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## **"Commission Work Programme 2010"**

*Check Against Delivery  
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

Plenary session of the European Economic and Social Committee

**Brussels, 28 April 2010**

Mister President, Dear Mr Sepi, Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to start by thanking you for inviting me to present the Commission Work Programme 2010. This is a work programme, which sets a very ambitious agenda for the European Union, and a work programme which requires all stakeholders, including EESC, to play their full part for ambition to be turned into lasting impact. The coming years will be crucial in casting the right foundation for the Europe of future generations. A Europe for employment. A Europe for enterprise. An inclusive and sustainable Europe. The backing of the EESC is particularly important. We need your commitment to endorse the Commission initiatives and to mobilize economic and social partners for their successful implementation.

This Work Programme is the first to be adopted after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, which has seen a significant strengthening of the role of your Committee. The Lisbon Treaty offers new perspectives for the EESC, and the Committee will be able to assume a reinforced role in the functioning of the EU. The Treaty opens up new prospects for an increased involvement of the EESC in a number of key policy areas, such as energy and research policies. As commissioner responsible for inter institutional relations, I reiterate the Commission's openness to intensify our exchanges. Your expertise is an invaluable input in the policy process.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me outline some of the main priorities of the Commission Work Programme, before briefly explaining the design of this year's work programme and addressing the particular role of your Committee.

[contents of CWP]

Exiting from the crisis and laying the ground for sustainable growth and employment will remain the top priority in the years ahead. Determined and consistent action is required in the short and medium terms as well as in the long term.

[Macroeconomy]

By putting in place a support mechanism for Greece, the European Union already took important action to balance the financial and economic interdependence of its Member States – thereby defending the collective interest. But we must go further. As one of its key initiatives, in May the Commission will set out new ideas on enhanced economic policy coordination.

The Commission must deepen its role as the guarantor of the system and as best placed to look at the full range of economic risks and imbalances. We need the right internal mechanisms, and the right external representation. With the right structures and the right approach, Europe can help return public finances to a sustainable path and provide the right platform for a broader and long-lasting

recovery. A sound basis for business and employment - investment and inclusion.

[financial regulation]

In parallel, we must continue efforts to establish a more ethical, robust and responsible financial system. A financial system that serves the real economy. In 2010, the Commission will table proposals in key areas such as derivatives markets, deposit guarantee schemes and market abuse. The protection of normal consumers of financial services will be given particular attention.

[Europe 2020]

The delivery of Europe 2020 is a cornerstone of the Commission's work programme. The overarching goal of the seven Europe 2020 flagships is to catalyse real change and to take action in areas, where genuine European added value can be delivered. A few examples:

The Digital Agenda will aim to bring down remaining barriers - thereby establishing a genuine Single e-Market - and on providing broadband to all Europeans - thus giving equal access to the new opportunities offered by a digital society. A new industrial policy aims at ensuring Europe's future competitiveness in the globalisation era. With 35 million jobs today, industry is an indispensable generator of growth and employment. It must remain so in the future.

The European Union can also help to drive the transition to a resource efficient and climate resilient economy. The energy and transport sectors will get particular attention this year – both critical to turn the challenge of a sustainable Europe into our competitive advantage.

The European Plan for research and innovation and the "Youth on the Move" initiative are other areas, where joint European action can make the difference between global leadership and relative decline. But we must act now to make it happen.

The Single Market will continue to constitute the backbone of the European economy. Tapping its full potential is particularly important for Small and Medium sized enterprises, which are the drivers of job creation in the European Union. Bringing the Single market into the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be one of the greatest challenges of this Commission. The next few weeks will see the report of Mario Monti and the Commission's vision of how to reshape the internal market, the springboard to develop a major package of initiatives by 2012.

[social affairs]

I want to take this opportunity to stress the importance of social inclusion in our vision for Europe 2020: The real strength of a society rests on the opportunities it creates for its weakest citizens. We must seize every opportunity to encourage employment. That means being ready to exploit the emerging sectors which will generate the new jobs. It means providing people with the right skills to create and sustain high employment levels and facilitate economic transition. It

means working to overcome the impact of the crisis on young people by easing transitions from education and training to work. It means continuously improving working conditions in a way that benefits both employers and employees, with the revised proposal on the Working Time Directive as a concrete example.

A broad-ranged European Platform against Poverty will aim to ensure economic, social and territorial cohesion, building on the current European year for combating poverty and social exclusion. Awareness building is essential and social partners and civil society have a crucial role to play. The conference, which you will be organising in Florence this May concerning education and the fight against poverty, is therefore particularly welcome. Experience shows that education is the most effective and durable means of assisting people to exiting from poverty.

[Citizens' agenda]

Looking beyond the economic and social fields, the Commission Work Programme also announces major initiatives in other policy areas of great importance to citizens and businesses. The implementation of the Stockholm Programme will make the area of freedom, security and justice become more tangible to the citizens, develop an open and secure Europe with a particular focus on tackling cross-border crime and advance a common immigration and asylum policy.

When we look to 2020, we must also address a number of long-term trends with growing impact on the daily lives of citizens. Action now

will pay dividends in the future. The Commission will launch public debates on the future of pensions and analyse options for ensuring the sustainability and adequacy of the pension systems. Needless to say, the contribution of social partners to this debate is indispensable.

In the external field, the new role of the HR/VP and the start of the External Action Service will offer us the tools to build a stronger and more coherent EU external policy. At the same time, the Commission will continue to deepen the "Community" side of external policy. We will set out strategic trade policy priorities, take forward trade negotiations and work with partners on issues ranging from market access to regulatory framework and global imbalances. We will project our Europe 2020 objectives on the global market place, for example through the G20. Another key priority for the Commission is to pursue the international development agenda and propose an EU action plan in the run up to the 2015 Millennium Development Goals Summit. And our commitment to biodiversity will be reflected both in our internal and external activities.

Finally, the Commission will publish the Budget Review and set out what we see as the key principles and parameters for using the EU's financial resources to best effect, taking full account of the Europe 2020 Strategy. In parallel, we will be making more detailed assessments of key areas including agriculture and cohesion.

[structure of CWP]

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year's Commission Work Programme is structured around a number of innovations to improve transparency and dialogue. Let me briefly explain.

This work programme - and future programmes - need to offer the right framework for all stakeholders to build a solid consensus on where Europe should concentrate its attention, efforts and resources. We therefore need to be more political, and we also need to reflect the multiannual challenge of initiatives of the scale we intend.

On the one hand, the programme identifies strategic initiatives - 34 to be exact. These are initiatives, which we commit to put on the table before the end of December. On the other hand, the Programme includes an indicative overview, covering 280 initiatives on which the Commission intends to work over the coming years. Not all of these initiatives will necessarily lead to the submission of concrete proposals: In line with principles of smart regulation, need to assess thoroughly which items should go forward and in which form.

The Work Programme will be reviewed every year to identify new strategic initiatives and adapt the multi-annual strand as required.

This "rolling" approach will enhance transparency and predictability, allowing all stakeholders to organise their activities and time their input to the policy process. At the same time, it preserves the necessary flexibility to react to unforeseen developments. The last



years have shown that strategic blueprints cannot be cast in stone, they have to adapt to reality on the ground.

The 34 strategic initiatives include a wide range of Commission initiatives that are of particular importance for the EESC (economic crisis-exit proposals; social dimension matters; future transport policy; energy and CAP reform 2013). The Commission is delighted that the EESC puts a strong emphasis on the mentioned issues by publishing own-initiative opinions (for instance CA reforms 2013). Your enthusiasm and expertise are of significant value.

Let me say a few remarks to your concerns on the lack of ambition of the Commission proposals to overcome the economic and social current crisis (I am referring to Mr SEPI's letter to President BARROSO, 31 mars 2010). We fully share your concerns about growing unemployment and the gravity of the challenges the economic crisis poses to all of us. Therefore the Commission highly appreciates your concrete suggestions concerning the crisis exit-strategies and will reflect on to what extent your recommendations could be taken into consideration.

Before finishing, I would like to return briefly to the Europe 2020 strategy, which will be a main focus of your as well as our activities in the coming years.

By presenting the Europe 2020 right on taking office, this Commission set the scene to help bring Europe back on track. On track for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The support for the main priorities of the Strategy, which you already expressed at our

meeting in March, is crucial in building and sustaining the momentum. Only if social partners and civil society play their full role in driving economic reform, Europe will be able to make a sustained exist from the current downturn.

This is true at the EU-level, where the European Economic and Social Committee already played an active role during the Lisbon strategy through its Observatory on the Lisbon Strategy. The Commission stands ready to pursue its dialogue with the Observatory even more actively.

The same true on the ground in the Member States. To deliver reforms much better this time round than under the Lisbon strategy, we will need to work towards forging a close and strong partnership between the central government, regions and municipalities, parliament, social partners and civil society. In setting national targets, in identifying bottlenecks, in devising national reform programmes – and last but not least in implementing this programme – all actors must be associated and play their role.

Ultimately, we should arrive at a strong consensus between European social partners around the need and the way of delivering the Europe 2020 reforms to avoid Europe declining. I am confident that the European Economic and Social Committee can lead in forging that consensus.

Thank you for your attention.

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Closing remarks

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Commission has high ambitions for 2010 and the coming years. I have listened with great interest to the interventions and I welcome your firm support to work together to achieve them.

As I have already stressed, this Committee can play a key role in driving economic and social change. In turning vision and work programme into reality and reform.

Not least through your network of national Economic and Social councils, you have unique access to key players and decision makers at all levels of society. The outreach and awareness that you can generate is unmatched.

I invite you to invest your influence in Europe's future. In smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

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