

Europe must be more efficient, concrete and closer to its citizens. The President of the European Economic and Social Committee, Henri Malosse, turned his vision into action just three months after his election: it transforms the EESC and presents a concrete action plan to the Commission.

The Committee relies on the new powers conferred to it by the Lisbon Treaty, aimed at strengthening participatory democracy and civil dialogue. Its Bureau met on Tuesday, July 9, and decided on a plan of major structural reforms.

This reform of the working methods will have a major impact on the upstream decision making process. This will allow the Committee to adopt a mechanism of anticipation and identification of priorities in order to focus its work on real concerns in the field.

But the EESC also wants to play a follow up role, in the context of the evaluation of the Community legislation. This is why the Observatories of the Committee will now concentrate their resources on the production of impact assessments, and the EESC will soon be launching a study on the economic and social impact of the Services Directive. The Committee will also be able to implement the concrete ideas it proposes; notably, a project is to be launched against food waste in the European Union.

It is in this new context that the EESC adopted its contribution to the 2014 work program of the European Commission. Among the measures adopted, the Committee is requesting to develop projects related to citizens' expectations:

- a European action plan for learning based on existing good practice,
- the creation of *Social Eurobonds* to finance enterprises or social projects
- a feasibility study of a European anti-poverty funds,
- strengthening of the *Small Business Act* with innovative financial instruments for SMEs such as microfinance, *crowdfunding* or mezzanine financing.

[For more information about the EESC contribution to the 2014 work program of the European Commission click here.](#)

Interview with Henri Malosse, president, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

By Sophie Petitjean | Friday 12 July 2013

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) reacted in the strongest terms to the conclusions of the June European Council. According to its President, Henri Malosse, the member states are simply carrying out a public relations exercise and are not considering a comprehensive reform of EU rules required by today's situation.

Why do you say Europe is “tinkering” when it comes to addressing the problem of youth unemployment?

I find that it's not right to allocate 0.7% of the EU budget to youth unemployment and nearly 10% to building roads and bridges. The other problem is that the €6 billion for the Youth Employment Initiative will go through the usual channels, namely the European Social Fund, and that this will take an extremely long time. A good part of the money will end up in consultants' pockets. In my view, this is nothing more than a public relations exercise.

So what do you suggest?

I would have liked to see the billions of euro not used under the Structural Funds allocated to actions for young people. I also would have welcomed changes in European procedures because it currently takes a year and a half for the slightest euro to reach a beneficiary. We need to stop fattening up consultants (of the €6 billion, nearly 20-25% will end up in consultants' pockets). [...] It's like EIB loans to small and medium-sized enterprises: I don't know of a single small company that has already directly benefited from such loans.

As I see it, the funds should be allocated directly to the social partners, who are capable of creating apprenticeships in companies, setting up work-training systems and giving young people their first experience in working life. But that takes political courage.

Do you think the youth guarantee will produce more results than ten years ago?

In principle it's a good idea. But I think that it will be a failure like the Lisbon strategy if we don't have: 1. more resources, allocated faster to the economic and social players and complementary at national and European levels; 2. more efficient procedures; 3. economic policies that encourage employment (which is not the case today); and 4. closer involvement of the social partners and taxation that offers incentives to companies.

Money is not the whole story. What else do you think is needed?

Indeed, this is not just a problem of money. The EU should be more aggressive about protecting European interests during trade negotiations. There should be greater convergence of economic policies in Europe that protect European interests and support industrial cooperation. There also has to be a change of mentality in support of youth employment.