I

(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

RESOLUTIONS

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

436th PLENARY SESSION HELD ON 30 AND 31 MAY 2007

Resolution of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 'Contribution to the European Council of 21 and 22 June 2007 — Roadmap for the constitutional process'

(2007/C 256/01)

At its meeting of 29 May 2007, the Bureau of the European Economic and Social Committee decided to present to the plenary assembly a resolution on the roadmap for the constitutional process as a contribution to the European Council of 21 and 22 June 2007.

At its plenary session of 30 and 31 May 2007 (meeting of 30 May 2007), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted this resolution by 171 votes to 18 with 16 abstentions.

1. The EESC emphatically confirms its opinions on the Constitutional Treaty of 24 September 2003 (1), 28 October 2004 (2) and 17 May 2006 (3), as well as its resolution of 14 March 2007 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome (4). In all these opinions, the EESC unreservedly declared its support for the Convention method as well as the outcome.

2. The EESC continues to support the Constitutional Treaty, which differs fundamentally and positively from all the institutional texts hitherto produced by the various Intergovernmental Conferences revising the Treaties of Rome in the following ways: it came about with the participation of national and European parliamentarians in free and public debate; it systematically summarises in one single text the entire political and institutional arrangements as they have evolved since the establishment of the European Communities; it contains the provisions for the necessary institutional and procedural reforms of the European Union’s decision-making system, describes the objectives that the EU must pursue, states the values which should form the foundation of its policies, and codifies the fundamental rights that it must respect and protect.

3. All this has justified calling the Convention’s draft a ‘Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe’. Owing to numerous misunderstandings, the term ‘constitution’ has, however, met with rejection in some Member States. The EESC is not opposed to the new treaty being given a new name. The substance is more important than the name.

4. The following reasons, which contribute to the strengthening of the EU’s democratic legitimacy, are of decisive importance to the EESC, as the institutional representation of organised civil society, for its continued support for the Constitutional Treaty:

— The increase in the European Parliament’s competences by extending co-decision rights to new areas

— An increased involvement of the National Parliaments in the work of the European Union by granting them the right to monitor compliance with the principle of subsidiarity

— The improved transparency of the proceedings of the Council of the European Union

— The strengthening of the role of autonomous social dialogue and the recognition of the social partners as players in European integration

— The recognition of the importance of participatory democracy, in particular by requiring the European institutions to maintain a transparent and regular dialogue with civil society organisations and EU citizens.
— To the same end, the granting of a right of initiative to EU citizens.

5. The EESC points out that the Heads of State or Government of all the Member States approved the Constitutional Treaty at a meeting of the European Council and formally signed it at a ceremony in Rome on 29 October 2004. Since then the Constitutional Treaty has also been ratified by a two-thirds majority of the Member States with a population representing a clear majority of the citizens of the European Union. The EESC therefore insists that the Constitutional Treaty must remain the basis for further discussions to solve the present crisis.

6. The EESC supports the German Presidency in its intention to present a roadmap for future endeavours to solve the crisis on the occasion of the meeting of the European Council on 21 and 22 June 2007, and welcomes the fact that in the Berlin Declaration of 25 March 2007 the European Parliament elections of 2009 were set as a deadline for the entry into force of the new Constitution.

7. This means that by the end of 2007 an Intergovernmental Conference of short duration must adopt the changes to the existing draft that are necessary in order to forge a new consensus. The mandate for this Intergovernmental Conference will accordingly have to list precisely the few provisions on which discussions can be reopened. The outcome would have to be ratified by all Member States during the course of 2008.

8. The fresh discussions on the Treaty must preserve the substance of what was decided at the European Convention and afterwards unanimously approved by the Heads of State and Government. These include, first and foremost, the institutional and procedural innovations as well as the binding nature of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. This means: Part I (Objectives, Institutions, Framework of the Union), Part II (The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union) and Part IV (General and Final Provisions) must remain as they are; Part III in essence contains the provisions of the current Treaties which relate to the policies of the European Union which need not necessarily form part of the new Treaty; the institutional and procedural provisions of Part III should, where they go further than existing law, be incorporated into Part I.

9. The EESC will follow the work of the Intergovernmental Conference in a constructive way. However, it also stresses that, despite the expected short duration of the Intergovernmental Conference and despite its limited mandate, civil society organisations should be given the opportunity for consultative involvement. The EESC is prepared, in cooperation with the Council Presidency, to organise the appropriate information and consultation meetings; here it can draw on its positive experience of cooperation with the Praesidium as well as with the European Parliament during the work of the European Convention.

10. There is an urgent need for a speedy resolution of the present crisis by the adoption of a treaty that meets the requirements of a Union of 27 Member States. For new challenges make it essential that the European Union reaches agreements on new policies and takes far-reaching decisions, above all with regard to the further development of the European social model, of which services of general interest (SGIs) are a component, and the strengthening of the social dimension of European integration; tackling the negative effects which have been brought about by the globalisation of all economic, social and cultural relations; promoting economic growth and strengthening competitiveness; tackling climate change; ensuring energy supply; dealing with problems relating to immigration; and combating poverty and social exclusion.

Brussels, 30 May 2007

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Dimitris DIMITRIADIS