



EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL COMMITTEE

EMPLOYERS' GROUP

Group I Internal

Newsletter of the Employers' Group

In this issue:

Members' Voices 2

- Manthos Mavromatis

Group I Events: 3

- Group I Debate "From Crisis to a Sustainable Europe"

Members' Life: 4

- Madi Sharma at a conference on female entrepreneurship
- Milena Angelova at a convention on "Representation of Women In Public And Private Sector's Senior Management" 5
- Filip Hamro-Drotz at the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum
- Stefano Mallia on the Common Strategic Framework 6
- Thomas McDonogh on Service Quality at European Airports 7
- Henri Malosse Receives Christoph Leitl, President of the Austrian FEC
- Patrizio Pesci at a conference on the wood and furniture sectors 8
- Gundars Strautmanis: Latvia hosts the second "Digital Agenda for Europe" event 9

Calendar of Group I's meetings 11

November Plenary:

- Group I's opinions and amendments

NOVEMBER 2012

EDITORIAL BY GUNDARS STRAUTMANIS

Today Europe is going through a seriously difficult time through having to overcome the existing economic and Eurozone problems. On top of that, we live in a time, where also generally accepted and long evolved Europe's values have been put to the test. This is a time, when we have to seek a new cooperation format and new tools by which to strengthen stability. Possibly, in a slightly surprising manner, **Digital Agenda for Europe is one of such flagship platforms and superior tools.**



Gundars Strautmanis (LV)
Member of the Employers' Group

"...delivery of this Agenda will spur innovation, economic growth and improvements in daily life for both businesses and citizens. Wider deployment and more effective use of digital technologies will thus enable Europe to more effectively resolve the common market issue, to tackle its key challenges and to improve the quality of life of Europeans through providing better health care, safer and more efficient transport solutions, cleaner environment, etc..." (Digital Agenda for Europe)

One of the key elements of the *Digital Agenda for Europe* is **the Going Local initiative the implementation of which, mainly due to the efforts of the Digital Agenda for Europe, Permanent Study Group** (set up following the Group I proposal), **was commenced in 2011 in Dublin.**

The initiative yielded good results, gaining praise, as a result of which, supported by the TEN Section, it has been agreed to hold *Going Local* Forums on an annual basis.

Advanced by the *Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI)* and *Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association (LIKTA)* initiative and efforts, in 2012 **the Going Local Forum was held in Riga, Latvia, gathering more than 70 EESC and local specialists.**

The Riga conference has repeatedly highlighted the key goals due for fulfilment within the ICT sector, along with providing possible resolutions to the problems, such as:

- Superior quality ICT education to ensure availability of highly skilled industry professionals at all levels
- Developing e-Skills at all levels of society, including lifelong learning (smart e-Citizens)
- Use of ICT benefits in all areas of economic activity, along with providing competitive and well-organised business environment Modern e-Government, e-Culture, e-Health and Ageing Well solutions.

the editorial continues on page 2 →

← the editorial continues from page 1

Latvia's commitment toward reaching the above goals can be proven by various success stories, one of which is the LIKTA ICT CHARTER that has been drawn up following the initiative brought forward by the existing non-governmental organisations operating within the ICT sector, and that in reality has turned into a major cross-industry programme document. The ICT CHARTER has been supported by the key organisations and businesses in Latvia.

It is very likely that the experience in introducing and implementing such programme documents may serve as a good example toward meeting the set objectives, providing the relevant feedback also for ICT developers of other countries.

Going further than that, it is absolutely evident that **well-developed and effective ICT sector is one of the key tools** with which a country – especially a small country – can greatly **advance economic growth and ensure high flexibility** of economic activity, thus gaining a competitive advantage in the continuously changing global market.

Gundars STRAUTMANIS
Member of the Employers' Group of the EESC

MEMBERS' VOICES



Manthos Mavrommatis
(CY)
Member of Group I

Mr. **Manthos Mavrommatis** studied economics at the London School of Economics and got an MBA from the University of Chicago Business School. He was **President of the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry** and before that of the Nicosia Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He runs a small family business in Cyprus and he is **on the board of directors of various private and public companies.**

He is involved with various institutions in Cyprus, including the Research Promotion Foundation and the International Institute of Management. He is the Honorary Consul of Mexico in Cyprus.

His priorities as Member of the EESC are **the promotion of competitiveness** at the national and European level, more **emphasis on Research and Innovation, the completion of the Single Market, energy saving and renewable energies, budgetary discipline and macroeconomic stability; social cohesion and inclusive society.**

GROUP I EVENTS

**Group I Debate with Mr. Hugues-Arnaud Mayer and Mr. David Croughan
“From Crisis to a Sustainable Europe”, 18 September**



David Croughan Hugues-Arnaud Mayer Henri Malosse Birgit Fular



David Croughan Hugues-Arnaud Mayer

18th September 2012 witnessed a meeting of the Employers' Group of the EESC, hosted by its President, Mr. Henri Malosse. **Mr. David Croughan**, Member of the Employers' Group, presented his paper entitled "**From Crisis to a Sustainable Europe**". Mr. Croughan pointed out that "the current crisis is not a crisis of periphery but a crisis in the center of decision-making". There is a need to fix the decision-making process in the EU and focus on the financial sector in particular; this is the only path to recovery. David Croughan highlighted that we urgently need conditionality, legitimacy and accountability. The EU is 'almost there' in terms of a fiscal union; however fiscal discipline is what we need to ask for in all Member States. He continued by explaining that it is extremely important to strengthen Europe's competitiveness.

Europe needs reforms and new policy instruments to achieve collective accountability and a democratic union. Mr. Croughan concluded that Competiveness and Innovation are the key principles onto which to base future work.

Mr. Hugues-Arnaud Mayer, Vice-President of the French Employers' Confederation (MEDEF) supported Mr. Croughan's position by adding that the crisis is complex because it tests the links between Europe itself with the Member States. He explained that we need more Europe, more regulations and more integration. Mr. Mayer argued that we need to inform ordinary people and also make available documents at national level, properly explaining the economic and social impact of this issue.



Reet Teder Eve Päärendson Adalbert Kienle Gundars Strautmanis
Patrizio Pesci Joerg von Fürstenwerth Vitalijs Gavrilovs Göke Frerichs



Hugues-Arnaud Mayer

MEMBERS' LIFE

Madi Sharma at the "More technologies? More women entrepreneurs!" conference on female entrepreneurship, 6 November

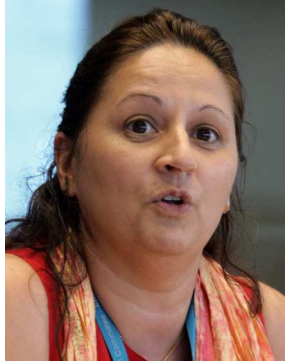
On 6 November 2012, **Madi Sharma**, Member of the Employers' Group of the EESC, spoke at a European conference entitled: "**More technologies? More women entrepreneurs!**" in Athens. The event was moderated by Dr. Irene Kamberidou from the ECWT Executive Group, and had 300 attending participants, in addition to the 200 participating through live web streaming. The practical workshops focused on mentoring, software applications and the use of social media in business.

Aiming to encourage aspiring women entrepreneurs, the conference was the culmination of a number of information activities in the framework of the European project "**ladybizIT**", a **Leonardo da Vinci initiative supporting female entrepreneurship** and in particular the ways **Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)** can encourage and facilitate female entrepreneurship.

A main conclusion of the conference is that **new technologies are providing new opportunities for female entrepreneurs.**

The other key points include:

- **societies underuse a large portion of their talents, by not providing equal opportunities for female entrepreneurs**
- **"feminine" skills and leadership qualities, such as social intelligence and communication, are more significant since the rise of social media**
- **social media tools should complement marketing efforts** and using the existing analytical tools can show their impact on a business



Madi Sharma (UK)

Member of Group I

Finally, gender equity and social equality minimise the wastage of talent from social groups traditionally excluded socially and institutionally (for example migrant entrepreneurs). This trend can be reversed through **specific interventions, policies and practices, targeting limited access to funding, support services, inadequate skills for business, management and marketing, and not least discrimination and language barriers.**



Milena Angelova at the “International Convention on Women Representation in Public and Private Sector’s Senior Management”, 11-12 Oct.

Ms **Milena Angelova**, Vice-President of the EESC Employers’ Group and Secretary General of the Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association (BICA), spoke at the “**International Convention on Women Representation in Public and Private Sector’s Senior Management**”, held in Ankara on 11-12 October 2012.



Milena Angelova
(BG)
Vice-President of
Group I

The forum is a part of the events held annually by **ANGIKAD** (Business Women Entrepreneurs and Enhancement Association) under the slogan “Half Does not Make One”. The event aims to support increasing the presence of

women in senior management and contributing to empowering the women’s position in society as well as improving human resources. In 2011 the theme was “Women’s Representation in Parliament” and in 2010 - “Representation of Women in the Management of Professional and Business Organizations”.

The ANGIKAD is very active and has stable relations with the EU, including work on EU-funded projects. Milena Angelova shared: “**I have provided them with all recent opinions and documents of EESC on the topic and they are really interested to be more actively involved, also in the work of the JCC EU-Turkey**”.

The forum produced a **Strategy for improving the participation of women in the senior management both in the public and private sectors**, based on the interventions during the event.

Filip Hamro-Drotz at the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum, 9-10 October

The third meeting of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum took place on 9-10 October 2012 in St. Petersburg, Russia. Mr. **Filip Hamro-Drotz**, Employers’ Group Member and President of the EU-Russia Contact Group, was invited to speak, as representative of the EESC, in the session about “**Perspectives of EU-Russia Relations**”.

Mr Hamro-Drotz spoke about the **regular cooperation between the EESC and the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation since they signed a memorandum of Understanding in 2008**. The cooperation has developed in a fruitful way with the intention to foster the exchange of information and expertise in order to acquire better understanding of the political, economic and social situation in the EU and Russia and to contribute to people-to-people contacts and mutual understanding. The Declaration from the previous Joint Workshop in June 2012 in Moscow was distributed and discussed at the Forum.

Filip Hamro-Drotz shared that **promoting contacts between actors in the society is a prerequisite to improved relations** between the EU, its Member States and Russia.

Facilitation of visa procedures is important in order to facilitate contacts between citizens of various categories in Russia and the EU. Although the negotiations about a new strategic agreement between Russia and EU are slow, **it is important that they are advancing and cover a broad range of topics of common interests**.



Filip Hamro-Drotz
(FI)
Member of Group I

In discussions about the civil society situation in Russia, Mr Hamro-Drotz expressed the **value of moving from confrontation towards cooperation**. Civil society actors should express an independent and critical opinion whenever needed, but in parallel offer their expertise and contribution in issues of their excellence.

MEMBERS' LIFE

Stefano Mallia at a Fact-Finding Mission in Latvia on the Common Strategic Framework, 11-12 September

Mr. **Stefano Mallia**, Member of the Employers' Group, the EESC rapporteur on the opinion "**Common Strategic Framework of the New EU Structural Funds**", ECO/329 as well as the co-rapporteur Mr. Gerfried Gruber, Member of EESC's 'Various Interests' Group, were invited by the Latvian government to meet all the main social partners and key government officials responsible for EU funds in Latvia. The two-day visit was organised by another EESC member from the 'Various Interests' Group, Mr. Andris Gobins.



Stefano Mallia (MT)
Member of Group I

The aim of the 2-day visit was for the rapporteurs to listen to key stakeholders about the **difficulties faced by Latvia in managing and absorbing EU funds**. Discussions also focused on the preparations underway for the new EU funding programming period 2014-2020.

Commenting on the visit, Mr. Mallia said: 'this was a very useful and intense 2-day visit during which **we could listen first hand to the difficulties being faced by both beneficiaries and managing authorities with accessing and managing EU funds and projects**. The scope of this visit was to crystallize some of the **key problems and propose solutions**

so that where possible, we do not repeat the same mistakes in the next programming period.'

The report being prepared by Mr. Mallia and Mr. Gruber will focus on what is known in EU jargon as the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) which essentially sets out how all the main EU funds will be coordinated together with the aim of ensuring that the investments on the ground lead towards the achievement of Europe's growth strategy, known as Europe 2020. **The proposed CSF approach marks a significant departure from the current approach where each fund has its own distinctive objectives and the different EU funds cannot be used for the same project.**

The report which is currently being drafted will be presented and voted upon during the November ECO section meeting and then finally adopted during the Plenary Session to be held in December.

Mr. Mallia and Mr. Gruber were also invited by the Chairman of the Ogre Region to visit a €35 million project which is now providing all the inhabitants of the city with first class drinking water. Mr. Gruber shared: 'it was **through such projects that the EU could have a direct impact on the lives of citizens**. It is important that we ensure that **every euro spent is money well spent on projects that have a lasting effect and that help reduce disparities between regions within the EU.**'



Thomas McDonogh on Service Quality at European Airports

In today's difficult economic environment, **Europe's airports are more concerned than ever to ensure that passengers have a good experience**, and are encouraged to frequent their airport again.

While a worthy goal, ensuring a quality experience for all passengers, all of the time, is far from straightforward in practice. During a single journey through an airport, **a typical passenger experience will be impacted by interactions with a range of contact points**. These can include car parks, ground transportation, check-in, security, signage, retail and restaurants. With so many elements comprising a single journey through an airport, **different elements of the customer experience will have different levels of significance to different customers**.

For example, ground access may be the most significant concern for a person with reduced mobility, while clear and logical signage may be of most concern to someone who is travelling through an airport for the first time. Moreover, a quality service experience cannot be delivered by an airport on its own – **it requires all service providers at the airport (airlines, handling companies, retailers etc.) to engage in the process and work together effectively**.

One of the keys to providing a quality service experience is to **understand the differing wants and needs of passengers, and the extent to which the airport is succeeding in meeting them**. This knowledge can then be used to drive continuous improvements in the passenger experience, not only for those services provided by an airport itself, but **across every touch point on the customer journey**.



Thomas McDonogh (IE)

Member of Group I

A focus on the passenger experience will continue to be key to success for European airports in the future. The European Commission has recognised the importance of this objective in its **Airport Package of legislative proposals which recommends the introduction of minimum quality standards for the performance of ground handling services** (check-in, baggage handling etc) at European airports – a proposal which should assist airports in their efforts to further improve the experience of European air travellers into the future.

Henri Malosse Receives the President of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, 18 October

On 18 October 2012, the President of the Employers' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) Mr. **Henri Malosse received a high-level delegation, led by Dr. Christoph Leitl, President of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, and Mr. Erich PUTZ, former Member of the Austrian Parliament**.

Their discussion focused on the social dialogue in Austria and the **best practices that can be taken from the DUAL learning system in promoting youth employment**.



MEMBERS' LIFE

Patrizio Pesci during the conference "The Wood and Furniture Sectors: Proposing Guidelines for a Sustainable and Competitive European Industry", 4 Oct.

On 4 October 2012, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) hosted an inter-institutional conference, entitled "**The Wood and Furniture Sectors: Proposing Guidelines for a Sustainable and Competitive European Industry**", which brought together the European Parliament, the European Commission and EESC representatives. The conference was organized as a follow-up to the EESC opinion on "**Opportunities and Challenges for a more Competitive European Woodworking and Furniture Sector**", **CCMI/088** adopted in October 2011. Mr. **Josef Zboril**, Member of the Employers' Group and Mr. **Patrizio Pesci** were Rapporteurs for this own-initiative opinion of the Consultative Committee of Industrial Change (CCMI).

The conference aimed to **highlight inconsistencies between policies and initiatives implemented at the European level and to seek the best ways to improve the current legal framework**. The conference brought together high-level representatives of the European institutions and the woodworking industrial sector and timber specialists from universities and wood workers.

The Representatives of the European institutions stressed the importance of dialogue and cooperation between the European institutions and stakeholders to define European policy can reflect the specific needs of industries.

MEP Elisabetta Gardini opened the conference, highlighting the European **Parliament's commitment to cooperate with the industry to ensure that our economy is based on a respectful approach to the environment**. **MEP Gaston Franco** noted that "**this conference should not be an isolated event, but should pave the way for many other initiatives.**"

Mr. **Jacek Krawczyk**, EESC Vice-President, stressed the need to develop other initiatives and continue working with wood sectors to identify the challenges these sectors face. At the end of the day, after the intervention of MM. Seppo Kallio (Group III) and Martin Siecker (Group II), Mr. Henri Malosse, President of the Employers' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee closed the conference by welcoming the fruitful discussion and promising that **the EESC will continue to focus its attention on the needs of the timber industry as well as other industrial sectors, which are currently facing the risk of profound industrial change.**



Gundars Strautmanis: Latvia hosts the second “Digital Agenda for Europe” going local event, 12 September

On 12 September 2012, the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) and the Latvian Association of Information and Communication Technologies (LAICT) in close cooperation with European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) organized the “**Digital Agenda for Europe**” going local event in Riga. The event came as a follow-up to the implementation of the „Europe 2020” strategy’s main initiative „Digital Agenda for Europe” in the EU and Latvia.

The main target of the going local event was to draw attention to the goals of the Digital Agenda for Europe and **its crucial role in economic development, job creation and social inclusion.**

“**To understand how the EU initiatives are realized locally, we have to see it at the place – country by country – and also here, in Latvia**”, says Mr. Gundars Strautmanis, the LCCI President and EESC Employers’ Group Member opening the event.

The **development and usage of information and communication technologies (ICT) is one of the main conditions of the Europe’s overall development.**

Ms Anna Maria Darmanin, Vice-President of EESC, stressed the need to make ICT accessible to all people, to promote e-skills and enhance internet security. “**While bridging the barriers to digital development, we are not allowed to forget about the public**”, Ms Darmanin shared.

Members of the forum emphasized that **Latvia already has taken significant steps in ICT development and is one of the leading EU countries in terms of the number of regular internet users.** Internet is used on a regular basis by 66% of population. Furthermore, Latvia is one of the leading EU countries in terms of the implementation of the Digital Agenda for Europe – the programme already is being realised at an 80% rate. For comparison, in other EU countries the programme is implemented on average at 40%.

Latvia is among the so-called “Nascente native” or emerging leaders in the ICT cluster, which also includes Estonia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Portugal, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia.



Gundars Strautmanis (LV)

Member of Group I



FOR YOUR AGENDA (SAVE THE DATE)

UPCOMING EVENTS OF GROUP I:

- Group I's Fourth annual Young European Entrepreneurs' Seminar _____ 06-07/12/2012
- Meeting of the EESC Bureau members of Group I _____ 11/12/2012, 10:00 – 12:30
- Meeting of the Group I Bureau _____ 12/12/2012, 09:00 – 10:00
- Group I meeting _____ 12/12/2012, 10:00 – 13:00
- Meeting of the EESC Bureau members of Group I _____ 15/01/2013, 10:00 – 12:30
- Meeting of the Group I Bureau _____ 16/01/2013, 09:00 – 10:00
- Group I meeting _____ 16/01/2013, 10:00 – 13:00
- Meeting of the EESC Bureau members of Group I _____ 12/02/2013, 10:00 – 12:30
- Meeting of the Group I Bureau _____ 13/02/2013, 09:00 – 10:00
- Group I meeting _____ 13/02/2013, 10:00 – 13:00
- Extraordinary Group I meeting _____ 20/02/2013, 09:00 – 17:30

THE NOVEMBER PLENARY

OPINIONS PRESENTED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE EMPLOYERS' GROUP
DURING THE PLENARY SESSION OF 14-15 NOVEMBER 2012:

INT/647 - EU State Aid Modernisation (SAM) by **Emmanuelle Butaud-Stubbs**

Members of Group I have successfully passed amendments to opinions, most notably the amendments:

by **Peter Morgan** (on the opinion INT/643 - Shadow banking,
and on the opinion ECO/339 - Banking Union Package)

by **Bernard Huvelin** (on the opinion INT/646 - A strategy for e-procurement)

by **Ivan Voleš** (on the opinion INT/649 - European Consumer Agenda)

by **Philippe de Buck** (on the opinion SOC/463 - Towards a job-rich recovery)



GROUP I INTERNAL

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an initiative of the Employers' Group



EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL COMMITTEE

EMPLOYERS' GROUP



The Employers' Group of the EESC

The Employers' Group (Group I) has 114 members, and is made up of entrepreneurs, employers and representatives of employer associations working in industry, commerce, services and agriculture in the 27 Member States of the European Union. These are women and men involved in the business world and in touch with the realities of everyday life who are willing to put their experience to use to further the European venture.

Our goal is to promote European integration by supporting the development of our businesses, which play a key role in fostering the prosperity of our societies and in creating jobs.

In an economically difficult climate, the European Economic and Social Committee is the only European institution that brings together business people and people fully engaged in the economic and social life of their home country.

A strong, coherent and dynamic Employers' Group is therefore crucial to making the voice of business heard at European level.

Naturally, the Employers' Group also works closely with the five major European business organisations – BUSINESSEUROPE, CEEP, EUROCHAMBRES, EuroCommerce and UEAPME – to which a large number of our members also belong.

www.eesc.europa.eu/employers-group