



European Economic and Social Committee

SOC/208
YOUTH POLICY

Brussels, 26 October 2005

OPINION

of the

European Economic and Social Committee

on the

Communication from the Commission to the Council on European policies concerning youth –

Addressing the concerns of young people in Europe –

Implementing the European Youth Pact and promoting active citizenship

COM(2005) 206 final

On 30 May 2005, the European Commission decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 262 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the

Communication from the Commission to the Council on European policies concerning youth. Addressing the concerns of young people in Europe – Implementing the European Youth Pact and promoting active citizenship
(COM(2005) 206 final).

The Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 5 October 2005. The rapporteur was Mrs Jillian van Turnhout.

At its 421st plenary session, held on 26 and 27 October 2005 (meeting of 26 October 2005), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 126 votes in favour, no votes against and with three abstentions.

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1. **Introduction**

- 1.1 The European Economic and Social Committee acknowledges the European Youth Pact and its elaboration as outlined in this Communication from the Commission on European policies concerning youth. This Communication provides a framework that can serve as a basis for future policy development in areas affecting young people in the European Union.
- 1.2 The destiny of Europe increasingly depends on its ability to foster societies that are welcoming towards children and young people. Adoption of the European Pact for Youth by the Spring 2005 European Council, as part of the revised Lisbon Strategy focussing on growth and jobs, is a recognition that integrating young people in society and working life, and making better use of their potential, are essential for ensuring a return to sustained and sustainable growth in Europe.
- 1.3 In acknowledgement of the multitude of challenges for young people in today's society the EESC has regularly contributed to youth policy development at Community level for over a

decade¹. It has initiated important debates on key areas, such as youth employment, social integration, education, mobility, participation and the role of NGOs. Whilst the EESC is also cognisant of the challenges currently facing the European Union and the need to regain confidence.

- 1.4 The EESC recommends that Young People are placed at the centre of this framework and are encouraged and given space to actively participate in the development of policies. Contributing to change is a major motivation for young people to get involved. The Member States and institutions must provide the necessary resources, supports and mechanisms to facilitate young people at all levels to engage in decisions and actions that impact on their lives. Only real influence will lead to real responsibility.
- 1.5 More than ever, Europe needs young people's ongoing commitment that will help to build an integrated, competitive, safe and inclusive Europe. If the European Union is to mean anything to young people, it must be relevant in their lives and show a clear interest in and respond visibly and creatively to their needs. Equally, success of this initiative depends on the involvement of all parties concerned, in particular, youth organisations as well as regional and local authorities and the social partners. The EESC has taken on board the "idea which emerges" from the High Level Group's report on the future of social policy in an enlarged European Union: "from a new intergenerational pact" to a pact focused on the elderly and based on fears ... to a new pact focused on the young and based on confidence ... to turn all these fears into a "win-win" process based on a positive perception of the future and a new intergenerational balance'.
- 1.6 Consequently, the EESC hopes that this Communication will lay the basis, both at the European and national level, for a greater partnership between decision-makers and young people. Real and continued involvement of young people and youth organisations in the development and implementation of policies will ensure that young peoples' real needs are addressed and that young people feel an ownership of the Lisbon process.

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White Paper: Youth Policy (OJ C 116 of 20.4.2001 – Rapporteur: Mrs Hassett-van Turnhout)

European Commission White Paper - A New Impetus for European Youth (OJ C 149 of 21.6.2002 – Rapporteur: Mrs Hassett-van Turnhout)

Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Year of Education through Sport 2004 (OJ C 149 of 21.6.2002 – Rapporteur: Mr Koryfidis)

Proposal for a European Parliament and of the Council decision establishing a Community action programme to promote bodies active at European level in the field of youth (OJ C 10 of 14.1.2004 – Rapporteur: Mrs Hassett-van Turnhout)

SOC/174 Relations between the generations (OJ C 157 of 28.6.2005 – Rapporteur: Mr Bloch-Lainé)

SOC/177 Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council creating the Youth in Action programme for the period 2007-2013 (OJ C 234 of 22.9.2005 – Rapporteur: Mr Rodríguez García-Caro).

2. Background

- 2.1 At the Spring European Council of 22-23 March, the EU Heads of State and Government adopted a “European Youth Pact”². In proposing this Pact the Heads of State and Government of France, Germany, Spain and Sweden identified four principal issues: the vulnerability of young people; the need to develop solidarity across the generations, in an ageing society; the need to equip young people through their education and training; the need for better coherence across all policy areas that concern young people.
- 2.2 The Communication addresses a range of issues and policy areas that are of high concern to young people in Europe, and were identified as such in the Commission’s White Paper *A new impetus for European youth* and the subsequent Council resolution of 27 June 2002, which set the framework for youth policy in Europe.
- 2.3 In response to the Spring Council conclusions, the European Commission adopted integrated guidelines on 12 April³. This package of guidelines, comprising on the one hand a recommendation for Broad Economic Policy Guidelines, and on the other hand a proposal that has been endorsed for a Council decision on Employment Guidelines, should serve as a basis for the national reform programmes for the next three years, to be drawn up by the member states.
- 2.4 In the introduction to the guidelines, the importance of involving the relevant stakeholders in the Lisbon Strategy is underlined, and it is stated that member states as well as the EU should take every opportunity to involve regional and local governments, social partners and civil society in the implementation of the integrated guidelines.
- 2.5 While the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines concentrate on the contribution of economic policies to achieving the Lisbon goals, the Employment Guidelines relate especially to the European Employment Strategy and aim to coordinate the employment policies of the member states. It is in the Employment guidelines that, with specific reference to the European Youth Pact, some action lines of the Pact are incorporated in the integrated guidelines. Two guidelines in particular reflect the content of the European Youth Pact: guideline No 18 includes building employment pathways for young people and reducing youth unemployment, better reconciliation of work and private life and childcare facilities; guideline No 23 includes reducing the number of early school leavers, increasing access to initial vocational, secondary and higher education, including apprenticeships and entrepreneurship training. Also, guideline No 24 includes broadening the supply of education and training tools, developing frameworks to support the transparency of qualifications, their effective recognition and the validation of non-formal and informal learning. At the end of the

² http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/84335.pdf.

³ SOC/206 The Employment Guidelines: 2005-2008 (CESE 675/2005 of 31.5.2005 – Rapporteur: Mr Malosse).

employment guidelines, it is repeated that member states should establish a broad partnership for change by involving parliamentary bodies and stakeholders, including those at regional and local levels.

- 2.6 This initiative highlights youth in core areas of the Lisbon partnership for growth and jobs, in particular via the European Employment and Social Inclusion Strategies and also the Education and Training 2010 Work programme, and calls for consistency across the initiatives within them.
- 2.7 Adoption of the Pact coincides with the completion of the first cycle of implementing the White Paper on a new impetus for European youth of 2001, taken forward in the Council Resolution of June 2002. This established a framework of European cooperation in the youth field for enhancing young peoples' active citizenship, through an open method of coordination (OMC) by including a youth dimension in other policies.
- 2.8 The European Youth Pact as it has been finally adopted at the Spring Meeting of the European Council stresses the need for young Europeans to benefit from a set of policies and measures forming a fully integrated part of the Lisbon Strategy and aims to improve the education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social inclusion of young people, and to facilitate the reconciliation of working life and family life. The European Youth Pact also includes the ambition to ensure the overall consistency of initiatives in these areas and to provide a starting point for strong, ongoing mobilisation on behalf of young people. It also notes that the success of the European Youth Pact depends on the involvement of all parties concerned, first and foremost national, regional and local youth organisations as well as the European, regional and local authorities and the social partners. Lines of action are proposed for Member States to draw upon in three fields: 1) employment, integration and social advancement; 2) education training and mobility; and 3) the reconciliation of working life and family life.

3. **Involvement of Young People**

- 3.1 In drafting this opinion the EESC organised a consultation of representatives of organisations involving young people on 6 September 2005. The results of this consultation are included in this opinion.
- 3.2 The involvement of young people must be the starting point for all strands. Any Policy aimed at young people must be characterised by the fundamental principle of youth participation: a principle that is reiterated at European and International level⁴. While the EESC welcomes the

⁴ EESC White Paper: Youth Policy, CES 1418/2000; Declaration of the United Nations on the International Year of Youth 1985, "Peace Participation, Development"; United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; European Charter on Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe, 1992; Resolution of Council and Ministers for Youth meeting with the Council of 8 February 1999 (OJ 1999/C42/01).

measures to consult with young people at a European level, in particular through the organisation of the “États Généraux” in 2005, it is with regret that the EESC notes that the Communication does not sufficiently outline with tangible recommendations how young people and youth organisations will be involved and will participate at a member state level. The EESC calls on the Commission and Member States to utilise more creative methods to reach and engage with young people.

- 3.3 The EESC stresses the importance of the active participation and autonomy of young people, not only in the labour market, but in society at large. The active participation of young people in society and their autonomy should be both an objective and a method that contributes to the personal development of young people, to their sense of initiative and their social integration and to the social cohesion in general.
- 3.4 The EESC notes with regret that mechanisms to truly involve young people and their organisations are not clearly outlined in this Communication. At the hearing on 6 September 2005, referred to in point 3.1, students' organisations, among others, stressed the extent to which seeing young people run general interest organisations by proxy – in this instance, the students' compulsory social security system – allowed young people as a whole – not just organised youth – to take responsibility for and to represent themselves as a group. The EESC calls on the Commission and Member States to develop and implement their policies in partnership with young people and youth organisations and continue to involve them in all steps. Young people and youth organisations and social partners *must* be consulted on the development of measures for this initiative with the national Lisbon reform programmes and on following up implementation.
- 3.5 The EESC looks forward to receiving the synthesis report⁵ of the Commission documenting the work to date of Member States in the area of youth participation as part of the OMC⁶ process. It is hoped that this synthesis report will provide examples of good practice which could be replicated in other Member States.
- 3.6 The EESC seeks clarification on the role of civil society organisations, in particular youth organisations, in the cycle of the open method of co-ordination. It should be recalled that paragraph 38 of the Lisbon European Council conclusions describes a role for NGOs in the Open Method of Coordination⁷. Given its expertise and experience, the EESC can play an active role in this field, and help devise and to enable a mechanism within its own sphere for the involvement of young people and youth organisations.

⁵ It is forecast that this will be published by end of 2005.

⁶ Open Method of Coordination.

⁷ Paragraph 38 of the Lisbon conclusions states that a method of benchmarking best practices and managing change will be devised by the European Commission networking with different providers and users, namely the social partners, companies and NGOs.

4. Youth in the Lisbon Partnership for Growth and Jobs

- 4.1 The EESC welcomes the special attention that the Pact is giving to the issue of youth employment. However the Youth Pact should be developed and implemented from a perspective that views it as an important goal in itself, and not merely as an element of the Lisbon Strategy. Moreover, while the success of the Lisbon Strategy is important for young people, young people are also important for the success of the Lisbon strategy. Investing in young people is essential to achieve higher growth and employment rates, continued innovation and stronger entrepreneurship. Their involvement in the strategy and their sense of ownership of and commitment to its objectives are necessary to make Lisbon work.
- 4.2 Likewise the issue of employment is central to the concerns of Europe's citizens and every effort must be made to combat unemployment, the unacceptable level of which poses a real threat to the cohesion of our societies⁸. The youth unemployment rate in Europe is still more than twice the average unemployment rate. Many young people face the very real possibility of being unemployed or struggling to live on a low income. For young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, ethnic minorities, immigrants, the disabled and women, the risks of being socially excluded are even higher. On the broader front, it is young people as a whole who are affected by issues such as vulnerability, poverty and dependency; this constitutes a historically unprecedented tragedy as well as a new opportunity for forging solidarity among young people as a whole and for society in order to find a way out of this unprecedented situation in Europe.
- 4.3 Young people are more at risk of unemployment and, if at work, of low income⁹. The Lisbon Strategy aims to create not only more jobs but better jobs. To ensure that every young person has a real chance of entering the labour market, greater emphasis must be given to appropriate training, education, apprenticeships and opportunities for young people to achieve personal and professional fulfilment and gain the necessary skills for living. It is also important that school education should enable young people to manage their working lives and make successful use of life-long learning mechanisms.
- 4.4 The EESC underlines the recognition of demographic change in Europe and the links to the Commissions Green Paper on confronting demographic change¹⁰. For example the number of 0-14 year olds will decline by 11% from 2000 to 2015 and continue to do so by 6% until 2030. Parallel to this change the EESC underlines the social, cultural and political change in Europe. Demographic change is not purely about statistics and numbers, it is imperative that a wider perspective is taken when considering the appropriate policies and actions. As the High

⁸ European Council Presidency Conclusions, Luxembourg 1997.

⁹ Report of the High Level Group on the future of social policy in an enlarged European Union.

¹⁰ COM(2005) 94 -Demographic change - solidarity between the generations (CESE 818/2005).

Level Group on the future of social policy in an enlarged European Union points out, this demographic situation, which will see a significant reduction in the comparative influence of young people as a group up until at least 2025 can, if we grasp it, present an opportunity as it implies "less demand for societal resources" and the possibility of bringing about substantial improvements in these fields at a steady cost.

4.5 Therefore, the EESC believes that a European Pact *for and with* young people would have the potential to significantly improve the living conditions and prospects of young people in Europe while at the same time it could reinforce the effective implementation of the Lisbon Strategy.

5. **The European Youth Pact**

5.1 The EESC welcomes the conclusions of the European Council that young people would benefit from a set of policies and measures fully integrated in the revised Lisbon Strategy.

5.2 In the Communication the following aspects of the Integrated Guidelines were identified as relevant to maximise the impact of the Youth Pact:

- (i) Measures for the employment, integration and social advancement of young people. The Integrated Guidelines concentrate on the contribution of employment policies to creating more and better jobs.
- (ii) Measures for education, training and mobility. The Integrated Guidelines underline the need for Europe to expand and improve investment in human capital, and to adapt education and training systems. In addition they invite Member States to increase opportunities for mobility, including increased opportunities for young people to work and study abroad.
- (iv) Measures for reconciliation of family life and work life. The Integrated Guidelines address the need to achieve a better work life balance addressing issues such as childcare, family friendly working arrangements and equality.

5.3 The EESC is disappointed to note that while Actions have been identified for each of the above measures the Communication fails to identify explicit and measurable targets for either the Member States or for the Commission. At a time when citizens are questioning the value of the European Union it is vital that Europe is seen to take effective action. In order to achieve this it is essential that the targets are unequivocal and result-driven.

5.4 National governments must be encouraged to quantify objectives and set clear targets in their national reform programmes. These objectives and targets must not only address the challenges young people face in the areas identified but also address issues which have a significant, albeit indirect, influence on the achievement of these objectives. Housing and accommodation as well as the need for family policy aimed at young parents are prominent

among these issues. It is also important that effective coordination mechanisms are put in place, both at European and national level, to achieve a coherent approach in all areas.

5.5 The EESC requests that the following targets be considered for inclusion in Member States Lisbon Strategy national reform programmes:

- Set targets for each Member State to reduce the number of young people unemployed by a minimum of 50% in the period 2006-2010 (currently 17.9% in European Union for under 25s)¹¹.
- Develop social protection systems that enable young people to be in a position to make choices to determine their own future.
- Initiate measures to promote the social inclusion of young people, in particular to combat the problem of young people who are not in education, training, employment or registered as unemployed.
- Set targets to reduce the gender gap as regards access to vocational and technological training, and reduce wage differences at the time of recruitment.
- Reduce early school leaving by 50% in the period 2006-2010 and promote work experience in companies.
- Promote the importance of foreign language competence in improving education and employment opportunities as well as the mobility of young people.
- Foster young entrepreneurship by providing financial and technical support and by minimising the bureaucracy involved in taking over, transferring and establishing an enterprise.
- Support regulated, inspected universal early childhood education and care to agreed standards.
- Provide additional supports to families experiencing disadvantage.

5.6 The EESC encourages the Commission to continue its work on the recognition of youth work and looks forward to the introduction of initiatives including "Youthpass". However the EESC considers that the "Youthpass" alone is not sufficient action in order to strengthen the recognition of youth work. It therefore recommends that the Commission should engage with employer organisations, workers organisations, representatives of the formal education system and appropriate NGOs to develop versatile methodology to raise the awareness on the contribution of youth work to the development of young people and the skills, values and attitudes that young people gain through active involvement in youth organisations and youth work activities. The EESC could facilitate this process.

5.7 The European countries which score top positions in the competitiveness ranking drawn up by the World Economic Forum all have high level of investment in social policy and social

¹¹ Page 3 Commission Communication.

protection and show high employment rates and low poverty after social transfers¹². Sustainable social security systems, based on the principle of solidarity, designed to afford protection against the major risks encountered in the life of the individual are the foundations for success.

- 5.8 The EESC urges that the situation of young people in rural areas and poor urban areas be given greater consideration. Young people are often disadvantaged because of the area in which they live. In many rural areas and poor urban areas, young people do not have access to high quality education, training, mobility, health services, leisure facilities, employment opportunities or have chances to participate in civil society. Specific measures should be introduced to ensure that young people in certain geographical areas could benefit fully from opportunities and make choices in their own lives. The remoteness of many rural areas means that young people do not have good access to information, especially regarding opportunities.
- 5.9 The EESC welcomes the proposal to launch a study on the social integration of highly disadvantaged young people in 2005. However, Member States need to step up to the challenge of eradicating child poverty and put immediate targets in place. Meeting this challenge will require a comprehensive, sustained and fully-resourced programme of action that addresses the multi-dimensional nature of child poverty. Child poverty has a severe impact on children across a range of issues such as health, education and even a child's future "life chances" of ever breaking out of the poverty trap. Member States need to immediately implement policies addressing the entire spectrum of these issues.
- 5.10 The Commission is committed to mainstream disability, which it expressly confirms in the European Action Plan on Equal Opportunities for people with disabilities from 2003¹³. Therefore the Commission has a duty to combat discrimination in all actions of the Commission. Mainstreaming disability is necessary in order to ensure the full and equal participation and inclusion of disabled persons in society. In order to include disabled young persons entirely in youth policy, the EESC stresses that the following points need be included in the Communication: Equal participation to the activities of the Youth Programme; Equal Access to information on youth policy and youth projects and Awareness raising measures.
- 5.11 Young people are not an homogeneous group. The EESC recommends, therefore, that policies made at the national level should be sufficiently varied and respect the needs of both the labour market and the individual. The Committee also recommends that the European Commission conduct an analysis of the circumstances and needs of young people in Europe.

¹² Report of the High Level Group on the Future of Social Policy in an enlarged European Union, May 2004.

¹³ COM(2003) 650 final, Brussels 30.10.2003.

6. Active Citizenship of Young People

- 6.1 The EESC commends the Commission for including the active citizenship of young people in this initiative despite the fact that it was excluded from the European Youth Pact. The EESC concurs with the Commission's proposal to maintain and consolidate the four current objectives of: participation; information; voluntary activities and knowledge of youth issues. However, the EESC underlines the importance of ensuring that the focus of the Open Method of Coordination should now be to produce tangible results. Therefore where deficiencies in the OMC system and process are identified they must be noted and addressed.
- 6.2 The EESC recognises that Member States will be reporting on the common objectives for participation and information by the end of 2005, and that reports on voluntary activities and better knowledge of the youth field will follow in 2006. However, the EESC calls for increased partnership and highlights the value of including all stakeholders, most particularly young people and youth organisations in drawing up the national progress reports. In the interests of transparency it is also important that these reports are developed publicly and/or at least available publicly when submitted. Also NGOs should be encouraged and supported financially to engage in their own evaluation of the OMC process.
- 6.3 Civil society organisations and the social partners are an integral part of any pluralistic democracy. In this context youth organisations, play a valuable role in promoting active citizenship and participation. They do this by working directly with, and for young people in building their personal skills and confidence, so that they can reach their potential and achieve the optimum standard and quality of life. These organisations operate at a grassroots level, tackling local issues with the support of individuals and groups in their own area. They are also working to promote and build the capacity of young people to self advocate. Youth NGOs should be adequately financially supported and given the necessary recognition and means to be able to participate as real actors in decision-making and society at all levels.
- 6.4 In its discussions on the representativeness of European civil society organisations in civil dialogue the EESC has already emphasised on several occasions¹⁴ that only clearly established representativeness can give civil society players the right to participate effectively in the process of shaping and preparing Community decisions, as is the case for the social partners under the European social dialogue.

¹⁴ See for example the documentation concerning the "First Convention of civil society organised at European level" of 15 and 16 October 1999 (CES-2000-012-EN) and the Conference on "The role of organised civil society in European governance" of 8 and 9 November 2001, and the relevant opinions: "The role and contribution of civil society organisations in the building of Europe", 23 September 1999 (CES 851/1999 - OJ C 329 of 17 November 1999), "The Commission and non-governmental organisations: building a stronger partnership", 13 July 2000 (CES 811/2000 - OJ C 268 of 19 September 2000), "Organised civil society and European governance – the Committee's contribution to the drafting of the White Paper", 26 April 2001 (CES 535/2001 - OJ C 193 of 10 July 2001), "European Governance – a White Paper", 21 March 2002 (CES 357/2002 – OJ C 125 of 27 May 2002).

- 6.5 The EESC notes with disappointment that the main contribution that volunteers make to society highlighted by the Commission was with regard to their role in natural disasters. While this role is worthy, the EESC considers that the Commission and the Member States should recognise and highlight the ongoing and continuing role that volunteers play in a wide variety of NGOs at local, regional, national and European level. In particular, the Committee calls on the Member States to facilitate voluntary activities by means of suitable tax policies, recognising that voluntary activities are not only a source of psychological and ethical satisfaction for young people, but also make it possible for innumerable social welfare services to be provided, or to make them less costly.
- 6.6 The EESC regrets that the actions proposed are minimal and have no targets or clear objectives. This is a missed opportunity to progress this key component.
- 6.7 European programmes have an important role in contributing to the objectives of the Open Method of Coordination and the European Youth Pact, as well as strengthening young people's involvement in other policies that concern them. The EESC supports the Commission's view that projects that encourage young people to become active, involved citizens and that are aimed at helping them develop their capacities should be developed at local, regional, national and European level within the framework of the different European programmes. However, while many programmes could indeed be used with this aim, there is a need to promote the use of these programmes by and for young people and youth organisations and to make these programmes more youth-friendly. The use of different programmes, especially the European Social Fund and the Structural Funds, is a major opportunity to advance youth policy from rhetoric to action. Different projects realised to promote the living conditions or the employment of young people are often too small to be supported with these funds. Therefore the Commission and the Member States should engage with youth organisations to facilitate the use of EU programme funding in favour of young people in Europe.
- 6.8 The EESC believes that the programme with the greatest potential to enhance the personal and social development of young people and to promote active citizenship is the European Youth Programme. We welcome the initiative for a new Youth in Action Programme for the years 2007—2013 and will continue to be actively involved in the preparation process. Considering the enlargement of the programme and the increasing will of young people to benefit from it, we strongly demand from the Council to support the proposal to moderately increase the funding for this programme to €1,200 million. Further we believe that young people, European youth organisations and the European Youth Forum have to be regularly consulted on the implementation of the programme. The EESC calls on national economic and social councils to become involved in innovative experiments in order to make it easier for young people to participate in national consultation procedures, and to exchange best practices regarding the role of young people within their organisations.

7. Including the Youth Dimension in other policies

- 7.1 The EESC supports the Commission's proposal to primarily concentrate on the policy areas covered by the European Youth Pact. Nonetheless the EESC underlines the importance of an integrated and cross-sectoral youth policy, when developing policies in the youth field.
- 7.2 A horizontal approach to the development of policy will ensure a more coordinated and effective strategy. Member States regularly consult with Employer and Trade Union organisations when developing policies such as employment guidelines. Equally Member States must consult with young people and their organisations on policies that affect them.
- 7.3 The EESC notes in its own initiative opinion "Obesity in Europe – role and responsibilities of civil society partners"¹⁵ that more than 14 million children are overweight in Europe, including 3 million obese. But even more worrying: this number rises by 400,000 each year. The EESC calls for a collective involvement of all stakeholders including young people.
- 7.4 The Committee shares the Commission's primary concern for actions focusing on the health of children and young people, and particularly healthy lifestyles. It is convinced that actions of this kind have a real impact on citizens, and are urgently needed. It therefore calls for the initiative in support of such actions, scheduled for 2006, to be brought forward to 2005, also in the light of the consultations and initiatives already under way.
- 7.5 The EESC encourages the Seventh Research Framework Programme to undertake research on the impact of young peoples' participation in representative democracy and in voluntary activities. This report could potentially provide an insight into the impact of participation.

Brussels, 26 October 2005.

The President
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

The Secretary-General
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

Anne-Marie Sigmund

Patrick Venturini

¹⁵ SOC 201 (2005) - Obesity in Europe – role and responsibilities of civil society partners (CESE 1070/2005).