

## I

(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

## RESOLUTIONS

## EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

478TH PLENARY SESSION HELD ON 22 AND 23 FEBRUARY 2012

**Resolution of the European Economic and Social Committee on the economic and social situation in the European Union, adopted at its 478th plenary session**

(2012/C 143/01)

At its plenary session of 22 and 23 February 2012 (meeting of 22 February), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the present resolution by 157 votes to 30, with 12 abstentions.

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted the present resolution, expressing its deep concern about the situation of the Union and addressing an urgent call to the European institutions and the governments of the Member States to do everything within their power to reaffirm the fundamental and unquestionable value of European unity.

1. The EESC:
  - regrets the fact that there is prevarication and differences of opinion among EU Member States, at the very moment when Europe should be demonstrating its resolve, unity and solidarity;
  - nevertheless welcomes the Eurogroup's agreement of Monday, 20 February on the second aid plan for Greece, but does regret the delays in and sluggish nature of progress towards finding a definitive solution;
  - is, however, concerned about the social and economic consequences, and asks the European Council to back measures for revitalising the economy, especially in those countries hardest hit by the crisis;
  - points out that there is a need to invest in the real economy by means of genuine industrial policies that could help halt the current downward spiral into recession; and
- welcomes the twelve-government initiative addressed to the Council and the Commission.
2. The EESC notes that the public is increasingly coming to doubt the institutions of the Union, and thus the actual Union itself, and - at the same time - lay the blame on the very same Union for its current hardships.
3. The Committee feels that measures on budgetary and fiscal discipline will not be enough on their own, and that economic policy governance in the Euro area and throughout the EU should be broader and more ambitious.
4. The EESC underlines the key role which the European Commission will have to play in setting out Europe's general interest here, particularly as regards implementation of economic and monetary policy measures, including those provided for in the new intergovernmental treaty.
5. In this connection, the EESC wishes to highlight the need to boost the 2020 strategy, especially measures to support

young people, research and innovation and the green economy. The EESC congratulates the European Commission president, Mr Barroso, on the new measures he announced at the European Council meeting on 30 January of this year to promote young people's access to jobs and asks him to ensure the immediate implementation of practical initiatives in this area. The EESC also advocates measures to support small and medium-sized enterprises, in full compliance with applicable EU law.

6. The EESC stresses that, in the negotiations on the future multi-annual financial perspectives for 2014–2020, the EU ought to be endowed with a sizeable, and increasing, budget. It supports the European Commission's proposal to find new own resources for financing the European budget and to make use of different forms of public and/or private investments. For its part, the EESC will draw up a report on the cost of "non-Europe", which will highlight the expected benefits of greater European integration. The EESC also stresses that there should be no discrimination against those countries which have joined the EU since 2004, in terms of eligibility thresholds and criteria for accessing European funds.

7. The EESC supports the idea of a stronger role for the European Central Bank to stabilise the situation in the Euro area, as well as financial engineering mechanisms which make use of private savings and the markets (Eurobonds) for financing promising projects for revitalising economic activity.

8. The EESC therefore calls on the European institutions and national authorities to:

- avoid weakening the treaties in any way, or the institutions established therein;
- implement Community measures that promote growth and support infrastructure development, as well as the efforts of small and medium-sized enterprises, young people's access to the labour market and measures promoting an efficient and clean energy policy for Europe;
- adopt an ambitious budget to apply these measures and strengthen European cohesion;
- speak with one voice to both the European public and the rest of the world;
- address a positive message to young people in Europe so as to present the European Union as a solution for coping with the crisis and which offers them prospects for the future; and
- ensure that decisions taken at all levels are based on real public participation by means of procedures which genuinely involve the European Parliament and national parliaments, entailing effective consultation of organisations representative of civil society, making the most of what autonomous social dialogue can contribute.

Brussels, 22 February 2012.

*The President*  
*of the European Economic and Social Committee*  
Staffan NILSSON

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