, mortgages, or other possible encumbrances that might burden the estate in question under the applicable national law.</p> | <p>The Commission's mandate is to encourage mutual recognition as much as possible, including recognition of extrajudicial acts in fields where they play a prominent role.</p> |
| <p>6) Specific questions:</p> <p>3.5. Tax issues: avoid double taxation on all or part of each portion of an estate;</p> <p>2.6. Transfer of SMEs in order to ensure continuity following the death of an entrepreneur;</p> <p>2.8.4. Acceptance of certain rules of substantive law in the context of an acceptance of "<i>professio juris</i>";</p> <p>3.3. Creation of a European certificate of inheritance;</p> <p>3.3. Creation of a registration system for wills;</p> <p>3.6. Creation of a European will based on the model of the Washington Convention's "international will";</p> <p>4.4. In the spirit of recent and ongoing reforms in continental Europe, the interests of legally incapacitated (minors or adults) or severely disabled heirs should be specifically safeguarded.</p> | <p>The Commission's proposals on these issues will of course use the legal bases provided for under the Treaty (principally Article 65 EC) and draw on the results of ongoing consultations (including the future hearing).</p> |

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| <p>47. Proposals for regulations amending the regulations underlying 18 agencies as regards the terms of office of their directors COM (2005) 190 final – EESC 1506/2005- December 2005 Rapporteur Ms CSER (Work./HU) DG ADMIN - Mr KALLAS</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC opinion</p> | <p>Commission position</p> |
| <p>The Committee regrets that the Commission did not propose to extend the terms of office of the directors of the European Agency for Reconstruction (AER) and the European Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA).</p> <p>As regards the latter agency, the EESC considers it unlikely that it will be extended beyond the five-year period provided for in the current regulation, and that provision should be made for such an extension.</p> | <p>The Commission cannot accept the EESC's view. As was stated in the explanatory memorandum, the extension of the terms of office of the directors of the AER and the ENISA cannot be considered owing to the limited lifetime of these two agencies. The directors' terms of office may not extend beyond the date, indicated in the underlying regulation, on which the agencies will cease to exist.</p> <p>If the regulation underlying the ENISA were amended by proposing that the agency's existence be extended for an indefinite period, the Commission would propose that the same wording for extending the term of office of its director should be adopted.</p> |
| <p>The Committee welcomes the Commission's aim of harmonising, clarifying and simplifying procedures, but feels that, by allowing a choice between extension of a term of office or initiating a new selection procedure, the proposals for regulations are sidestepping the requirements laid down in the EC Treaty and the Staff Regulations of EC officials, particularly with regard to the aim of recruiting on the broadest possible geographical basis from among nationals of Member States, as provided for in Article 27 of Staff Regulations.</p> <p>Thus citizens of the ten new Member States would be excluded from being appointed as directors.</p> | <p>The Commission presented its proposals for regulations in order to deal pragmatically with a legal issue and to harmonise regulatory provisions. The procedure is framed so as to ensure the necessary transparency: the term of office would be extended only once following an evaluation.</p> <p>A "turnover" in directors of agencies, allowing nationals of the new Member States with the qualifications and skills required for these posts to have access to them when they come up for renewal, is guaranteed in the medium term even if not immediately. It therefore cannot be said that no citizen of the new Member States can be appointed as director of an agency.</p> |

PART C : opinions calling for a different type of response

a) Agreement between the Commission and the EESC

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| <p>4. Proposal for a Council Regulation determining the Community scale for the classification of carcasses of adult bovine animals (codified version) COM (2005) 402 final – EESC 1493/2005 – December 2005 Rapporteur : Mr ALLEN (Act.div./IE) SJ / DG AGRI – Mr BARROSO / Ms FISCHER BOEL</p> | |
| Main points of the EESC opinion | Commission position |
| 2.2 – "... the Committee ... welcomes the proposal." | The EESC's favourable opinion has been taken into account. |

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| <p>9. Restructuring and employment - Anticipating and accompanying restructuring in order to develop employment: the role of the European Union COM(2005) 120 final - EESC 1495/2005 - December 2005 Rapporteur : Mr ZÖHRER (Work./AT) DG EMPL – Mr ŠPIDLA</p> | |
| Main points of the EESC opinion | Commission position |
| As in its own-initiative opinion on the "Social dialogue and employee participation, essential for anticipating and managing industrial change" (CCMI/019-EESC 1073/2005), which had the same rapporteur, the EESC welcomes the comprehensive, inter-sectoral approach taken by the Commission in the communication on "restructuring and employment" and the necessary protection in periods of transition, and considers that the aim of improving the regulatory framework should not lead to a lowering of social standards. | To the extent that this opinion lends support to the actions proposed by the Commission concerning restructuring [COM(2005) 120], a specific follow-up other than these proposed actions will not be necessary. |

16. COM in hops
COM(2005) 386 final - EESC 1258/2005 – October 2005
Rapporteur : Mr KIENLE (Empl./DE)
DG AGRI – Ms FISCHER-BOEL

This opinion will not be followed up, since it fully endorses the Commission proposal and does not propose any significant amendments.

24. Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision No 2256/2003/EC in view of the extension of the programme in 2006 for the dissemination of good practices and monitoring ICT take-up (MODINIS Extension)
COM (2005) 347 final - EESC 1262/2005 - October 2005
Rapporteur Mr Retureau (Work./FR)
DG INFSO – Ms REDING

| Main points of the EESC Opinion | Commission Position |
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| The Committee supports the Commission's proposal to extend the MODINIS programme by a year. It would like to be informed in the very near future about the Commission's work programme for 2006. | The Commission welcomes the support of the Committee and its interest in this subject. The Commission will remain available to those Committee members wishing to obtain further information on the progress of the work programme for 2006 as soon as it is publicly available. |

34. Rationalisation of exemptions and anti-fraud measures concerning the Sixth VAT directive
COM(2005) 89 final – EESC 1501/2005 - December 2005
Rapporteur : M. Palenik (Var. Int./SK)
DG TAXUD - Mr KOVACS

The Commission welcomes the positive opinion of the EESC.

**39. Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council regarding access to the Second Generation Schengen Information System
COM(2005) 237 final - EESC 1486/05 – December 2005
Rapporteur: Mr Ranocchiaro (Empl./IT)
DG JLS – Mr FRATTINI**

The Commission has taken into consideration the favourable opinion of the EESC on the draft Regulation. The EESC has recommended several general steps for the future concerning closer cooperation between Member States to fight vehicle related crimes and to increase cooperation in this area with third countries, Europol and Interpol. However, since it does not contain specific suggestions for modifications of the draft proposal, there is no need for a follow-up of this opinion.

**40. Security and safeguarding liberties (2007-2013)
COM(2005) 124 final - EESC 1496/2005 – December 2005
Rapporteur : Mr CABRA DE LUNA (Act. Div./ES)
DG JLS – Mr FRATTINI**

The EESC's observations reinforce what has already been stated in the Commission proposal. They therefore do not necessitate any amendment to this proposal, nor any specific measures on the part of the Commission.

b) Opinions on which the Commission has made certain comments

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| <p>17. Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a multiannual funding for the action of the European Maritime Safety Agency in the field of response to pollution caused by ships and amending Regulation (EC) No 1406/2002 COM(2005) 210 final - EESC 1244/2005 – October 2005 Rapporteur : Mr Chagas (Work./PT) DG TREN – Mr BARROT</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC opinion</p> | <p>Commission position</p> |
| <p>2.6: The Committee stresses the need to ensure that the owner(s) of pollution-response ships respect Community legislation, particularly with regard to living and working conditions.</p> | <p>The Commission uses all the means at its disposal under the Treaty in order to ensure the correct application of Community rules concerning living and working conditions of seamen.</p> <p>In addition, the Commission is considering the incorporation into Community law of the ILO's consolidated Maritime Labour Convention in order to ensure its effective application in all EU Member States.</p> |
| <p>2.8 and 3.1: The EESC is concerned about the delays of some Member States in implementing Community rules for maritime pollution prevention and response, particularly as regards port state controls, places of refuge and port reception facilities.</p> | <p>The Commission is endeavouring to ensure that the Community rules adopted in order to tackle pollution caused by ships are implemented effectively throughout the EU.</p> |

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| <p>23. Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council repealing Council Directive 90/544/EEC on the frequency bands designated for the coordinated introduction of pan-European land-based public radio paging in the Community COM(2005) 361 final - EESC 1261/2005 - October 2005 Rapporteur Mr Retureau (WORK./Fr) DG INFSO – Ms REDING</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC opinion</p> | <p>Commission position</p> |
| <p>The Committee approves the proposal to open up the 169.4 to 169.8 MHz radio spectrum band for other uses, in particular for disabled persons, elderly people, increasing safety and mobile services.</p> | <p>In keeping with the Committee's opinion, the Commission on 20 December 2005 adopted Decision 2005/928/EC on the harmonisation of the 169,4–169,8125 MHz frequency band in the Community, particularly for disabled persons, elderly people, increasing safety and mobile services. The adoption of this Decision was made possible by the repeal of Directive 90/544/EEC.</p> |
| <p>The Committee hopes that services relating to social inclusion will be developed as a priority, and that it will lead to the creation of companies and jobs.</p> | <p>The Commission attaches particular importance to the need to make available, in a harmonised way, the radio spectrum band to services promoting social inclusion. It feels that these developments should encourage the creation of new activities and companies.</p> |
| <p>The Committee calls on the Member States to give priority to social inclusion and employment in the information society when allocating frequencies to new radio services.</p> | <p>The Commission is continuing its work and its dialogue with the Member States in the context of Decision 676/2002/EC, in order to make available, in a harmonised way, frequencies likely to encourage social inclusion, especially for those with impaired hearing.</p> |

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| <p>26. Joint enterprises in the fisheries sector: current state of play and future prospects Own initiative opinion – EESC 1492/2005 - December 2005 Rapporteur : Mr Sarró Iparraguirre (Var. Int./ES) DG FISH - Mr BORG</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC Opinion</p> | <p>Commission Position</p> |
| <p>Joint enterprises could and should be considered as a specific aspect of multilateral or bilateral cooperation treaties with third countries; concrete rules should be laid down that take their particular features into consideration, from the point of view of both fishing per se and the promotion and protection of European external investments, customs, labour, tax, etc.</p> <p>Although joint enterprises could, under the current legislation, fall within the scope of "partnership agreements", no significant practical results have hitherto been observed. There is therefore a need for a regulation that coordinates the disparate responsibilities within the Commission (Directorates-General for Development, Cooperation and Fisheries), and clarifies how employers and other stakeholders should act within the framework of such agreements or other instruments, so that these practical results can be achieved.</p> | <p>The Commission supports initiatives undertaken by European economic actors aiming at investing in fishing sectors of third countries. The creation of joint enterprises can be considered as a useful tool in order to contribute to the development of the fisheries sectors of developing countries and at the same time guaranteeing the supply of Community market. The Commission therefore encourages the realization of such investments; this position has notably been reiterated in its communication on fisheries partnership agreements (COM(2002)637).</p> <p>With the suppression of subsidies for the creation of joint ventures within the CFP framework from 2005, the Fisheries Partnership agreements constitute the framework under which the Community acts in this respect. In the latest Fisheries Partnership agreements concluded, specific provisions foresee that conditions favourable to European investments may be established in the relevant country, notably through the setting up of joint enterprises.</p> <p>In addition, the part devoted to the development of the fisheries sector of third countries is of particular importance in the Fisheries Partnership Agreements. Considerable funds are granted by the Community to the Contracting Parties, inter alia aimed at enhancing the production capacities and the processing industry of their fisheries sectors</p> <p>It is up to those States to decide on the best possible allocation of those funds, based on an assessment of their needs. The expertise and experience of Community investors</p> |

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| | <p>constitute valuable assets contributing to the development of the fishing industry in these Coastal States.</p> <p>Moreover, the Development policy pursued by the Community also represents a basis through which the Community intends to foster investments by European firms in third countries, notably in the fisheries sector. The Cotonou agreement already contains provisions devoted to investments by European firms (Articles 74 to 78). The Commission is currently negotiating Economic Partnership agreements with African, Caribbean and Pacific regional entities, which are designed to implement the Cotonou agreement on a regional basis. As mentioned by the Council in the negotiation directives for those agreements, they should promote the institution of a legal framework promoting and defending foreign investments in the countries concerned.</p> <p>The current and future action of the Community therefore takes well into account the need to encourage investments by European firms in the fisheries sectors in developing countries. The Commission does not consider it necessary to adopt new instruments in that respect.</p> |
| <p>The Committee believes that:</p> <p>- The Commission should carry out a detailed, up-to-date assessment of the current situation and potential of joint enterprises in the fisheries sector, and should disclose its conclusions to the other EU institutions and the sectors concerned;</p> | <p>The Commission considers that the authorities and economic actors of the developing countries concerned are the best placed to assess which should be their policy and strategies as far as the creation of joint undertakings is concerned.</p> |
| <p>Current Community law should include rules and mechanisms that will give legal security to joint enterprises within a specific stable, long-term framework for action, in the context of bilateral or multilateral agreements with non-EU countries, taking into account the particular nature of the activity and its benefits in terms of management of fisheries resources, market supply, job creation in fishing-dependent areas, creation of added value,</p> | <p>There is a high degree of diversity between developing countries.</p> <p>Based on those elements, the Commission does not deem that conducting an assessment focused on joint ventures would represent a considerable added value for the European fishing sector.</p> <p>The Commission is particularly interested to improve the legal security of European</p> |

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| cooperation and international trade. | investments in the context of bilateral and multilateral agreements. This is well taken into account during negotiations of each of those agreements. |
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| <p>29. Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund COM (2005)108 final – EESC 1256/2005 - October 2005 Rapporteur : Mr Barros Vale (Empl./PT) DG REGIO - Ms HÜBNER</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC Opinion</p> | <p>Commission Position</p> |
| | <p>General remark: Deliberations on the proposed Regulation are currently in full progress at the Council and the European Parliament. It is therefore difficult, at this stage, to predict which follow-up to the EESC opinion the Commission will be able to make.</p> |
| <p>The EESC considers that the scope of the new EU Solidarity Fund (EUSF) should be extended to cover also other forms of disaster, particularly droughts.</p> | <p>The current EUSF is in principle limited to natural disasters. The proposal extends the scope of the EUSF quite considerably by adding technological disasters, acts of terrorism and public health crises. Droughts are natural disasters and as such not excluded from the proposal. However, financial aid of the EUSF should remain limited to emergency operations carried out by the public administrations; it should not cover private damage. This limits the possibility of the EUSF to intervene in the case of droughts which cause damage mostly in (private) agriculture. Other EUS instruments such as the EAGGF are more appropriate in such cases.</p> |
| <p>The EESC demands to lower the thresholds for EUSF interventions and/or to give the Commission more discretionary powers to recognise serious regional disasters.</p> | <p>The criteria for granting EUSF should be as clear and simple as possible. That is why the Commission has proposed to maintain the size of the damage as the single criterion. However, it has been proposed to considerably lower the threshold from €3 bn or 0.6% of the affected country's GNI (whichever is the lower) to €1 bn or 0.5% if GNI. These lowered thresholds should allow to grant assistance in all cases of serious disasters, including regional ones, without conflicting with the subsidiarity principle. Discretionary powers should only be used where damage alone is an inappropriate criterion, i.e. in the event of terrorist acts and</p> |

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| | health crises. |
| The EESC calls for more flexibility as concerns the types of eligible expenditure that the EUSF may finance | Rules on eligibility should be as simple and clear as possible. The proposal includes all those types of operations that correspond with the objective of the EUSF, i.e. to help finance emergency measures necessary to allow the affected population to return to normal living conditions as quickly as possible. |

| <p>36. Hygiene rules and artisanal food processors Own-initiative opinion - EESC 1489/2005 - December 2005 Rapporteur : Mr RIBBE (Var.Int./DE) DG SANCO - Mr KYPRIANOU</p> | |
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| Main points of the EESC Opinion | Commission Position |
| 5.1 Flexibility. | No action is necessary. |
| 5.2 Publication of guidance documents. | These are published on the internet. In addition, a CD-ROM has been produced, which contains all legal texts and the guidance documents. The CD-ROM will be distributed widely in Member States and among stakeholders including CIBC (representing small butchers). |
| 5.3.1 Artisanal individual slaughter should be recognised as a traditional process. | The possibility exists in the Hygiene Regulations. It is up to Member States to apply this possibility. |
| 5.3.2 Retail supplying large quantities to other retail establishments should fall within the scope of Regulation 853/2004. | This is the case and has been further clarified in the Guidance document. Member States are responsible for laying down detailed rules for these establishments. |
| 5.3.3 No waiting pens should be required for small slaughterhouses. | This point has been included in the Guidance document. |
| 5.3.4 A separate cutting room in small slaughterhouses should not be required. | This will have to be clarified in the guidance document. Member States can take a national measure on this subject using Article 10 paragraph 4 b) of Regulation 853/2004. |
| 5.3.5 Temperature in cutting rooms. | If the establishment is considered as retail (selling to the final consumer), Regulation 852/2004 and national legislation applies. If the establishment is not a retail establishment, Regulation 853/2004 applies. In that case the ambient temperature should be no more than 12°C or an alternative system can be used as long as the temperature of the meat does not exceed 7°C. |

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| 5.3.6 Minced meat to be chilled at 2°C. | If the establishment is considered as retail (selling to the final consumer), Regulation 852/2004 and national legislation applies. |
| 5.3.7 Proposal for a comparative study with regard to the implementation of the Hygiene Regulations in the various Member States. | The Commission is required to prepare a report not later than 20 May 2009 (Article 14 of Regulation 853/2004) reviewing the experience gained from the implementation and accompanied by relevant proposals. |
| 5.3.7 Training facilities for small food businesses. | Such training should be organised by the food business operator, the sector or the competent authorities (i.e. Chapter XII of Annex II of Regulation 852/2004; Chapter I of Section IV of Annex III of Regulation 853/2004). |
| 5.3.7 Publication of Commission guidelines. | See answer of point 5.2. |

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| <p>42. Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference Own-initiative opinion - EESC 1263/2005 – October 2005 Rapporteur : Mr Nilsson (Var. Int./SU) DG TRADE – Mr MANDELSON</p> | |
| <p>Main points of the EESC Opinion</p> | <p>Commission Position</p> |
| <p>Summary 1. The EESC believes that the success of the Hong Kong Ministerial would send a clear positive signal of confidence that Member States are committed to a strong multilateral trading system.</p> | <p>The Commission has consistently pushed for an ambitious outcome in the Round, and believes that the outcome needs to be balanced, with commitments in each of the different areas of negotiation, including agriculture, NAMA, services, trade facilitation, rules (geographical indications, anti-dumping), and environmental goods and services.</p> <p>An ambitious Round will strengthen the objectives of the Lisbon Agenda, with freer trade contributing to greater prosperity and economic growth for all.</p> <p>Overall, the ambitions for Hong Kong across all negotiating areas could have been greater. However, given the complexity of negotiations and resistance to compromise by some WTO members, the EC was pleased that our determination to push for a development package led to commitments that will advance the development goals of the DDA.</p> |
| <p>Summary 10. The EESC calls for the ILO to be granted the status of permanent observer to the WTO.</p> | <p>EU trade policy also remains in favour of observer status for the ILO in the WTO.</p> |
| <p>7.2 The EESC calls on the EC to ensure that the following aspects are given priority in the negotiations leading up to the Hong Kong Ministerial and afterwards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • real progress in implementing the proposals on strengthening special and differential treatment for the weakest developing countries and LDCs, with an exemption for LDCs from any requirement to open their | <p>The Hong Kong meeting agreed a number of measures in favour of the Least Developed Countries that the Commission itself pushed for strongly. Although the outcome did not go as far as the generosity that the EU provides unilaterally through EBA (Everything But Arms), the US and Japan did at least move to provide duty free and quota free access to LDCs for 97% of their tariff lines. In addition, the EU and the US announced increases in their financial efforts in the area of aid for trade. On cotton, the US finally committed to</p> |

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| <p>markets and the possibility for these countries to continue to protect products that are important to their food security and rural development with high tariffs;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• greater clarification of developing countries' situations and categories by making a clearer distinction between countries which lag behind persistently and countries which already enjoy the benefits of an emerging economy;• effective support, in the form of financing and projects, for technical assistance and capacity building in the least developed countries;• serious consideration of the problem of tariff preference erosion for poor countries, including potential financial compensation;• implementation of the decisions to eliminate trade-distorting subsidies in key commodity products such as cotton and sugar;• implementation of the Decision of 30 August 2003 on paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health to find a solution to the difficulties of WTO members with no pharmaceutical production capacity to make effective use of the provision of the TRIPS Agreement authorising compulsory licensing in cases of national emergency to combat major epidemics. | <p>tariff and export subsidy elimination (in line with the WTO panel), though the important area of US domestic subsidies remains unresolved.</p> <p>Progress in the DDA can help promote development in several ways. First, through ambitious results in the various negotiating areas, resulting in increased market access and strengthening of rules. Second, through ensuring adequate flexibilities for developing countries as foreseen in the negotiating mandates on agriculture, industrial tariffs, services or trade facilitation. Third, through the adoption of a package aimed at helping the poorest WTO Members, a special development package which would include a substantial “aid for trade” package. As noted above, a substantial step on this last point was made in Hong Kong thank to EU’s pressure. Since the start of the DDA in 2001, trade-related assistance has increased sharply. The EU has played its full part. The Commission and EU Member States together are already the largest donor, accounting for more than half of all development assistance. The average level of new commitments on trade-related assistance by the Commission alone is now €850 million every year. At the Hong Kong Ministerial conference, the Commission reconfirmed President Barroso’s pledge to increase this to €1bn a year for the 2007-2013 period. In addition, EU Member states have committed to increase their own development assistance, and in this process will work to ensure that the sum of their trade-related assistance also reaches €1 billion per year by 2010. So taken together, the EU contribution for Aid for Trade should reach €2 billion by 2010. Furthermore, this is without counting aid for infrastructure, which also will improve the ability of developing countries to benefit from access to new markets.</p> <p>Regarding the EESC’s call for a solution to ensure access to medicines for countries with no manufacturing capacity, the WTO General Council adopted the Decision on 6 December 2005 replacing the temporary waiver of 30 August 2003 on access to medicines with an</p> |
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| | <p>amendment of the TRIPs Agreement. The Commission played an important brokering role in the negotiations that led to the Decision. The Commission welcomes this decision as the amendment will ensure a legally secure, predictable, effective and sustainable solution for those countries that want to use the system to get affordable medicines they need.</p> |
| <p>9.3 The EESC endorses the EC strategy of introducing core labour standards into the international trade and investment system by incorporating them into bilateral and regional trade agreements. The EESC also calls for a social chapter to be included in the ongoing EU-Mercosur negotiations.</p> | <p>The EC has pursued social development objectives in regional, bi-regional and bilateral arrangements. All its most recent agreements recognise and promote social rights. The EC has for example entered into dialogue and co-operation with countries such as Chile, South Africa and bi-regionally with the ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) countries, the Gulf Co-operation Council, Mercosur and other regions.</p> |
| <p>11.6 The EESC requests that civil society players be consulted regarding the implementation of [SIA] studies.</p> | <p>Consultation is a central part of the process of carrying out trade SIAs and the EC is committed to ensuring the involvement of Civil Society in the discussion of the results and other relevant issues in each phase of the Trade SIAs.</p> |

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| 46. Proposal for a Council Regulation amending Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities COM (2005) 181 final – EESC 1259/2005 - October 2005 Rapporteur : Mr BURANI (Empl./IT) DG BUDG - Ms GRYBAUSKAITE | |
| Main points of the EESC opinion | Commission position |
| Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities. | Reservation pending the outcome of negotiations with the other institutions. The Commission has not yet formally initiated the preparation of the modified proposal amending the Financial Regulation. Having received the opinion of the Court of Auditors and that of the EESC, the Commission is waiting for the opinion of the European Parliament and for the end of the first reading of the proposal in the Council's Budget Committee. |

c) **Opinions on which the Commission is not yet in a position to comment**

**1. Reflection period: debate on the European Union
Referral to EP - EESC 1249/2005 – October 2005
Rapporteur : Ms VAN TURNHOUT (Act. Div./IE)
SG – The President**

Follow-up to this opinion is deferred to the next quarter.

**5. The role of technology parks in the industrial transformation of the new Member States
Own-initiative opinion - EESC 1494/2005 – December 2005
Rapporteur : Mr TÓTH (Act. Div./HU); corapporteur: Mr KUBÍČEK (Work./CZ)
SG – The President**

Follow-up to this opinion is deferred to the next quarter.

**12. COM in sugar
COM(2005) 263 final - EESC 1251/2005 – October 2005
Rapporteur : Mr BASTIAN (Empl./FR)
DG AGRI – Ms FISCHER-BOEL**

This opinion will not be followed up, since the Council adopted the reform during the session of the Agriculture/Fisheries Council on 20 February 2006.

**13. EU Forestry Strategy
COM(2005) 84 final - EESC 1252/2005 – October 2005
Rapporteur : Mr KALLIO (Empl./FI) and Mr WILMS (Work./DE)
DG AGRI – Ms FISCHER-BOEL**

Follow-up deferred to the next quarter.

- 14. COM in seeds**
COM(2005) 384 final - EESC 1254/2005 – October 2005
Rapporteur : Mr BROS (Act. div./FR)
DG AGRI – Ms FISCHER-BOEL

This opinion will not be followed up, since the Council adopted the Regulation on 23 November of last year.

- 15. COM in wine**
COM(2005) 395 final - EESC 1255/2005 – October 2005
Rapporteur : Mr BARATO TRIGUERO (Act. div./ES)
DG AGRI – Ms FISCHER-BOEL

This opinion – which also supported the Commission proposal – will not be followed up, since the Council adopted the Regulation on 20 December of last year.

- 20. Renewable energy sources**
Own-initiative opinion – EESC 1502/2005 – December
Rapporteurs : Ms SIRKEINEN (Empl./FI) et Mr WOLF (Act. Div./DE)
DG TREN – Mr BARROT

Follow-up to this opinion is deferred to the next quarter.

- 22. 7th R&D Framework Programme and nuclear training facilities (2007-2011)**
COM(2005) 119 final – EESC 1484/2005 – December 2005
Rapporteurs : Mr WOLF (Act. Div./DE) et Mr PEZZINI (Empl./IT)
DG RDT – Mr POTOENIK

Follow-up to this opinion is deferred to the next quarter.

- 33. Proposal for a Council Directive amending Directive 69/169/EEC as regards the temporary quantitative restriction on beer imports into Finland**
COM(2005) 427 final - EESC 1487/2005 – December 2005
Rapporteur : Mr BYRNE (Empl./IE)
DG TAXUD – Mr KOVACS

The Commission does not consider that any follow-up is necessary.

- 38. Mobility of persons in the enlarged Europe and its impact on means of transport**
Own-initiative opinion - EESC 1250/2005 – October 2005
Rapporteur : Mr LEVAUX (Empl./FR)
DG TREN – Mr BARROT

Follow-up to this opinion is deferred to the next quarter.

- 41. The Hague Programme –Freedom, Security and Justice (communication)**
COM(2005) 184 final - EESC 1504/2005 – December 2005
Rapporteur : Mr PARIZA CASTAÑOS (Work./ES)
DG JLS – Mr FRATTINI

Follow-up to this opinion is deferred to the next quarter.

- 45. Civil society dialogue between the EU and candidate countries**
COM(2005) 290 final - EESC 1264/2005 – October 2005
Rapporteur : Mr Pezzini (Act. Div./IT)
DG ELARG – Mr REHN

The Commission does not consider that any contribution is necessary with a view to a follow-up, since what is involved is a communication. Moreover, the EESC opinion does not provide for any follow-up by the Commission.