

EESC



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THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE — A BRIDGE BETWEEN EUROPE AND ORGANISED CIVIL SOCIETY WWW.ESC.EU.INT

EDITORIAL



Communicating Europe

On 7 and 8 April at Druids Glen, Wicklow (Ireland), the Irish Presidency held an informal ministerial conference on the theme 'Communicating Europe'. In a highly significant gesture, Dick Roche, the Irish Minister of State for European Affairs, invited the EESC to be represented throughout the conference. Thus, the Committee's two representatives, President Briesch and myself, as President of the Ad Hoc Communication Group, took our places alongside ministerial representatives of all of the present and future Member States, together with the three current applicant States and delegations from the western Balkan countries. The conference was also addressed by Pat Cox, President of the European Parliament, and by European Commissioners António Vitorino and Pascal Lamy.

Getting the message across: a key responsibility

One of the key objectives of the Irish Presidency is to ensure that the EU better informs and engages citizens about developments in the Union, and the conference was organised in this context. Over the two days, delegates assessed how the Union and the Member States communicate to their citizens, and reviewed means of promoting greater involvement and engagement by citizens in deciding how the EU operates and evolves. In his keynote speech, President Briesch made a clarion call for a common and cohesive effort by all involved in the European integration process. He stressed the role the EESC could play in this context, citing the example of the Lisbon strategy as a vital development but one which, so far, had been badly communicated. Intervening on the second day, I underlined the increasing importance of a cohesive communications strategy, given such momentous developments as the 1 May enlargement and the probable agreement on the draft European Constitution. I also underlined the important role the EESC can play as a bridge between the EU institutions and civil society in the Member States in 'communicating Europe'.

Jillian van Turnhout
President of the EESC Communication Group

Spring European Council

The EESC requested to examine the conditions for successful implementation of the Lisbon strategy



How can we move beyond the slogans and ensure that the Lisbon strategy is implemented in practice?

Four years after the decision of the European Council, taken at the Lisbon summit in April 2000, to introduce concrete, ambitious measures to reform the Union with the aim of making it the most competitive economy in the world, it has to be said that tangible progress has yet to be made in this area.

This is one of the reasons that the Heads of State or Government decided, at their meeting in Brussels on 25 and 26 March, to give the European Economic and Social Committee the task of examining how to ensure more effective implementation of the Lisbon strategy.

With its 222 members (soon to be 317), the EESC, as the institutional representative of organised civil society at European level, is particularly well placed to take on this role and to contribute to ensuring that the implementation of the Lisbon strategy reflects the day-to-day concerns of European citizens, particularly with regard to economic growth, the creation of high-quality jobs, and sustainable development.

Last October, the Committee, concerned at the lack of progress achieved over the past four years, sounded the alarm by organising a major conference on the contribution of organised civil society to the implementation of the Lisbon strategy. This highlighted the need for more coordinated action, particularly at the national and local levels, and the need for greater commitment on the part of all those involved: the authorities, the social partners, the relevant civil society organisations.

The involvement of European organised civil society in the implementation of the Lisbon strategy was also considered to be the best way of ensuring the success of that strategy.

On the eve of the spring summit in March 2004, Roger Briesch, President of the EESC, added:

'The Lisbon strategy will only achieve its objectives if it thoroughly overhauls the institutional political system and its way of working, as well as the instruments of cooperation adopted for the purpose of implementing it.

The responsibility for ensuring the strategy works must be shared between the EU and the Member States. The public's interest must be awakened. A wide-ranging public debate on the various aspects of the strategy is needed, and organised civil society must continue to be involved in it.'

The EESC has already started its work on more effective implementation of the Lisbon strategy and will draw up specific proposals in time for the mid-term evaluation planned for the European Council meeting to be held under the Luxembourg Presidency in spring 2005.

Mr Prodi asks for the views of organised civil society on the European Union's financial perspective for 2007-13



EESC President Roger Briesch and EESC Secretary General Patrick Venturini meet Commission President Romano Prodi

At their 11 March 2004 meeting, Roger Briesch, President of the EESC, and Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, agreed that it was important that the European Economic and Social Committee should contribute at an early stage to the debate on the EU's new financial perspective for the period 2007-13 by organising, in conjunction with the Commission, a conference entitled 'The EU's political priorities 2007-13 and the financial perspective: the views of organised civil society'.

The conference is being designed to allow civil society in the EU to analyse the priorities set by the Commission in its communication 'Building our common future: chal-

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allenges and budgetary means of the enlarged Union', in particular by examining its three key priorities: sustainable development, European citizenship, the European Union as a world partner.

The date for the conference has been set at 25 and 26 May, and preparatory work is already well under way. The EESC will prepare an opinion on the financial perspective and the conference will provide valuable input into this work. The Commission President and several Commissioners are expected to attend, together with EESC members and representatives of EU civil society.

Romano Prodi's invitation is another significant indication of the important role which the EESC can play in such vital debates, notably by providing a forum for the major challenges facing the EU in the next 10 years and acting as a bridge to civil society to allow a debate on the fundamental issues affecting it.

Our doors: closed yet open

For the first time in many years, the European Economic and Social Committee will not be opening its doors on the first Saturday in May to commemorate the anniversary of Robert Schuman's declaration on 9 May 1950. The preparations for the move and the idea of leaving a place that we have occupied since 1972 would have made it difficult to welcome the public. Instead of opening our doors, we will therefore be represented at the Europe stand in the Cinquantenaire, where the City of Brussels is organising a huge fair to celebrate enlargement under the symbol of the iris, which is the emblem of the city and the region of Brussels. We will also meet the public at the EESC stand in the entrance hall of the European Parliament.

We will continue to welcome people in the way that has always been characteristic of our institution: dialogue, human warmth and openness, which will enable visitors to discover that the institutions are not all staffed by Eurocrats, bureaucrats and technocrats who live in a

strange, remote world and use a language that is difficult to understand.

Simple, informative literature, a few sample opinions and small souvenir gifts will be on offer; a loop videotape will show certain aspects of our work, in particular some shots of the hemicycle during a plenary session. A similar stand will also be set up in Strasbourg on 8 May.

Our doors, then, will be closed; but, in this spring month of May 2004, they will be wide open to enlargement, which will bring 95 additional members from 10 new Member States into the home of organised civil society. This will bring the total number of members to 317 and make our body even more lively and representative.

And, in May 2005, come and see us at our new address (97/113 rue Belliard, B-1000 Brussels), where the doors will be doubly open!

Franco-German meeting in Berlin on participatory democracy



Dr Michel Bürsch from the Bundestag's Investigation Committee on Civil Engagement with Roger Briesch, President of the EESC

On the initiative of the French Economic and Social Council (ESC), the European Economic and Social Committee, the Berlin-Brandenburg Institute and the

Franco-German Institute in Ludwigsburg, more than 90 representatives and members of civil society met from Thursday 25 to Saturday 27 March in Berlin in order to think about practical ways of better involving citizens in the national and European democratic process.

This third meeting, which followed on from those held at the EESC in Brussels in November 2002 and at the French ESC in Paris on 20 January 2003 (on the 40th anniversary of the Franco-German Elysée Treaty) enabled the delegations to address their experience of public commitment and participatory democracy on both sides of the Rhine.

The discussions brought to light common points and differences. Several speakers expressed regret that Germany lacked an institutionalised point of contact equivalent to France's Economic and Social Council, which would facilitate dialogue between the civil societies of the two countries and with the European Economic and Social Committee. Some speakers pointed out that participatory democracy in Germany is more informal and empirical and tends to take place more at the local level.

Beyond these differences in form, the need to address the current crisis in representativeness by carrying out joint in-depth work on the ways in which participatory democracy is expressed was highlighted several times. Jacques Dermagne, President of the French Economic and Social Council, insisted that Franco-German cooperation should not be limited to the political level; instead, it needs to extend to more pragmatic, concrete and civic themes.

Some participants expressed the wish that the bilateral work should have repercussions on the European level. On this point, Roger Briesch, President of the European Economic and Social Committee, hoped that this meeting, which dealt with the principle of participatory democracy as enshrined in the new European Constitution, would strengthen the cooperation of civil societies, whose development is of crucial importance to the European Union.

The discussions ended with the announcement of a forthcoming meeting in Paris in March 2005, the subject of which will be determined shortly.

March plenary session

Philippe Maystadt emphasises the role of the EESC, a key partner in the implementation of the Lisbon strategy

Philippe Maystadt, President of the European Investment Bank, visiting the EESC plenary session, heavily emphasised the Committee's key role in the successful implementation of the Lisbon strategy. The March plenary session of the European Economic and Social Committee also saw the adoption of opinions on: proposals from the European Commission on chemical products (REACH); Croatia's application for EU membership; simplifying the *acquis communautaire*.

Like the EESC, which has the necessary experience, expertise and links with Europe's organised civil society, the European Investment Bank (EIB) will play its part in delivering a successful policy that will have important repercussions on the daily lives of European citizens.

That was the thrust of a speech given by Philippe Maystadt to EESC members on the second day of the plenary session. Mr Maystadt also underlined the importance of **sufficient financing** for key European Union policies. 'We must give the European Commission the financial means to promote key areas such as transport and research,' he said.

'The support of civil society in explaining to EU citizens the rationale behind the Lisbon strategy and in particular the interlinkage between economic growth and social and environmental well-being is absolutely essential,' he continued.

He further noted that for securing investment (risk capital) for small and medium-sized enterprises, it was not so much the fact that companies did not have access to

capital but rather the conditions under which capital was provided.

In response to Mr Maystadt's speech, Giacomo Regaldo (President, Group I, Employers, Italy) emphasised the importance of concentrating on the growth aspects of the Lisbon strategy. 'The spring Council emphasised competitiveness and fostering a business culture to promote growth. This must be the priority. The EU shouldn't just be writing documents but getting on with the task in hand,' he said.

Mario Sepi (President, Group II, Employees, Italy) pointed to the importance of the European Investment Bank in ensuring the success of the Lisbon strategy. 'The EIB should increasingly become its financial instrument,' he said. Referring to the EU financial perspective 2007-13 he added: 'the demand for greater own resources for the EU budget is a necessity to be supported, in order to cope with the ambitious political priorities defined by the European Commission.'

Jan Olsson (Group III, Various Interests, Sweden) for his part sought to highlight the need to support the EU sustainable growth strategy. This strategy should be based at grassroots level and concentrate on lifelong learning and education and training.

Finally, Henri Malosse, President of the EESC's Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion, confirmed that the Committee would be very interested in drawing up an opinion on the theme of integrating social considerations into projects financed by the EIB.

Principal opinions adopted

Legislation on chemical products (REACH)

Rapporteur: Mr Paolo Braghin
(Group I, Employers, Italy)

The EESC reiterates the view that sustainable development and protection of health and the environment should be one of the EU's priority objectives. The Committee agrees with the objectives of the proposal which would make manufacturers, importers and users responsible for preparing documentation on chemicals with a view to registration and initial risk assessment. While the Committee supports the objectives and application of the REACH (Registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals) system, it thinks that particular attention must be paid to the implementing arrangement with a view to ensuring that the new legislation (however opportune) does not jeopardise the competitiveness and growth of industry and hence aggravate employment problems.

The Committee appreciates the method used by the Commission to draw up the REACH proposals, which has involved extensive consultations. It hopes that the consultation and involvement of stakeholders will continue so that the proposals can be further improved notably by:

- ensuring changes that help simplify procedures and therefore reduce costs without changing the objectives being pursued;
- extending and strengthening the tasks of the future Chemicals Agency so that it becomes the hub of the new system, in close and constructive cooperation with the competent national authorities;

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- drawing up a support plan for SMEs and downstream users in particular, to facilitate the implementation of the REACH system.

Finally the Committee calls for a vigorous political campaign promoting the provisions of the REACH system worldwide, a campaign which would emphasise the fact that the proposals are designed to protect public and worker health and the environment, while in tandem defending the competitiveness of the European chemicals industry.

NB: The Commission's proposed regulation is designed to replace the 40 existing directives and regulations governing the industrial use of chemicals within the EU. At the core of the proposal is the REACH system. Under the proposals, companies that produce and import chemicals would be required to assess the risks arising from their use and to take the necessary measures to manage any risk they identify. In effect, this reverses the burden of proof from public authorities to industry for ensuring the safety of chemicals on the market.

Simplification of the *acquis communautaire*

Rapporteur-general: Mr Daniel Retureau
(Group II, Employees, France)

The Committee welcomes the European Parliament, Council and Commission interinstitutional agreement with regard to simplification procedures. The Committee would have liked to have had the opportunity to give its opinion while the interinstitutional agreement (drawn up in December 2003) was still being drafted. It could have thus highlighted the suggestions of organised civil society, to which the *acquis* is principally addressed and which is directly concerned by simplification, transposition and alternative methods of regulation.

Through its consultative opinions, the EESC wishes to have a greater role in drawing up Community law, which presupposes that it plays a part in the proceedings at a much earlier stage than is usually the case at the moment. It also wishes to participate actively in impact and follow-up assessments and in actions to promote simplification, in order to contribute to the greater accessibility and effectiveness of Community law in the enlarged Europe. These requests of course follow the principles of democracy and good governance, as well as those of bringing citizens closer to the institutions and legislation of the European Union.

The social dimension of culture (EP referral)

Rapporteur: Mr Daniel Le Scornet
(Group III, Various Interests, France)

The Committee and the European Parliament have decided to make the question of the social dimension of culture a common theme, as both bodies consider that culture and social development are closely interrelated and that this relationship will be increasingly important in the context of European integration.

The Committee considers that culture — understood as a process and a common form of thinking and acting — assigns key functions to education and the participation of society. The European concept of culture also embraces strong social elements, such as solidarity, social cohesion, measures to combat marginalisation and discrimination, as well as social integration. On the basis of this approach, the Committee asked the European Convention that in future it be consulted on culture.

The Committee opinion focuses on three key areas:

- a new 'culture' of interactions between economic, social and environmental practices;
- the effects of changes in the world of work on the structure of society and cultural values;
- a new culture of democracy.

Finally, the EESC proposes to continue consideration, with the Commission and the European Parliament, of the European Parliament's proposal to set up a European Observatory of Cultural Cooperation.

Realities and prospects for appropriate environmental technologies in the candidate countries (own-initiative opinion)

Rapporteur: Mr Lutz Ribbe
(Group III, Various Interests, Germany)

The EESC calls upon the Commission to address its recommendations on appropriate environmental technologies, i.e. technologies which are adapted to local circumstances. The use of such technologies is often little known or infrequently used in both the candidate countries and the current EU Member States. This can be put down, in part, to the significant shortage of know-how and uncertainty over whether it is indeed possible to comply with prescribed standards by using alternative technologies.

The establishment of skill centres for appropriate technologies in the candidate countries, the Committee believes, might be one way of reducing this information shortfall.

Whilst the use of appropriate environmental technology may, in some cases, involve higher planning costs, considerable savings may be made in both the investment and the operational phases, and more, lasting jobs may be created. The savings made in this way could be used to ease the burden on both public and private budgets.

Croatia's application for EU membership (own-initiative opinion)

Rapporteur: Mr Rudolf Strasser
(Group III, Various Interests, Austria)

The EESC recognises Croatia's considerable efforts to meet the prerequisites for EU membership. It also underlines the fact that to meet these conditions, there is an urgent need to carry out a comprehensive reform process that would include the system of administration and the judicial system.

Success of the reforms in order to comply with EU law must also have the full backing of the Croatian people: the EESC therefore recommends that Croatian civil society should be closely involved in the required decision-making processes.

The EESC expresses its concern over the ongoing unresolved problems in the fields of the administration of justice and measures to combat corruption and in connection with the work of the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

Finally the Committee welcomes the fact that the institutional prerequisites for social and civil dialogue in Croatia have either been put in place or are in the process of being installed.

White Paper on European space policy/A coherent European framework for space policy

Rapporteur (for both):
Mr Stéphane Buffetaut (Group I, Employers, France)

The European Economic and Social Committee considers that the Commission communication on the STAR 21 report rightly draws attention to the weaknesses of military aerospace activity in Europe. However, it feels that the Commission probably attaches too much importance to the institutional side of things, and that the main thing is that a real political desire for autonomous Community defence should emerge in Europe. Only that will enable our industries to be given a solid base.

In the field of space, the EESC notes that the White Paper drawn up by the Commission fully answers the requests made by STAR 21. It considers that the Commission/ESA framework agreement and the political guidelines defined by the White Paper should enable Europe's ambitions in space to be revived.

The EESC would point out that the European aerospace industry provides jobs for millions of Europeans and requires highly skilled staff able to master the most

advanced current technologies. It is therefore clear that if the aim of making Europe 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world' is not to remain only an empty and hollow formula, it is up to the Member States to take appropriate action by defining genuine and ambitious European policies.

Economic diversification in the accession countries — Role of SMEs and of companies in the social economy (own-initiative opinion)

Rapporteur: Ms Lucia Fusco
(Group III, Various Interests, Italy)

The EESC takes the view that industrial policy in an enlarged Europe must take account much more effectively of the needs and challenges of small and medium-sized enterprises and social economy enterprises (SEEs) in the accession countries. It would draw attention to their needs, such as management education and training, innovation, quality, design, funding and cooperation instruments such as clusters, second- and third-degree structures, networks, etc., which will be more and more necessary to meet the challenges of EU enlargement and internationalisation.

The EESC acknowledges that the success and effectiveness of SMEs and SEEs are not automatic and do not depend solely on the enterprises themselves. The opportunities for the development of these enterprises and for them to fulfil their roles within the transitional economies and the economic diversification of the accession countries must be supported by a favourable environment which takes account of their particular characteristics. Such an environment should be promoted by means of a specific programme for these countries. The EESC calls on the Commission to promote such a programme for SMEs and SEEs in the accession countries.

The EESC, in the context of its work on the internal market, will closely follow the development of SMEs and SEEs in the EU, paying particular attention to the new Member States.

Finally, the EESC undertakes, and calls upon all the EU institutions, including the Commission, to develop a far-reaching dialogue with all the representative institutions and managers of SMEs and SEEs in the accession countries, in order to meet together the very serious challenges facing these enterprises during the process of their countries' accession to the EU, while remaining aware that this is a major development in the history of 21st century Europe as a whole.

Trade policy aspects of industrial change, especially in the steel sector (own-initiative opinion)

Rapporteur: Mr Goran Lagerholm
(Group I, Employers, Sweden)

The EU steel sector has a vital and strategic interest for the European Union given the competitive technological knowledge base upon which it is built and its strategic importance for the development of infrastructure within the EU and for most manufacturing sectors. Industrial change in the EU steel sector has been effectively

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A photo exhibition to mark a departure: The Ravenstein years (1972-2004) are an important part of the Committee's memory



'The Ravenstein years' will be on display until 4 June.

Before this chapter in our institution's history finally comes to an end, the staff of the EESC and of other institutions, not to mention visitors to the Committee, will be able to see this photographic exhibition, which traces 32 years of the EESC's life in the Ravenstein building.

You can visit the exhibition soon on the EESC's website.

Third meeting of EU/Latin America/Caribbean organised civil society

The third meeting of EU/Latin America/Caribbean organised civil society was held from 13 to 15 April. It was organised by the European Economic and Social Committee with the support of the European Commission and in cooperation with the Mexican Department for External Relations. This meeting brought together delegates from civil society in all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, EESC members, representatives of the European institutions, governments of Latin American and Caribbean countries, and international organisations.

Among those taking part in this event were Mr Roger Briesch (EESC President), Mr Wagner (Presiding Minister of the Brazilian Council for Economic and Social Development), Mr Montalvo (President of the Economic and Social Council of Spain), Mr Abascal (the Mexican Minister for Labour) and Mr Canales Clariond (the Mexican Minister for the Economy).

Participants at the third meeting drew up some recommendations from organised civil society to the Summit

of Heads of State or Government of the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean, which will be held at Guadalajara on 28 and 29 May 2004, on two major themes:

- social cohesion, particularly ways to reduce inequalities, combating exclusion, economic development, and reform of the labour market;
- strengthening the role of organised civil society actors, in particular, strengthening and creating structures for dialogue and the contribution of these actors to the existing dialogue in the context of agreements made between the European Union and the countries and regions of Latin America and the Caribbean.

This third meeting also aims to help strengthen the strategic partnership between the European Union and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean from the viewpoint of regional integration, and will facilitate a joint discussion on ways to achieve better governance.

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enhanced by the use of the ECSC instruments in the restructuring process and the trade policy measures taken to support them.

In the EU steel sector, there exists a significant link between industrial change that is designed to maintain existing, achieve missing or regain lost competitiveness and trade policy strategies designed to ensure the necessary success of change management in both domestic and international markets.

The EESC makes the following recommendations for trade policy to help with industrial change in the future:

- being an export-oriented economy, the European Union should continue a general policy of open market access, provided that common rules of fair trade are respected;
- the European Union should initiate and improve the development of multilateral trade agreements within the WTO, such as the intended steel subsidies agreement, but not endanger existing high EU standards;
- the European Union should continue to conclude bilateral agreements with important trading partners as far as multilateral discussions do not yet cover Community interests.

Joint EESC/Irish ESC conference on public services



Hernández Bataller

As co-organiser of this important conference, the EESC sent a strong delegation to Dublin in order to look at the question of public services. Mr Hernández Bataller (Group II, Employees, Spain), President of the Budget Group and EESC rapporteur for the Green Paper on public services (see opinion adopted in December 2003), provided this summary for *EESC Info*.

Services of general interest, which include services of both an economic and of a non-economic nature, are complex and constantly evolving. They cover a broad range of various types of activity, differing in scale and nature. The way in which these services are organised

varies according to the cultural traditions, history and geographical conditions of each Member State, and the characteristics of the activity concerned, in particular its technological development.

The EESC emphasises that this framework directive (1) needs to be adopted in particular in order to define the concepts used by the Treaties and sectoral directives, as well as the conditions for intervention by the various operators, especially those responsible for providing services of general interest at regional or local level.

As regards the scope of Community action, in addition to its suggestion that a framework directive, accompanied by other, sector-specific proposals, be drawn up, the Committee feels that 'Article 3 of the EC Treaty should include a reference to the provision of services of general interest in the list of activities to be undertaken by the Community to achieve its objectives'. The EESC is pleased to note that the draft Constitution produced by the Convention on the Future of Europe strengthens and amplifies the present Article 16, with a view to providing an adequate legal basis for legislation.

The EESC draws attention to the fact that the primary objective of services of general interest is access for all citizens, consumers and businesses to public services; when such services are provided by a publicly or privately owned enterprise operating in the commercial sector,

the profit- or competitiveness-seeking criterion must under no circumstances be allowed to result in the disappearance of services for some citizens. Services must be uninterrupted and equally accessible to all, even where, due to geographical or technical circumstances in particular, service provision is not economically profitable. In such cases, the administrative, tax-related, legal and technical derogation measures necessary for service provision, including State aid by way of exception from the Community system, must be authorised and encouraged.

As regards those principles that could be included in a framework directive or other general instrument concerning services of general interest, the Committee has already expressed the following view.

'As a citizens' right, services of general economic interest should operate according to the following guidelines:

Equality: All citizens are entitled to equal access to services of general interest. The term equality is to be understood not as an obligation of uniformity, rather as prevention of any unjustified discrimination based on social or personal status in relation to service provision.

Universality: For services supplied, basic services should be universally provided.

Reliability: The provision of services of general interest should be continuous, regular and uninterrupted. Irregular operation or suspension of services will be restricted to specific cases laid down in the regulation governing the sector.

Participation: Users should participate actively in the development of services of general interest. The purpose of such participation is to protect citizens' rights with regard to the adequate provision of services and to promote the cooperation of the service providers.

Transparency: Service providers will ensure that users receive full information on the service provision, especially on the public service obligations and tariffs. To this end, service providers will inform the users of the financial and technical arrangements for the provision of services and of any changes affecting the service, publishing the texts containing the relevant regulation.

Simplification of procedures: As far as possible, service providers will simplify the procedures to be followed by users and will supply the appropriate explanations.'

The EESC repeats that the principle of free administration by the territorial public authorities should be applied, and calls for the criteria used in assessing services of general interest to be diversified and to take special account of quality of service. From the financial point of view, the concept of compensation for the costs incurred by public service obligations should be defined.

(1) 'Framework law' in the terminology used in the draft Constitution for Europe.

FUTURE EVENTS

10 and 11 May, Brussels

EESC participation in the third European forum on cohesion policy

25 and 26 May, Brussels

EESC conference on the financial perspective, with the support of the European Commission

2 and 3 June, Brussels

Committee plenary session

The Communication Group of the EESC will meet on 24 June. Other planned dates in 2004 are 2 September, 21 October and 2 December.

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