

Resolution of the European Economic and Social Committee on The implementation of the renewed Lisbon Strategy

(2007/C 97/13)

On 23-24 March 2006 in its Presidency Conclusions (point 12) the European Council welcomed the initiative taken up by the European Economic and Social Committee to increase ownership of the Lisbon Strategy at Community level. It encouraged the European Economic and Social Committee to continue its work and asked it to prepare a summary report in support of the Partnership for growth and employment by early 2008. This resolution sets out the EESC's position on the renewed Lisbon Strategy and its work on this issue.

The implementation of the renewed Lisbon Strategy

At its Bureau meeting of 14 February 2007, the European Economic and Social Committee decided to present a resolution to the Spring Summit. At its plenary session on 15 and 16 February 2007 (meeting of 15 February 2007), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted this resolution by 125 votes for with 10 abstentions

1. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) welcomes the European Commission's follow-up of the National Reform Programmes (NRPs) presented by the Member States. However, the EESC fears that the relaunch of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005 has still not succeeded in ensuring popular knowledge of, and support for, the Strategy. The EESC stresses that political ownership by Member States of commitments jointly agreed in the Council is key. In addition to the above responsibilities of Member States, efficient partnerships and new alliances with social partners and civil society are needed. Effective multi-level governance, including stakeholder consultation, which is to be closely monitored by the European Commission, must be guaranteed.

1.1 The EESC believes that the current method of assessment should be complemented by transparent benchmarking of Member States' performances with regard to implementation of the Strategy. To this end, tailor-made recommendations for each Member State should lead to focused discussion and, possibly, review in the Council, so that key areas for future action can be identified.

1.2 The EESC is of the opinion that in defining and implementing the NRPs, timely consultations with organised civil society must be carried out at national level so that all parties concerned take responsibility for the process in pursuit of genuine partnership and involvement. National Economic and Social Councils, and similar bodies, should have an important role to play in the countries where they exist.

1.3 The EESC fully endorses greater focus on the renewed strategy. This summer, the EESC will present four information reports on *Investment in knowledge and innovation*, *Business potential, especially with regard to SMEs*, *Employment of priority categories* and *An Energy Policy for Europe* as a basis for its 2008 Summary Report to the European Council. These reports will be drafted in close cooperation with National Economic and Social Councils and similar bodies representing civil society.

1.4 The EESC stresses that full implementation of the renewed Lisbon Strategy implies a coordinated macroeconomic policy which actively promotes growth and employment. The current positive economic outlook should not undermine the ambitions of the Council regarding the implementation of the Strategy. Interdependence between national economies means that structural reforms should be implemented from a European perspective. The NRPs should, therefore, be incorporated into a pan-European macroeconomic policy framework to which all concerned parties should contribute. The global context must continuously be taken into consideration.

1.5 The EESC stresses that continued industrial change, quality of work and quality of life should be ensured in parallel. The aim should be a symbiosis of competitiveness, social cohesion and sustainable development. In working towards this aim, Europe and Member States must decode the message of the renewed Lisbon Strategy in such a way that the grassroots level can obtain a clear understanding of the objectives. This requires effective communication, which, so far, has been lacking.

2. The EESC considers the whole strategy to be a dynamic process which requires constant fine-tuning within the Member States and the Council, and with the European Commission. In order to achieve this, the following issues need to be addressed:

2.1 *At national and regional levels:*

- Lisbon-related priorities, including accompanying resources, should be identified more clearly in the national budgets;
- the whole chain of educational and training systems should be scrutinised and the contents, in terms of general education and scientific and technical training, should be of the highest possible level so as to enable people to adjust to changes in the environment and to foster citizens's participation, higher quality jobs, entrepreneurship and innovation;
- demographic change, and its effects on finances, the labour market and health care, need to be addressed;

- innovative labour market reform should be guided by flexibility provisions which promote competitiveness and at the same time provide adequate social security;
- the Barcelona targets for R&D investment should be met;
- Member States need to make efficient use of exchanges of best practice, which also have the benefit of fostering convergence of goals across Europe.

2.2 *At European level:*

- the Council and the Commission should set timetables and deadlines for agreed priorities;
- a common energy policy is needed;
- addressing climate change is of great importance;
- the European Funds (the Regional Fund, the Social Fund and the 7th Research Framework Programme) and other EU

financial tools, such as the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, should target the Lisbon Strategy's priorities;

2.3 *All levels require:*

- more specific and concrete cooperation with social partners and other stakeholders in the formulation of policies and follow-up related to the Lisbon Strategy;
- a better regulation agenda and a well-functioning internal market, addressing economic, social and environmental development objectives in the context of global changes.

3. The EESC urges the European Council to give its full support to the approach outlined above and to involve organised civil society as a more active player in the implementation of the renewed Lisbon Strategy.

Brussels, 15 February 2007.

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Dimitris DIMITRIADIS
