



*European Economic and Social Committee*

Brussels, 5 March 2003

## **PLENARY SESSION**

**26 AND 27 FEBRUARY 2003**

## **SUMMARY OF OPINIONS ADOPTED**

**Full text versions of EESC opinions are available in the 11 official languages on the Committee's website at the following address:**

**<http://www.esc.eu.int> ("Documents")**

The plenary session of 26 and 27 February 2003 was attended by **Sir Albert Bore**, President of the Committee of the Regions.

## **1. RESOLUTION TO SPRING COUNCIL**

– **References :** CESE 317/2003

– **Key points :**

The Lisbon strategy is in trouble according to the resolution of the European Economic and Social Committee to the Spring European Summit.

The Commission Report to the Spring European Council on the Lisbon Strategy of economic, social and environmental renewal makes it evident that although some progress has been made, implementation of the Lisbon strategy as well as the sustainable development strategy are falling seriously behind schedule. The EESC is convinced that a major responsibility for the insufficient progress is the lack of commitment by many Member States to implement the strategies. The EESC calls for a stronger commitment by Member States, but also by European institutions, regions, social partners and civil society as a whole to work towards the Lisbon objectives.

The EESC believes that the Lisbon objectives remain relevant. Efforts need to be made to rebuild confidence among European citizens and to create a positive vision for the future, based on citizens' involvement, ensuring a more balanced distribution of the wealth produced and the surplus created by modern technology. In the present political and economic climate it is all the more important that the EU gives a stronger message on the importance of pushing ahead in the field of sustainable development.

"The economic situation has worsened in the last two years and without strong and sustainable economic growth it will not be possible to reach the other Lisbon objectives. The EESC underlines the need for better targeting of the EU's Broad Economic policy Guidelines and of the application of the Stability and Growth Pact to favour sustainable economic activity, the preservation of individual purchasing power and employment.

In relation to employment the EESC emphasises support for fewer, more stable and better targeted employment guidelines. It also emphasises the importance of promoting full employment, quality and productivity at work as well as cohesion and an inclusive labour market.

The EESC regrets that sustainable development, one of the most important challenges facing the EU has still not been fully integrated into the Lisbon Strategy and is not seen as an overarching

priority for the EU institutions and Member States. In the present economic and social climate it is all the more important that the EU gives a stronger message on the importance of moving ahead in the field of sustainable development.

The EESC recalls that the Lisbon Summit called upon enterprises, social partners and civil society in general to take an active part in the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy. It will seek to ensure this is the case."

- **Contact:** *Mr Johannes Kind*  
(Tel.: 32 2 546 9111 – e-mail: [Johannes.kind@esc.eu.int](mailto:Johannes.kind@esc.eu.int))

## **2. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT** **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

- ***The Lisbon Strategy and Sustainable Development : the real challenge***

- **Rapporteur :** Mr Ehnmark (Employees - S)
- **Co-rapporteur :** Mr Ribbe (Various interests – D)
  
- **References :** Own-initiative opinion – CESE 289/2003
  
- **Key points :**

The Commission Report to the Spring European Council on the Lisbon Strategy of economic, social and environmental renewal makes that although some progress has been made, implementation of the strategy is falling seriously behind schedule. With the Lisbon strategy in trouble, the EU strategy for sustainable development is also falling behind. The Report indicates growing disparities between Member States in the implementation of the strategy as a whole.

The EESC regrets that sustainable development is still not fully integrated in the Lisbon strategy and not recognised as one of the most important challenges facing the EU. It calls on the Spring European Council to firmly re-establish sustainable development as an overarching objective for the EU, particularly in the light of the outcome of the Johannesburg World Summit. The EU has an opportunity to give a global lead. It invites the Greek and Italian Presidencies to ensure that the necessary operational actions are initiated and that sustainable development is at the heart of the debate on the future of the EU.

The EESC considers that the EU sustainable development strategy needs to be translated into concrete terms and emphasizes that progress on three issues is particularly important:

- more vigorous support for private and public investments in new and clean technology;
- improvements in the quality of work;
- wider debate on the issues of unsustainable production and consumption patterns.

It also proposes that the Summit should launch a coherent action in the EU leading to lower dependence on fossil fuels.

- **Contact:** *Mr Johannes Kind*  
(Tel.: 32 2 546 9316 – e-mail: [Johannes.kind@esc.eu.int](mailto:Johannes.kind@esc.eu.int))

- **Detergents**

- **Rapporteur : Mr Adams** (Various interests - UK)
- **References :** COM(2002) 485 final – 2002/0216 COD – CESE 282/2003
- **Key points :**

The EESC notes and sympathises with the very real concern and dissatisfaction of numerous European environmental scientists with the Commission proposal and therefore urges the Commission and the detergents industry – which has made significant advances in the commercial development of substitutes to replace detergent ingredients with known damaging effects or broader, second order environmental impact implications – to promote the adoption of completely biodegradable and non-toxic products and use in manufacture in conjunction with a programme of positive consumer education.

The Committee recommends

- the inclusion of tests on anaerobic biodegradation and sets appropriate standards and levels;
- to encourage the use of surfactants which rapidly biodegrade in a way which does not raise any problem of environmental toxicity;
- more precise test methods for more accurate monitoring of biodegradation over time;
- a clear commitment to banning substances in cleaning products causing excessive harm to the environment as a rolling review to incorporate the findings of new research studies as they are published;

- to communicate the general environmental impact characteristics of the product (not just the surfactant), e.g. by requiring the level of primary and ultimate biodegradability as determined by an improved testing process be expressed as a percentage on the product label;
  - consumer education on correct use of detergents in order to eliminate unnecessarily high dosage and further research and information (via labelling and advertising) on controlled dosage which will assist consumers to reduce the amount of detergent used at source; and
  - to extend to Eco-label products the provision under this proposal to state the number of standard washes obtainable.
- **Contact:** *Mr Johannes Kind*  
(Tel.: 32 2 546 9111 – e-mail: [johannes.kind@esc.eu.int](mailto:johannes.kind@esc.eu.int) )
- ***CFCs and BCM (ozone layer)***
  - **Rapporteur : Mr Braghin** (Employers - I)
  - **References :** COM(2002) 642 final – 2002/0268 COD – CESE 283/2003
  - **Contact:** *Mrs Eleonora Di Nicolantonio* (Tel. : 00 32 2 9454 – e-mail :  
[Eleonoradinicolantonio@esc.eu.int](mailto:Eleonoradinicolantonio@esc.eu.int))

### **3. LISBON STRATEGY**

- ***Employee financial participation***
- **Rapporteur : Mr Sepi** (Employees - I)
- **References :** COM(2002) 364 final – CESE 284/2003
- **Key points :**

The EESC would point out that financial participation is entirely consistent with the European Union's established objectives of social cohesion and economic development, and therefore advocates stepping up efforts to promote this instrument, by increasing knowledge about it and identifying current obstacles. Such efforts should not be restricted to large multinationals: consideration should also be given to the particular needs of other sectors, such as SMEs, the non-profit sector and the public sector, which are an important part of the European economy.

The communication from the Commission makes a significant contribution to reactivating Community initiatives on financial participation, and spurring the Member States and social forces to take practical steps to encourage its introduction.

It is particularly important that financial participation be viewed in the light of the present system of corporate governance for European companies, and of its potential contribution to growth and greater transparency in European businesses.

- **Contact :** *Mr Pierluigi Brombo*  
(Tel. : 00 32 2 546 9718 - e-mail : [pierluigi.brombo@esc.eu.int](mailto:pierluigi.brombo@esc.eu.int))

#### **4. RESEARCH**

- ***The European Research Area – New momentum***

- **Rapporteur : Mr Wolf** (Various interests – D)
- **References :** COM(2002) 565 final – CESE 288/2003
- **Key points :**

The EESC recommends adapting new measures on research promotion, coordination, networking or integration, and their timing, to the delicate operating conditions of top-quality science and research; and recommends that, in support measures and rules, the costs associated with mobility be taken into account and compensated for, to ensure that no disadvantages arise, and that sufficient incentives are provided.

The EESC strongly supports the creation of a European Community Patent.

The EESC also supports all measures which encourage coordination by the research institutes themselves and their participants, including European-level coordination. Coordination by the Commission itself should concentrate on and confine itself to those thematic aims and organisational needs (large apparatus, infrastructure) for which such coordination going beyond the individual Member States is really useful or necessary.

- **Contact :** *Mr Nemesio Martínez*  
(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 95 01 – e-mail: [nemesio.martinez@esc.eu.int](mailto:nemesio.martinez@esc.eu.int))

- **Research: towards 3% of GDP**

- **Rapporteur : Mrs Sirkeinen** (Employers – FIN)

- **References :** COM(2002) 499 final – CESE 278/2003

- **Key points :**

The EESC underlines that particularly in times of economic slow-down R&D should be seen as an investment, not an expenditure, and that the goals of competitiveness, economic growth, employment, high environmental and health standards and a balanced sustainable development can only be achieved by more knowledge, R&D and innovation. Moreover, it encourages the Commission to a stronger presentation of the case and a stronger challenge to the Member States in face of the dramatic change needed, and proposes that regional funds and funding to candidate countries be directed to R&D. The EESC puts more emphasis on removing borders and barriers to cooperation and networking than overall top-down coordination and considers that the Commission's proposals need to be implemented, in particular on renewing state aid rules on R&D financing.

- **Contact :** *Mr Nemesio Martínez*  
(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 95 01 – e-mail: [nemesio.martinez@esc.eu.int](mailto:nemesio.martinez@esc.eu.int))

## **5. CONSUMER PROTECTION**

- **Consumer policy strategy**

- **Rapporteur : Mrs Davison** (Various interests – UK)

- **References :** COM(2002) 208 final – CESE 276/2003

- **Key points :**

The Committee welcomes the Commission Communication on consumer policy strategy 2002-2006. The EESC supports maximum harmonisation but considers that the protection of consumers must be at the highest level. Speedy implementation of the E-commerce directive is needed to help protect consumers on-line. The Committee supports stronger enforcement of existing legislation and co-operation between enforcement bodies. It favours integration of consumer policies into other relevant policy areas including education.

- **Contact :** *Mr João Pereira dos Santos*  
(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 92 45 – e-mail: joao.pereiradossantos@esc.eu.int)

## **6. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- ***Drug precursors***

- **Rapporteur :** *Mrs Le Nouail* (Employees - F)
- **References :** COM(2002) 494 final – 2002/0217 COD – CESE 277/2003
- **Key points :**

The Committee endorses these measures and advocates uniform application of Community legislation in this field so as to prevent any diversion of drug precursors for the manufacture of illegal narcotic drugs.

- **Contact :** *Mr Nemesio Martínez*  
(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 95 01 – e-mail: nemesio.martinez@esc.eu.int)

- ***Products of animal origin – human consumption - controls***

- **Rapporteur :** *Mr Donnelly* (Various interests - IRL)
- **References :** COM(2002) 377 final – 2002/0141 COD – CESE 281/2003
- **Contact:** *Mrs Eleonora Di Nicolantonio* (Tel. : 00 32 2 9454 – e-mail :  
*Eleonoradinicolantonio@esc.eu.int*)

## **7. INSURANCE**

- ***Civil liability/vehicles***

- **Rapporteur :** *Mr Levoux* (Employers -F)
- **References :** COM(2002) 244 final – 2002/0124 COD – CESE 287/2003

- **Contact :** *Mr João Pereira dos Santos*  
(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 92 45 – e-mail: joao.pereiradossantos@esc.eu.int)

- ***Insurance for air carriers and aircraft operators***

- **Rapporteur :** **Mr Santillán Cabeza** (Employees - E)
- **References :** COM(2002) 521 final – 2002/0234 COD – CESE 280/2003

- **Contact:** *Mr Luis Lobo*  
(Tel.: 32 2 546 9717 – e-mail: Luis.lobo@esc.eu.int)

## **8. EDUCATION**

- ***Erasmus World 2004-2008***

- **Rapporteur :** **Mr Rodríguez García-Caro** (Employers – E)
- **References :** COM(2002) 401 final – CESE 285/2003
- **Key points :**

The Committee welcomes the proposal.

It believes that the mobility of students towards higher education institutions in Europe has a dimension which goes beyond the mere transmission and acquisition of knowledge in specific subjects, however new or important. It contributes a human dimension to knowledge, involving exchanges and coexistence, which, over the course of time, could have a beneficial impact on understanding and trust between the students' countries of origin and the European Union.

It is essential to implement support measures to ensure that participants return to their countries of origin, to prevent countries in great need of their most highly qualified human resources suffering from a cultural and professional brain drain.

The Committee believes that teaching centres should be free to deliver Masters courses according to the criteria they deem most appropriate. Nonetheless, it wishes to point out that the Union's linguistic diversity must be preserved and as far as possible the move towards linguistic simplification on grounds of efficiency or effectiveness must be avoided.

In its opinions the Committee has repeatedly expressed its concern for facilitating the integration of the disabled. Accordingly, it would urge the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament to include in this programme some funds to assist towards this end.

- **Contact :** *Mr Alan Hick*  
(Tel.: 00 32 2 546 93 02 - E-Mail : [Alan.Hick@esc.eu.int](mailto:Alan.Hick@esc.eu.int))

## **9. CITIZENS' RIGHTS – JUSTICE**

- ***Compensation to crime victims***

- **Rapporteur :** Mr Koryfidis (Employees - EL)
- **References:** COM(2002) 562 final – 2002/0247 (CNS) – CESE 286/2003
- **Key points :**

The Committee endorses the broad lines of the proposed directive.

However, it feels that the directive should include the following elements:

- A definition of crimes that comprises not only crimes against the victim's life, health or physical integrity, but also those against the victim's psychological health and integrity.
  - A detailed definition of the responsibilities of assisting authorities and of deciding authorities, along with a simplification of cooperation procedures between them so as to reduce bureaucracy and make it easier for citizens of the Member States to exercise the rights provided for in the directive.
  - Broader scope for the victim to receive advance payment.
- **Contact :** *Mrs Susanne Johansson*  
(Tel. : 00 32 2 546 9619 - e-mail : [susanne.johansson@esc.eu.int](mailto:susanne.johansson@esc.eu.int))

## **10. ENERGY**

- ***Cogeneration***

- **Rapporteur : Mr Buffetaut** (Employers – F)

- **References :** COM(2002) 415 final – 2002/0185 COD – CESE 279/2003

- **Contact:** *Mr Siegfried Jantscher*  
(Tel.: 32 2 546 8287 – e-mail: *Siegfried.jantscher@esc.eu.int*)

---