



ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΚΗ ΚΑΙ ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΗ ΕΠΙΤΡΟΠΗ
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL OF GREECE
COMITÉ ÉCONOMIQUE ET SOCIAL DE GRÈCE



*European Economic and Social Committee
Europe 2020 Steering Committee*



The European Economic and Social Committee and the Economic and Social Council of Greece are co-organizing in the framework of the activities of the Hellenic Presidency of the Council of the European Union:

Hearing

**“Η ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΗ ΔΙΑΣΤΑΣΗ ΤΩΝ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΩΝ «ΕΥΡΩΠΗ 2020»
ΑΠΕΝΑΝΤΙ ΣΤΗΝ ΚΡΙΣΗ”**

**“THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF EUROPE 2020 POLICIES FOR
COMBATING THE CRISIS”**

25 April 2014

9:30 a.m. – 17:30 p.m.

*Venue: Economic and Social Council of Greece,
9, Amvr. Frantzi Str., GR-117 43, Athens*

Programme

9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Welcoming participants and coffee

09:30 a.m. – 10:50 a.m. Opening Remarks

The social policies that were implemented in EU and in Greece in particular, throughout the crisis, didn't adapt sufficiently: social inequalities, sharp increase of the unemployment, the lack of a solid investment-friendly environment were all factors that disrupted the Europe's capacity to stimulate progress. Thus, Greece being in an emergency situation is invited to set its own targets and to take specific actions that will be incorporated into the Greek National Reform Program in order to exit from the recession as fast as possible.

Mr Christos Polyzogopoulos, President of the Economic and Social Council of Greece (ESC)
(Opening speech, 10 min)

Greek Government Representative (TBC)
(Opening speech, 10 min)

Mr Stefano Palmieri, EESC Member and President of Europe2020 Steering Committee
(Opening speech, 10 min)

Mr Christos Polyzogopoulos, President of the Economic and Social Council of Greece (ESC)
(Presentation, 10 min)

Opinion on Social Protection and Social Cohesion

Greece, trapped in a vicious circle of austerity and recession, experience inevitably negative consequences to the social cohesion. These policy decisions imposed by the Troika, engaged the Greek government to implement predetermined measures that affect irreversibly to whole groups of citizens and. Creditors, auditors and legislators seem to ignore issues of social cohesion partially due to the pace of forced measures that left little time for consultation and social dialogue despite the effects on whole group of citizens and subsequently social cohesion.

Ms Evelyne Pichenot, EESC Member, Rapporteur-General on Annual Growth Survey 2014 opinion
(Presentation, 15 min)

The modest recovery from the crisis was judged insufficient and uncertainties persist, as the European Commission pursued the structural reform without considering spill overs on the population. Troika contributed to a certain loss of sovereignty and a considerable disparity between Member States in applying reforms has been observed. Therefore, the economic governance has an increasing importance and innovative measures are needed to be introduced while maintaining the

balance between: environment-economy-society, competition-development-employment, short-term and long-term targets.

Mr Gabriel Amitsis, Associate Professor at the Technological Educational Institute of Athens, Expert at the Economic and Social Council of Greece (ESC)
(Presentation, 10 min)

Opinion on the development of social cohesion policies in the European Region – Challenges for the active inclusion of vulnerable groups during the economic crisis

It is still to be examined the impact of the EU social cohesion policies on the active inclusion of persons at high risk of poverty and social exclusion during the economic crisis. The institutional, operational and financial framework of the social solidarity discourse at the EU level must be further analysed over a set of key initiatives that could strengthen the social adequacy of the EU 2020 Strategy:

- Minimum Income Directive
- Equal treatment between nationals and non-nationals in access to welfare
- Activation of vulnerable people
- Social Entrepreneurship Initiative
- Quality Charter of Social Services

Public Debate (15 min)

10:50 a.m. – 12:00 a.m. Dealing with poverty and unemployment

This section is targeting a common diagnosis as the crisis had a great direct impact on Europe delaying significantly its course to reach the Europe2020 targets in poverty and employment. Unemployment has increased sharply in Europe and is expected to remain at those levels due to a combination of the negative impact of the crisis and the time needed before improvements are transmitted to the market.

National performances vary but further differences have been observed across regions pointing to mismatches, the slow pace of implementing reforms in some Member States and the reality of limited geographic mobility across the EU. Among other Member-States, Greece has been affected by sharp falls in employment and the overall level is still the lowest within the EU. In the longer term, structural unemployment may have severe consequences for the labour force and the growth potential of the Member-States as manifested already in the Greece. Indicatively in Greece for 2013 the unemployment rate was 27.6% and unemployed people aged 15-24 reached 59.2%.

Mr Denis Meynent, EESC Member
(Presentation, 10 min)

EU's potential for growth is undermined due to deteriorating working and living conditions for the

most vulnerable Member States. Therefore, EU needs not only to improve the prospects for quality job-driven growth but also to re-engineer processes that may foster democratic resilience and social cohesion. Particularly for the young people and women necessary resources need to be provided and obligations set to reassure equal participation to the labour market. Proposed measures/ solutions:

- Youth Employment Fund
- Social progress protocol in the European Treaties
- System of unemployment insurance
- Investments in new skills and qualifications to secure Europe's future and its competitiveness in the world
- Employment package as a tool for better synergies and targeted mobilization of the European Social Fund

Position of the European Commission:

Mr Krzysztof Nowaczek, Policy Coordinator - European Employment Strategy, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

(Presentation, 10 min)

Under the inclusive growth heading, the EU hopes to foster a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion. State of play/ policies:

- Follow up to the Flagship Initiatives: An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs and Youth on the Move
- Employment Package, Youth Guarantee; Quality framework for Traineeships
 - How this applied to the Greek situation
 - How it is expected to develop in the next years, i.e. mid-term review Europe 2020: Generate a job-rich recovery, addressing both the demand and supply sides of the labour market

Mr Ioannis Vardakastanis, EESC Member and Member of the Social Council of Greece (ESC)

(Presentation, 15 min)

The post-2015 development agenda must provide clear guidelines to Member States to place a particular emphasis on cross-disability issues, accessibility, the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities, and the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes leading to inclusive policies and programmes. There was a consensus among participants that advocacy efforts need to be intensified and mainstreamed at national and international levels, including among intergovernmental bodies and development cooperation agencies.

Dr. Afroditi Makrigianni, Scientific Consultant of the Social Council of Greece (ESC)

(Presentation, 15 min)

Greece needs to implement reforms that will allow the return to growth and job creation as well as the labour market to be more resilient in the future. Progress towards the target should consist policies concerning vulnerable groups such as women, older people, immigrants and socially excluded adults.

- Greek State of Art
 - Short-term and long-term strategy, expectations of the development of unemployment in Greece until 2020 under different scenarios
 - Greek Manpower Employment Organization (OAED)
 - Unemployment programs, ongoing reforms, Youth Guarantee
- Challenges
 - Performance of those measures
 - Improvement of effectiveness and targeting policies
- Actions taken
 - Means-tested minimum guaranteed income (established by law 4093/2012) from January 2014
 - Short-term public work programs for jobless households, unemployed, long-term unemployed and young people
 - Family support/allowances
 - Quality childcare services

Moderator: Ms Christina Kopsini, Journalist
Public Debate (20 min)

12.00 p.m. - 14:00 p.m. Standing buffet lunch will be offered to the participants

14:00 p.m. – 14:50 p.m. Setting priorities and targets for a sustainable Greek Society

Mr Etele Baráth, EESC Member

(Presentation, 15 min)

In this period of major challenges a sustainable and smart growth is not possible without the political will for substantial integration and multilevel cooperation between Member States by redefining the balance between responsibility and solidarity:

- Monitoring processes of the macroeconomic policy mix and financial support for structural reforms in Member States
- Development of macro-regional strategies
- The role and priorities of cohesion policy within the EU 2020 strategy
- Analysis of Global Challenges for Europe, assessing EU competitiveness in relation to other regions of the world.

Mr Nikos Skorinis, Vice President of the ESC of Greece GR1

(Presentation, 15 min)

Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs), productive reconstruction and employment.

Moderator: Ms Christina Kopsini, journalist
Public Debate (20 min)

14:50 p.m. – 15:20 p.m. Coffee break

15:20 p.m. – 17:00 p.m. How to ensure a more effective social dialogue?

In the wake of the worst global crisis, the accumulated imbalances increased over the years resulting in a growing divergence across Member States. Southern and Eastern European Countries in particular display strong variations in terms of regional employment rates. Thus, a regular dialogue between the National Councils is imperative to be restored, reflecting mostly the need for a partnership approach for the development of the Europe 2020 Strategy and its pertinent translation into real economy growth.

Moreover, these discrepancies can be reflected as well to the level of ambitions of the Member States when implementing measures and policies; conditions varied from country to country either because targets weren't set properly or civil societies didn't commit to reach those. The issue of ownership and coordination between civil society representatives and National Councils should be revisited under a constructive dialogue that would be particularly beneficial for the Greece:

- The level of policy response across EU: is time diminishing ownership?
- Exchange of information and best practices to support EUROPE 2020 objectives
- Socio-economic coordination in order to achieve coherence and consistency
- Raise awareness, transparency and eventually public acceptance of the measures/ policies decided

Mr Stefano Palmieri, EESC Member, President of Europe2020 Steering Committee
(Opinion, 10 min)

The need to raise awareness of the civil society's role in monitoring policies is becoming more urgent in order to establish democratic legitimacy to the governance process of the strategy itself. The EESC can play an active and collaborative role in this bottom-up perspective:

- Participation of civil society stakeholders in the Platform
- Open Method of Coordination (OMC),
- Civil Society Pact for a renewed Europe 2020 strategy

Keynote address: Mr. José Silva Peneda, President of the Economic and Social Council of Portugal
(Presentation, 15 min)

The European project was based on sharing and commitment to the preservation of peace and to the search for economic prosperity a sentiment that has gone into abeyance with the danger of destroying the legacy of European integration. Collective bargaining has been frozen rather than encouraged in the implementation of the adjustment programme.

Europe needs a new narrative, a vision for a structured dialogue that really brings added value to the formulation of public policies and contributes to a new governance. Examples of social dialogue during austerity in Portugal:

- Tripartite agreement on employment and competitiveness
- Negotiation phases with Government in the crisis

Mr Roland Zwiers, Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands
(Presentation, 15 min)

Development and growth cannot take place at the expense of respect for the human-being and solidarity. By taking the example of the particular social dialogue dynamics in Netherland, it becomes clear the need for a true common action of social partners in order to solve social and economic problems:

- Active engagement of Dutch social partners in structural reforms
- Participation of Dutch social partners in the Europe 2020 strategy

Mr George Vernicos, Member of the ESC of Greece GR1
(Presentation, 10 min)

Industrial relations - active participation of social partners

Since the implementation of the Economic Adjustment Programme for Greece, the new institutional environment of the labor market overturned the long established processes of collective bargaining. Given the importance of industrial relations for the promotion of entrepreneurship and attraction of investment capital, collective bargaining framework should be re-examined, on the basis of social dialogue and active participation of the social partners.

Mr George Tsatiris, Member of the ESC of Greece GR1
(Presentation, 10 min)

The role of the Economic and Social Council in the new economic and social context

Moderator: Ms Christina Kopsini, Journalist

Public Debate (40 min)

17:00 p.m. – 17:30 p.m. Closing Remarks

During this section final comments and general conclusions will be made under the goal to endorse proactive communication between Member-States and thus to prevent the further incoherent development of the unemployment and poverty rates within the EU.

Europe, 'the convergence machine' slowed down as a result of accumulation of imbalances and the pressure of the global crisis. Convergence of income and living standards across Member-States should be fuelled again by promoting a deeper socio-economic integration to avoid spill over effects on other Member- States.

This hearing is to set the importance for an integrated implementation of policies and shared analytical frameworks of indicators and policy evaluators to provide direct and concrete support to Greece and other Member-States through policy advance and technical assistance and exchange of information and ex-ante coordination.

Conclusions and recommendations by **Mr Christos Polyzogopoulos**, President of the Economic and Social Council of Greece (ESC)