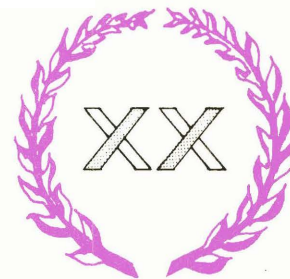


THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE



1958 - 1978



MAY 1978

Twentieth Anniversary of the Economic and Social Committee of the European Communities



Mr de STAERCKE
Chairman 1958-1960
Belgium

BIRTH OF THE COMMITTEE

"An ever closer union among the peoples of Europe", "economic and social progress ... by common action to eliminate the barriers which divide Europe", "improvement of living and working conditions", "steady expansion, balanced trade and fair competition", "reducing the differences existing between the various regions", "solidarity which binds Europe and the overseas countries", "preserve and strengthen peace and liberty" — these are the aims of the European Community as expressed in the preambles of its founding Treaties.



Mr ROSENBERG
Chairman 1960-1962
Germany

To achieve these aims, institutions are necessary: the Commission, the Council, the European Parliament, and the Court of Justice. But is any lasting achievement possible without the active participation of the economic and social forces directly affected by European integration? In answer to this question the Community's Economic and Social Committee was set up, drawing on the experience of similar bodies in several Member States and of the European Coal and Steel Community's Consultative Committee.

The inaugural session of the Committee was graced by speeches ripe with promises. At this session, which was held in the Belgian Senate on 19 May 1958, the President-in-Office of the Council of the European Community, Mr Larock,

asserted that the Economic and Social Committee would acquire a strength and authority all its own. Mr Walter Hallstein, President of the Commission of the European Economic Community, predicted that although it would not be a Parliament the Economic and Social Committee would be much more than a mere group of experts. He pointed out that the Committee would play a part in creating the new European legal framework, since it would be able to influence the drawing up of the regulations which would have to be enacted by the Member States to put the Treaties of Rome into effect. Mr Motz, President-in-Office of the European Atomic Energy Community, forecast that the knowledge of Community problems that the Committee's members would acquire would rapidly enable them to go beyond their role as advisers of the Council and the Commission and to take up that of go-between for the



Mr ROCHE
Chairman 1962-1964
France



Mr GIUSTINIANI
Chairman 1964-1966
Italy



Mr MAJOR
Chairman 1966-1968
Belgium

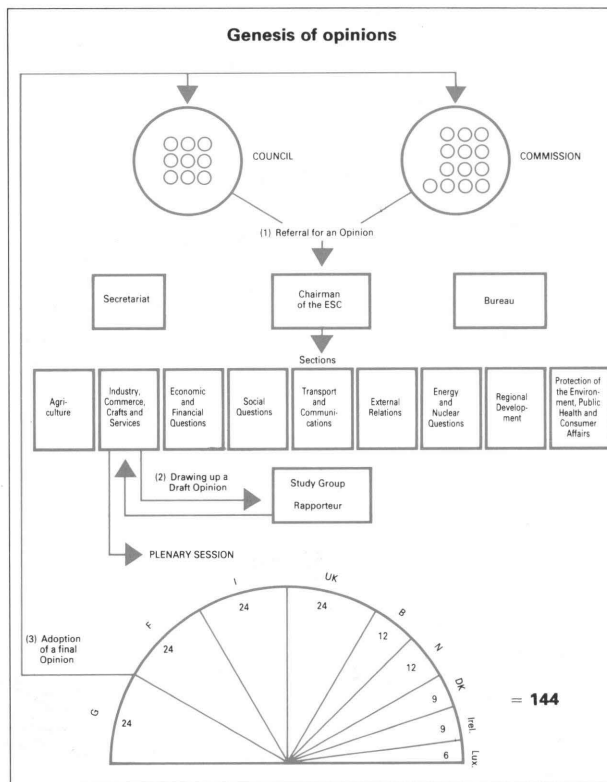
economic and social interests which they represented. As a result of the setting-up of this Committee"; he said, "a two-way flow of advice and information will rapidly be established

which will contribute to a close cooperation between the institutions of the Community and the various economic sectors of our member countries".

A Genuine Consultative Assembly

These early hopes for the Committee were not fully satisfied in its early years. It soon became apparent to the one hundred and one Committee members—as they then were—that the prerogatives given to the Economic and Social Committee at the European level was in no way equivalent to the influence they carried in their respective countries or to that given to similar national institutions. Modest in its beginnings, with only limited influence on the Community's decision-making, the Committee had to put in years of effort to establish itself and to become the pre-eminent meeting place of the economic and social forces at European level and a permanent centre for economic and social dialogue.

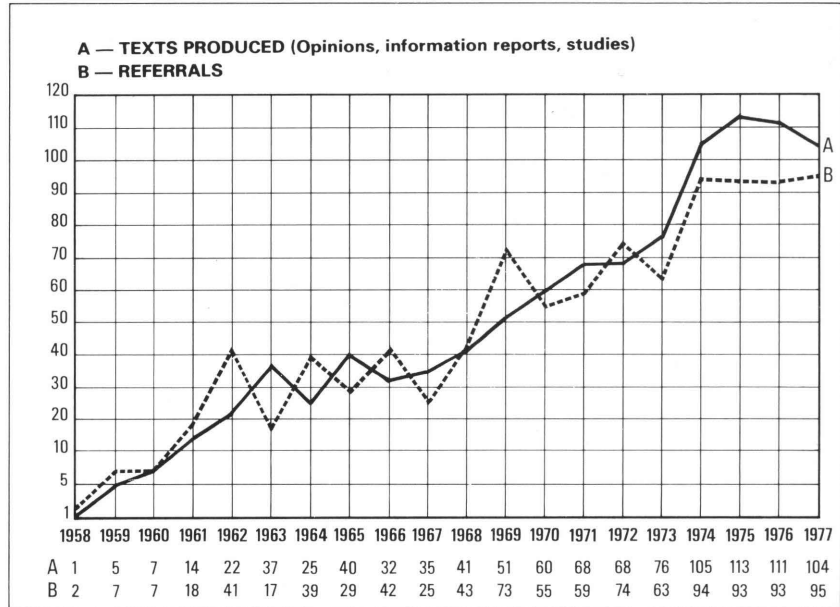
However, a European consciousness gradually took shape in the Committee, the natural result of which was more independence and therefore more influence. This development was fed by the accession to the Community of three new Member States, which increased the number of members to one hundred and forty-four. There is no doubt that this influx of new blood gave an additional push to the Economic and Social Committee.



The most significant mark of this was the decision of the Community's 'Summit' conference in Paris in October 1972, giving the Committee the right to deliver Opinions on its own initiative. In taking this decision, the Heads of Government expressed their determination to "ensure the increasing involvement of labour and management in the economic and social decisions of the Community".

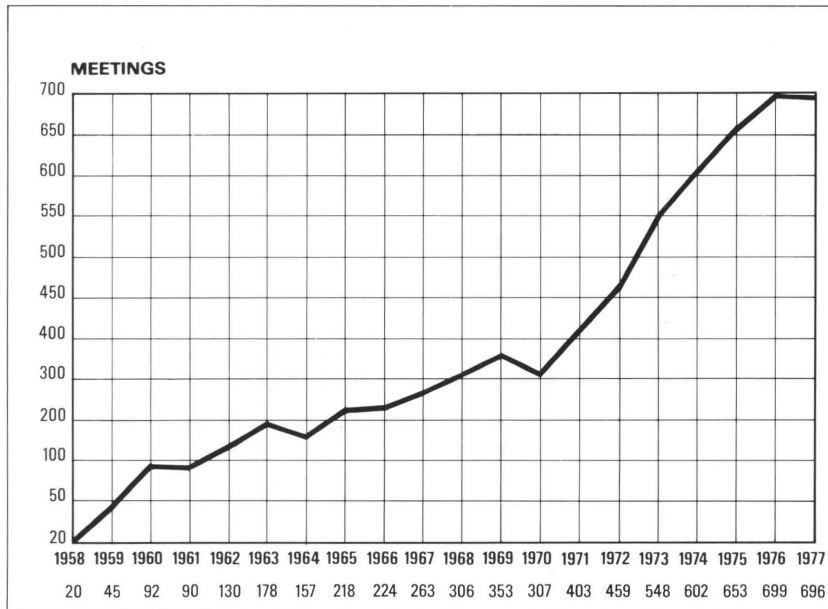


Mr BERNS
Chairman 1968-1970
Luxembourg



New rules of procedure were drawn up and approved by the Council of Ministers. In addition, the Committee was authorized to have all its Opinions published in the Official Journal—including Opinions drawn up on its own initiative.

This was the start of a new phase in the life of the Committee. The trend was unmistakable: by winning the right to issue Opinions on its own initiative, the Committee had achieved a breakthrough to increased influence.



Mr Jacques GENTON, General Secretary of the Committee from 1958-1971. On the right Mr Malfatti, President of the Commission.

An Irreplaceable



Mr TINDEMANS, Prime Minister of Belgium before the Economic and Social Committee (March 1976)

For, since 1972, the Committee has been able to express its views on the whole range of issues arising from the work of the Community; and accordingly it has delivered a large number of Opinions covering the most disparate fields of European activity. On several occasions, for instance, it has taken a stand on the overall progress of the Community, expressing the strong feelings of the economic and social forces in respect of unemployment and inflation, and denouncing shortcomings in the workings of the Community institutions, failures in solidarity and political will, and delays and postponements in strong and expanding economic, monetary, energy, industrial, regional and social policies for Europe.

In this context, the Committee made an important contribution to the study on European Union carried out in 1975 by the Belgian Prime Minister, Mr Tindemans. In its Opinion, the Committee came out for more democracy in the workings of the Community institutions. Among other things, it pressed for more powers for the European Parliament and for its election by universal suffrage. It advocated giving the Commission more powers to initiate proposals, and it called for the introduction of majority voting in the Council. One of its principal themes was the need for improved coordination in the Community's decision-making process so that the functions of proposal, consultation, decision

Contribution

and control could be carried out in an orderly fashion and in full knowledge of all relevant circumstances. It reaffirmed its determination to play its advisory role to the full, while expressing some disquiet at the dilution of consultation in a multiplicity of consultative bodies. The Committee highlighted its view of the right economic and social priorities for the Community, stressing the need to speed up progress towards economic and monetary union.

It would take up too much space to list the texts produced over the years by the Committee. Such a list would range from the general to the particular: from technical trade barriers to the common agricultural policy, from industrial policy and sectoral policies to energy, from the East-West transport question to the implementation of the Lomé Convention and the Community's enlargement.

But because of its particular sensitivity to the difficulties of the present economic situation, the Committee's recent work has paid special heed to unemployment and inflation. Opinions have been adopted on the coordination of national employment machinery, on regional policy and its contribution towards reducing inflation and unemployment, on industrial change and its effects on employment, and on the employment prospects in sectors such as agriculture and small firms.



Mr KUIPERS
Chairman 1970-1972
Netherlands



The Economic and Social Committee –

As an advisory body of the European Communities, the Economic and Social Committee forms an integral part of the Communities' institutional machinery. Its functions can be indicated by taking a look at the Community legislative procedure :

- **The Commission**

initiates and implements Community legislation;

- **The Council**

makes the decisions — but, beforehand, the draft legislation is submitted to two representative assemblies :

- **The European Parliament**

which has advisory, budgetary and supervisory powers, and

- **The Economic and Social Committee**

which was set up under the Rome Treaties (Articles 4 and 193 to 198 of the EEC Treaty, Articles 3 and 165 to 170 of the EURATOM Treaty).

The purpose of the Committee is to involve representatives of the various economic and social interest groups in the establishment of the Common Market by giving them an institutional vehicle for expressing their views to the Commission and the Council.

Under the EEC Treaty, the Council or the Commission must consult the Committee on matters relating to agriculture, freedom of movement for workers, right of establishment, transport, approximation of laws, social policy, the European Social Fund and vocational training. Under the EURATOM Treaty, the Committee has to be consulted on certain aspects of nuclear policy :

research and training programmes, establishment of schools for training specialists, health and safety, investment, access to skilled jobs and insurance cover against nuclear risks. If they wish, the Council and the Commission may also consult the Committee on other matters. In addition, the Committee has obtained the right to advise on its own initiative on all matters relating to the work of the Community. On average the Committee now delivers over a 100 Opinions per year.

The Committee consists of representatives of :

- Employers (Group I);
- Workers (Group II);
- Various Interests (Group III),

such as agriculture, transport, trade, small businesses, the professions and consumers.

Functions and membership

The 144 members are drawn from the nine Member States:

— Belgium	12
— Denmark	9
— France	24
— Germany	24
— Ireland	9
— Italy	24
— Luxembourg	6
— the Netherlands	12
— the United Kingdom	24

Members are nominated by the Member States' Governments and appointed by the Council. Their term of office lasts four years and can be renewed.

The last re-appointment of the full Committee took place in 1974. The next one is due in 1978.

The Committee elects its Chairman and Bureau from among its members for a term of two years. The Bureau, consisting of 21 members, has the job of organizing the Committee's work.

The Committee has set up nine sections, each of which is responsible for one or more of the principal fields covered by the Rome Treaties:

- Section for Economic and Financial Questions
- Section for External Relations
- Section for Social Questions
- Section for the Protection of the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Affairs
- Section for Agriculture
- Section for Regional Development
- Section for Industry, Commerce, Crafts and Services
- Section for Transport and Communications
- Section for Energy and Nuclear Questions.

The Sections draw up draft Opinions on matters which have been referred to the Committee by the Council or the Commission or have been taken up by the Committee on its own initiative.

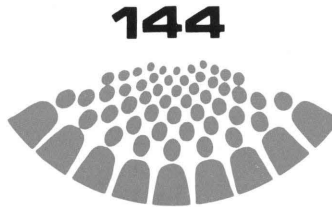
The Committee adopts its Opinions at its monthly Plenary Sessions. These Opinions, which are based on the Sections' draft Opinions, are then forwarded, together with the relevant Section reports, to the Council and the Commission.

The Committee has its own secretariat, numbering about 320 officials and headed by a Secretary-General. Committee documents are drawn up in the six Community languages.

INITIATIVE — CONSULTATION — DECISION



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

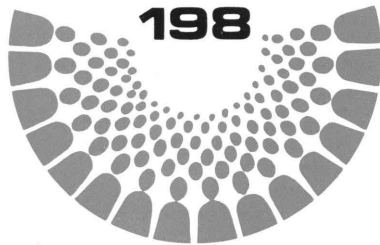


ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE



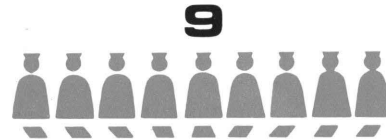
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

PARLIAMENTARY SUPERVISION



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

LEGAL SUPERVISION



COURT OF JUSTICE

Relations with the Community Institutions

RELATIONS WITH THE COMMISSION

A large number of officials from all the services of the Commission keep up close and assiduous contacts with the Committee. These exchanges greatly help its work.

Members of the Commission frequently attend the Committee's Plenary Sessions. During a recent wide-ranging debate on econ-



Mr LAPPAS
Chairman 1972-1974
Germany



omic and monetary union, Mr Roy Jenkins, the current President of the Commission, emphasized the particular contribution which the Committee could make towards achieving its aims.

RELATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL

The Committee has always maintained close cooperation with the Council and steadily improved its impact. As a result, in recent years, the successive Presidents-in-Office have made it a rule to attend Committee debates at least once every six months.

Regular meetings also take place between the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Committee and the Committee of Permanent Representatives.



Mr CANONGE
Chairman 1974-1976
France

It has now become customary for the Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairmen to visit the relevant government authorities at the beginning of their term of office as President of the Council. This practice has turned out to be particularly worthwhile.



RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Relations between the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee were marred for a long time by a certain amount of ambiguity regarding their respective powers. Since this has now been clarified, cooperation is at last under way. On several occasions, Committee Rapporteurs have addressed parliamentary committees on selected E.S.C. Opinions. This type of discussion enables the members of Parliament to have a better grasp of the views of economic and social circles without in any way detracting from the Parliament's powers.



In addition, the European Parliament has invited the Committee—and, through the Committee, the professional and employers' associations and trade unions—to take part in certain discussions with the ACP countries regarding the implementation of the Lomé Convention.

This marks an important milestone in the process of associating the economic forces of Europe with the political debate.

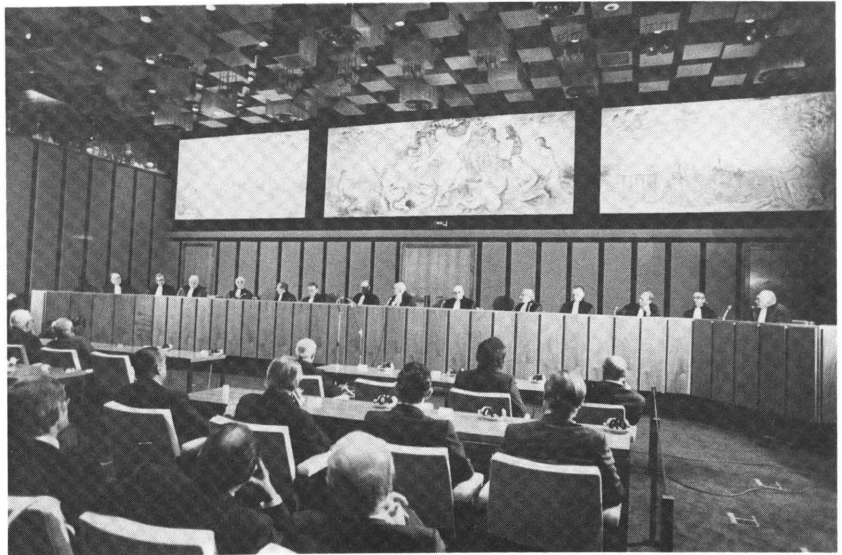
RELATIONS WITH THE COURT OF JUSTICE

The Committee evidently pays a great deal of attention to the judgements of the Court of Justice, which frequently have a bearing on its work. Over the years, the Court of Justice has played a crucial role in making sure that the provisions of the Treaty are respected. It has not only helped to ensure that the Treaties are applied properly but also that the Community develops in the sense of its founders.

The Committee appreciated the honour of having an eminent member of the Court attend a Plenary Session. It hopes to continue this practice in the future and to further the relationship already established.



Mr Basil de FERRANTI
Chairman 1976-1978
United Kingdom



External Relations

A good deal of effort has been put into obtaining a bigger audience for the Committee's work. Manifold contacts have been made to this end outside the strict framework of the Community institutions.

Exchanges of information have been arranged with national and regional economic and social councils and with the Consultative Committee of the European Coal and Steel Community. The respective presidents, secretaries-general and even bureaux of these various institutions have agreed to meet regularly to exchange their views. The Committee has encouraged the setting up of similar bodies in countries where none exist. Ireland, Israel and Greece have already decided to set up economic and social councils.

Special attention has been devoted to certain international organizations. For instance, meetings have been held with the European Free Trade Association authorities. Again, the International Labour Office deserves a special mention. A delegation of the Economic and Social Committee now attends the International Labour Conference each year.



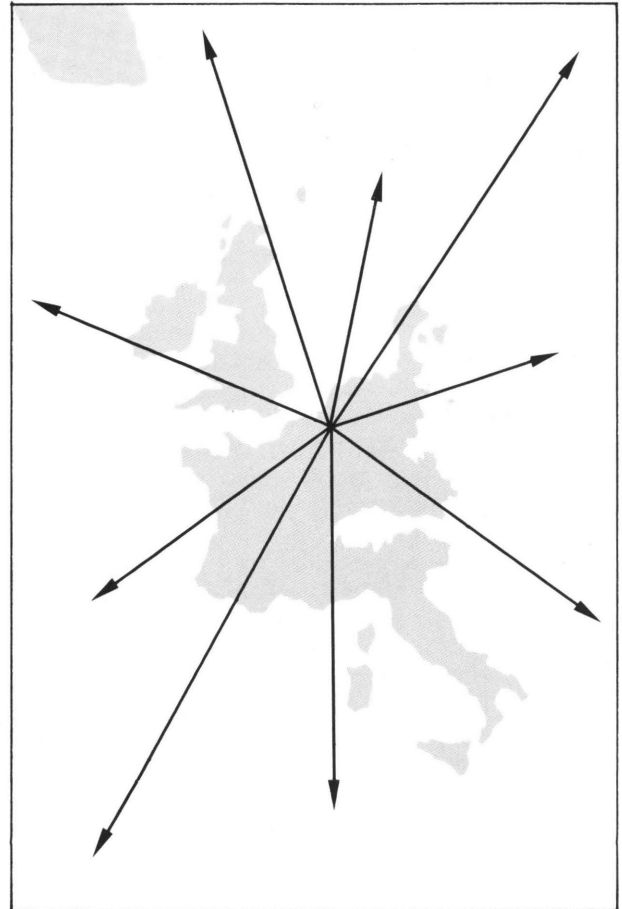
A delegation from the Economic and Social Council of Senegal at the Economic and Social Committee at its 140th Plenary Session (30 June and 1 July 1976).
Left: Mr CANONGE, Committee Chairman; Centre: Mr ORTOLI, President of the EC Commission; Right: Mr M. LO, Head of the Senegalese Delegation

Experts from all sorts of backgrounds furnish the Committee with their special knowledge.

Relations with professional associations and trade union organizations have been stepped up. The Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Committee regularly visit the Member States to meet these organizations and government authorities. Sections and Study Groups of the Committee hold meetings in Member States or go on fact-finding tours even to African countries, in order to gather first-hand information concerning the matters with which they are dealing.

Increasing numbers of visiting groups come to the Committee to hear about the way it works and its activities. The number of people and organizations requesting information has increased considerably, which results in a very wide dissemination of information about the Committee's work. Relations with the press, radio and television have been intensified and the Committee's activities are receiving a wider coverage.

This vast and diversified external relations activity has gradually made the Committee an important European link; a forum for all the economic and social groups which are involved in the European venture.



A Promising Future

In its final conclusions, the European Council held on 7-8 April in Copenhagen devoted the following paragraph to the Economic and Social Committee :

“The European Council stressed the importance which it attaches to the work of the Economic and Social Committee. It asks all the parties concerned to cooperate with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of the Committee’s work, on the occasion of the renewal of the Committee in September 1978, bearing in mind the Committee’s role in the decision-making process of the European Communities”.

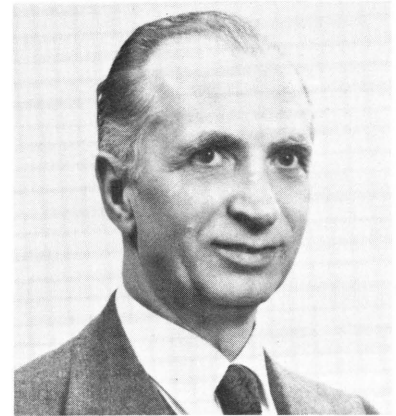
This quotation crowns twenty years of activity during which, owing to its high degree of representativity of the various economic and social groups in the Community, its permanent presence and the quality of its Opinions, the Committee has gained a vital place within the European institutions. Being the expression of social and economic democracy it will continue to work for a European society which is humane, just and prosperous. It will use its



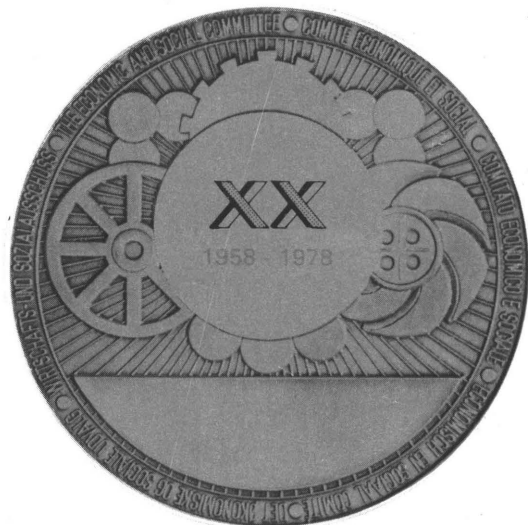
Mr Basil de FERRANTI, Committee Chairman (standing) welcoming Mr SOARES, Prime Minister of Portugal (second from the left) during his visit in March 1977

growing authority to help the Community authorities to overcome the grave difficulties with which they are currently faced: unemployment, inflation, energy, structures, inequalities.

The Committee has an exciting task before it. With the help and support of the Community's economic and social forces it will be assured of achieving its new goals.



Mr Delfo DELFINI
General Secretary of the Committee
since 1971



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