

"50 years of the EESC: look into the past for future inspiration" from EESC-Info (June 2008)

Caption: On 28 May 2008, the European Economic and Social Committee celebrates its 50th anniversary during a commemorative plenary session. On this occasion, the Committee's President, Dimitris Dimitriadis, refers to the importance of consultation in the European Union's legislative process.

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50 years of the EESC: look into the past for future inspiration

On 28 May 2008, 50 years after the first plenary session of the European Economic and Social Committee, current EU leaders, former EESC presidents and young Europeans from different European countries gathered in Brussels for a commemorative plenary session to celebrate its birthday. This special plenary session included a discussion among young Europeans and EESC members on the challenges facing the European Union.

The plenary session was opened by EESC President Dimitris Dimitriadis, who stressed that in the past 50 years, the Committee has played an important role as bridge between the European institutions and organised civil society, providing a visible and tangible contribution to the European Union's legislative process. He promised that the EESC will continue to work closely with the EU institutions and European citizens. 'One of the main challenges we face is to reinforce its presence in the debate on the future of Europe regarding the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon and to make its work more transparent and more available for citizens', he said.

EU leaders praise the EESC's role in European politics

In his key address, Mr Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament, highlighted the great added value of the EESC opinions and its members as a major repository of expertise based on the local experience. He underlined the importance of solidarity in achieving European goals and of social dialogue at the European level. 'Our common task is to build a common future', stressed Mr Pöttering.

Ms Marjeta Cotman, Slovenian Minister for Labour, Family and Social Affairs who represented the Presidency of the Council, stated that the EESC brings the EU policies closer to citizens. 'We need constructive dialogue and partnership synergies to achieve all challenges facing the European Union', she added.

In his address to the Committee, Commission President José Manuel Barroso underlined that this celebration marked the sustainability of the core values of the European project: 'The EESC is an indispensable partner for other institutions', said the President, adding that the Lisbon Treaty, once ratified, will enhance the EESC's role.

Last but not least, the President of the EESC's sister organisation, the Committee of the Regions, Mr Luc Van den Brande, pointed out that consultation is becoming a key element of the European decision-making process. He stressed the importance of working together for the future development of a Europe of better quality. 'Let's build Europe in partnership!', he concluded.