



EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

This issue of the EESC newsletter has a special focus on climate change. This comes as no surprise since the EESC is getting ready to contribute a political resolution to the Copenhagen

Summit. Indeed, the fight against climate change has always been close to our hearts and minds, not only in theory, as a vague notion, but in practice, through concrete measures and proposals. I am convinced that all of us can, must and will contribute to saving our planet through a more efficient and lower consumption of energy, water and other natural resources, rather than continuing to treat these resources as though they were infinite, without a thought for future generations. This is why our Committee recently erected, and opened to the public, a sustainably built house in the heart of Brussels in order to mark Earth Overshoot Day, the day when our consumption overshoot what the planet is able to generate sustainably in a year, and to show in practical terms how we can cut down on energy use. This is why we launched a contest to design an innovative and creative eco-friendly gift that sends a clear message about the need to respect our environment and the delicate balance of nature. This is why we continue to try to improve our day-to-day in-house energy efficiency and why we have been rewarded for our efforts. Change starts with us! By changing our mindset, and production and consumption patterns, we can help change the course of development across the world. I invite you to read what my colleagues have been working on and what other public figures have to say on the issue. It is about sharing a common responsibility for the sake of our own future and our children's! We have only one planet, and it is precious!

Irini Pari

EESC Vice-President
responsible for communication

Barriers and initiatives in EU environmental policy – Interview with EP Committee Chairman Jo Leinen



Jo Leinen

Congratulations on being elected chairman of the EP environment committee. As a former minister for the environment in the Saarland, you have got a strong environmental background. What initiatives, in your opinion, are key for bringing about a low-carbon economy in the EU?

A low-carbon economy is our vision for the economic future of the European Union. Most important is a

sound balance of instruments in order to conduct an effective and efficient climate policy. Within the concept of different policy instruments, we have to clearly show the low cost options of climate protection and tackle them. To cite an example, buildings are among the largest energy consumers in our societies. Improving the performance of buildings could be implemented at a comparatively low cost level. Therefore, we have to develop attractive incentives to people in order to act in accordance with these goals.

Despite the need for a successful energy efficiency policy, we should keep concentrating on the constant support for research and development in order to introduce new technologies into the market. Without ambitious research plans, we will not achieve our target of becoming a low-carbon economy.

What have been the main barriers to implementing EU-wide environmental policies?

It has been a long and bumpy road to reach our present situation. Governments are generally not in favour of handing over competences to European institutions. In the very first days of EU

environmental policy, governments thought that this policy would not have a big impact on the economy. Today we know that environmental measures are key to a sustainable economic model — even though some representatives of industrial branches have not completely understood this. It is a good signal to our citizens and a good confirmation for our work that today we have one of the highest protection levels in the world.

How do you see the role of the EU Emission Trading Scheme changing after the meeting in Copenhagen and what do you



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UN climate negotiations in the run-up to Copenhagen



Next month, representatives from 192 member countries of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will assemble in Copenhagen to address arguably the most universal and pressing issue of our time: climate change. Some member countries have been preparing their own initiatives and commitment targets to combat CO₂ emissions in preparation for this meeting, which the

world community hopes will result in laying the framework of a new international agreement regarding greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions to replace the expiring Kyoto Protocol.

The convention was signed in 1992 in order to facilitate the process of climate change mitigation. The Kyoto Protocol, which was signed in 1997 and entered into force in 2005, legally binds industrialised countries (with the exception of the US) to emission cuts for the first time, but significant global emissions reductions have yet to be seen.

Here are some points to bear in mind.

What are the long-term and short-term goals for a Copenhagen deal?

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, keeping the global temperature rise below 2 °C compared with pre-industrial levels gives a reasonably good chance of keeping the most dangerous effects of climate change at bay. To work towards this goal, developed countries should cut their emissions by 80-90 % of 1990 emission levels by 2050. In the shorter term, in order to meet this goal, developed countries must reduce their emissions by 25-40 % of 1990

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DIARY DATES

26 and 27 November 2009

Stockholm, Sweden:
Press Officers' Seminar

7 and 8 December 2009

EESC: Exhibition and conference 'Better mobility — Move together towards a new culture of urban mobility'

7 to 18 December 2009

Copenhagen, Denmark:
United Nations Climate Change Conference

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EESC Save It! Energy Efficient Days launched at the Pallet House

—Interview with the architects *Andreas Claus Schnetzer* and *Gregor Pils*



Left to right: *Andreas Claus Schnetzer*, architect; *Mario Sepi*, EESC President; *Jos Leyskens*, Architects' Council of Europe; and *Gregor Pils*, architect

them. By reusing pallets to build houses, the architects *Andreas Claus Schnetzer* and *Gregor Pils* hope to provide temporary but adequate living facilities in areas such as Sudan, to replace present refugee camp shelters at a low cost. The EESC wanted to know more about the idea behind this environmentally friendly structure.

What were some of the reactions you observed when you unveiled the Pallet House for the first time?

The reactions to the Pallet House were very positive overall. Many of the people already knew the Pallet House from its winning design in the 2008 European student competition organised by the *Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine* in Paris. We enjoyed

the reactions from people when they interacted with the house itself. For example, they were very surprised that when they stepped inside the house from the cold weather, it was very warm and insulated. Attendees also commented on the fresh smell inside the house from the wooden materials.

How do you envision the potential impact of the Pallet House design on future sustainable architecture?

We think it will have an impact on the way people think about what materials to use in sustainable architecture. Perhaps people will learn to think about everyday materials not just in their original function, such as associating pallets with transport, but in other, recyclable ways in which they can be used. In our design we followed the concept that 'form follows function'.

The idea of the Pallet House stems from using available materials.



Pallet House

Where do you expect the Pallet House to become most widely adopted? Why?

As the idea of the Pallet House stems from using available materials, it would be most functional where pallets are abundantly available, such as in places where there are many factories or transport hubs. We are building a Pallet House for classroom use as a social project in South

Africa. Here there are many pallets just lying around, waiting to be disposed of by burning. We would not use similar insulation materials in the Brussels Pallet House and the classroom in South Africa because the materials available for insulation are different; in South Africa, we would use straw and earth. For us, being sustainable means using the materials you have available to you. (al)

The EESC recognised Global Overshoot Day during its Save It! Energy Efficient Days event. In the build-up to Global Overshoot Day, the date when humanity began using more resources than one planet can replenish sustainably, the EESC facilitated a week of activities in the award-winning Pallet House, a sustainable structure built entirely out of recycled wooden transport pallets.

The Pallet House utilises old materials that would have otherwise been burned in order to dispose of

Combating climate change: the EESC reduces its ecological footprint



Martin Westlake, EESC Secretary-General, during FridayBikeDay

Global warming is a fact. Climate change is already happening and represents one of the greatest environmental, social and economic threats facing the planet. The EESC is strongly committed to working constructively for a global contribution to controlling climate change and is leading the way by taking ambitious action of its own through raising awareness, promoting events, activities and studies, and providing specific services.

As an advocate of sustainable urban transport and a bicycle-friendly employer in the EU dis-

trict of Brussels, the EESC encourages cycling among its staff. The Committee organises the monthly FridayBikeDay, offers training on cycling in traffic, provides service bikes and promotes cycling to work. On a political level, the EESC has also long advocated pro-cycling policies in various opinions.

At the international conference on cycling policy 'Velo-City 2009', held in Brussels in May 2009, the EESC signed the Charter of Brussels, a commitment to a European pro-cycling policy. During the event, the Committee also officially

launched the European cycling lexicon, a multilingual glossary containing key cycling terms in all 23 official EU languages.

The Committee also wanted to make a specific contribution to combating climate change and therefore implemented the EU eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS), a voluntary scheme aimed at improving the environmental performance of private and public organisations.

The EESC, together with the Committee of the Regions (CoR), was awarded this summer the 'Ecodynamic Enterprise' label, with the maximum three-star rating. This put them in the top category in terms of environmental performance. Only 14 of the 124 organisations awarded the label have achieved three stars! This labelling scheme was launched in 1999 by the Brussels Region Environment Agency (IBGE) to encourage good



environmental practices in the private and public sectors.

A recent example of the EESC's environmental efforts is the massive savings that have been achieved on the Committee's electricity bills. This year these are an estimated 10 % lower compared with 2006; that represents a saving of 474 tonnes of CO₂ every year! A similar downward trend can be

seen in the gas bills: compared with last year, the Committee saved 1 million Kwh of gas!

Of course, this does not mean that work to improve our environment is over. The Ecodynamic Enterprise label covers around 50 % of the requirements for the European EMAS label, so the Committee still has some way to go. (ds)

Continued from page 1 — UN climate negotiations in the run-up to Copenhagen

levels by 2020. At a later stage, the emissions of developing countries also need to be reduced.

What are the commitments of emerging economies?

The EU has asked the developing countries to reduce their emissions growth by 15–30 % compared with a business-as-usual scenario. It is clear that the emerging economies will therefore expect larger financial transactions and more technology transfer from developed countries.

Several countries are making progress on renewables. For example, China has stated its goal of generating 15 % of its energy from renewable resources by 2020.

How will countries reduce their emissions?

In order to reduce GHG emissions by economic means, many countries are in favour of participating in carbon markets and domestic emissions trading systems. Cap and trade is up and running in the EU with the EU Emission Trading Scheme and cap and trade systems are in the works in US legislation. Research and development are also top priorities as countries strive towards energy efficiency in sectors such as economic development, the

production of industrial materials, housing and transport. Renewable energy sources are also on the table, with wind energy and biofuels being some of the most popular energy sources in this category. Another key element of the fight against climate change is to combat deforestation, which accounts for more than 20 % of man-made greenhouse gas emissions.

How will we finance climate change initiatives?

Developing countries need funds to bring their economies onto a low-carbon path and to combat poverty at the same time. Adaptation is also high on the agenda as global warming will affect these countries the most and some are already suffering the negative effects of climate change today. Other countries need funding to support research and development on strategies to address climate change in the developed world. Emissions trading and carbon credit auctions in the carbon market are popular proposals to raise capital. Developed countries are also encouraged to donate directly to the UNFCCC financial mechanism, which then allocates funds to projects that address climate change. (al)

Continued from page 1 — Interview with Jo Leinen, Chairman of the EP Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

think about the CO₂ tax as its complementary instrument to tackle climate change?

The EU Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) is the spearhead of European climate policy. We were the front runners in introducing a market-based instrument for climate protection on a larger scale. Many countries are following our track now. But we had to learn, of

course. Not everything worked out as we wanted it in the first trading period. At present, our partners in the United States and Japan should learn from our trial and error phase and avoid the same mistakes.

Carbon markets will be one of the central topics in the run-up debate for Copenhagen. Representing the responsible committee in the European Parliament, we are

very pleased to share our experiences and push for the interconnection of different regional carbon markets worldwide.

A European carbon tax would be a reasonable complementary instrument as long as it does not interfere with the ETS. It could also be used to create additional revenues for our financial commitments on a global scale. (bg)

Tackling major carbon challenges

By Josef Zboril



Josef Zboril

The article below is an excerpt containing the main ideas from the original publication. For the full article, please see:

<http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/imported/tackling-major-carbon-challenges/65226.aspx>

The EU's Emission Trading Scheme needs to take into account the entire life-cycle of industrial processes in order to set correct targets.

A competitive basic-material industry is integral in determining its efficiency. This could be endangered by the departure of basic industry to a more favourable business environment

The production of basic materials usually requires loads of energy, and they are therefore mostly produced by energy-intensive industries, which are exposed to the impact of the EU Emission Trading Scheme (ETS).

The overall energy requirements of an industrial process must be

assessed on the basis of the potential energy and carbon savings of the final product when including industries in the EU ETS.

The EU ETS must also take into account the willingness of energy-intensive industries in Europe to tackle climate change. They have achieved a 6 % reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in absolute terms compared with 1990 levels. This was not cheap and the physical limits of technologies should be taken into account when setting targets and reduction mechanisms.

Josef Zboril is a member of the European Economic and Social Committee (Employers' Group), working in its sections on transport, energy, infrastructure and the information society; agriculture, rural development and the environment; and the consultative commission on industrial change.

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Training, education and tighter control needed to address climate change challenges

By Edgardo Iozia



Edgardo Iozia

Three key opinions on energy and climate change have been adopted by the EESC during the last four months. The opinion on education and training for a carbon-free energy society stresses that education across all age groups and training for technicians have a crucial role to play in moving towards a 'zero-emissions' society. Government initiatives on education and training have been inadequate so far. The majority of actions to be taken fall under the responsibility of Member States, stakeholders such as educators, local authorities, businesses, trade unions and NGOs.

The need for concrete measures to kick-start the stagnating process of addressing persisting high levels of noise and pollutant emissions is the message of the opinion on emissions from road transport. Emissions

from private, public and goods road transport continue to cause serious illness and erode quality of life, especially for urban communities, representing more than 75 % of European citizens.

The current system of self-certification by the industry does not deliver the necessary improvements for citizens. While tests under laboratory conditions are used to prove compliance with EU emissions standards, on-road controls show that noise and pollutant emissions are considerably higher than those recorded in the cycle tests. The EESC calls upon the EU institutions to take steps to tighten control measures, thereby protecting citizens' health.

The importance of strengthening cooperation through the Union for the Mediterranean is at the heart of the 'Information report on climate change and the Mediterranean: environmental and energy challenges', approved by the EESC plenary session on 1 October 2009. The purpose of the study is to focus civil society's



EU commitments

By Derek Osborn



Derek Osborn

The article below is an excerpt containing the main ideas from the original publication. For the full article, please see:

<http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/imported/tackling-major-carbon-challenges/65225.aspx>

A global carbon market would be much more effective in reducing emissions than a series of regional systems hampered by protectionism.

For 20 years the world has been discussing the problem of climate change, while greenhouse gas emissions keep rising.

Wrong price signals are an important part of the problem. The prices

of fossil fuel and energy consumption do not include the increasing costs that carbon emissions impose. We don't see the damage we are causing — so we ignore it.

Getting the price of carbon emissions right must be a key part of any new deal on climate change. Carbon trading establishes a price for carbon emissions and therefore encourages companies to reduce emissions over time.

Some of the practical problems associated with carbon trading systems would be easier to resolve in a global system.



Concerns that a stiff carbon price would damage the competitiveness of industries in Europe would be removed if all countries were operating similar trading schemes, because all industries would be pressured to reduce carbon impact.

In addition, the concern that countries might favour their own industries when allocating carbon permits would be removed if permits were auctioned on a similar basis.

A free market without protectionism in carbon trading must be the way forward. A global carbon market would be a powerful instrument to drive the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Derek Osborn is a member of the European Economic and Social Committee (Various Interests Group) and Vice-President of its Sustainable Development Observatory.

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Go green! EESC supports renewable energy sources



The EU has fixed itself the most ambitious goals in order to combat global warming. Within the next 11 years, by 2020, it has promised to reduce its CO₂ emissions by 20 %. In addition, 20 % of the energy used in 2020 should come from renewable sources. In its opinion, prepared by Lutz Ribbe who represents the European Nature Heritage Fund (Euronatur) in Germany, the EESC supports this target as a tangible sign of the transition to a post-fossil fuel energy policy.

Can agrofuels be a solution?

Agrofuels as a possible substitute for fossil fuels have become a hotly debated issue in the recent past, but the EESC is critical of this solution. For example, the EESC believes that the future of private cars lies with electric traction powered by renewable energies. To power a VW Golf over 10 000 km

with agrodiesel would require the entire annual crop from 2 062 m² of arable land planted with oilseed rape. The same energy could, on the other hand, be obtained from the annual output of solar cells covering 37 m², around one sixtieth of the area. The EESC believes that in the long term solar and wind energy will play the dominant role in renewable energies.

Many studies have pointed out that biomass, unlike solar energy, is a limited resource and will inevitably find itself in competition with food production or the maintenance of biodiversity. If arable land is in short supply, large-scale expansion of bioenergy will require land not previously used for farming to be brought into use, with the ploughing up of grassland or deforestation —

the topic of a related EESC opinion, also prepared by Lutz Ribbe.

However, the EESC considers it is substantially more efficient to use biomass to generate electricity and heat than to produce liquid agrofuels, with the efficiency of modern biomass burners being nearly as high as fossil fuel burners. The EESC recommends that decentralised, locally or regionally available sources be placed at the heart of the new renewable energy strategy. Bioenergies could and must play a role here, but not the one envisaged by the agrofuel strategy.

The opinion can be found at: http://eesc.europa.eu/documents/opinions/avis_en.asp (cw)



Lutz Ribbe

attention on the consequences of failure to adopt suitable, timely policies that cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Strengthening social cohesion in the Union for the Mediterranean is the main key to developing a major North-South cooperation agree-

ment. It is proposed that a Mediterranean climate and sustainability alliance be set up, backed and supported by civil society.

Governance of environmental and sustainable development policies in the Mediterranean presents major problems and a lack of common policies will have a negative impact on people across the whole region. Achieving substantial increases in energy saving and

efficiency will be the key to attaining significant results.

Edgardo Iozia is a member of the EESC Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption (INT) and Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society (TEN), as well as rapporteur of many opinions.

Carbon capture and geological storage

By Gerd Wolf



Gerd Wolf

Fossil fuels are currently the mainstay of both European and global energy supply but the use of coal in power plants to produce electricity needs to be dramatically reduced. Two lines of development are being pursued to achieve this, one more technically mature than the other and both with varying effects. One of these is power stations with much higher energy efficiency which burn substantially less coal and release less CO₂ into the atmosphere for the same amount of electricity; the other is power stations that provide carbon capture and storage (technically referred to as carbon capture and sequestration (CSS)), so that most of the CO₂ produced is no longer released into the atmosphere, though with a perceptible loss of efficiency and higher costs.

Although the latter procedure, which is just starting to be developed

based on a number of pilot projects, will result in even faster consumption of a primary fuel, namely coal, if successful it will potentially lead to a very effective and swift reduction in the amount of CO₂ released into the atmosphere and so to substantial climate protection effects in the near future. This technology should be developed more rapidly and brought on stream as soon as possible. The decisive question is probably whether it will be possible to find sufficient safe long-term storage sites in suitable geological structures and demonstrate their fitness for purpose.

The EESC therefore welcomed and broadly supported the content of a relevant proposal for a directive from the Commission, a legal framework and the regulation technical requirements.

Gerd Wolf is rapporteur for the EESC on geological storage of carbon dioxide. He has been a member of the EESC since 1998 in its Various Interests Group, where he represents the Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres.



Three-country Stakeholders' Forum in Sopron: where history met the future



Open space workshops in full swing

Is it possible to simultaneously relaunch the economy and curb rising youth unemployment? What will the EU be like in 20 years? To answer these questions the EESC brought together almost 100 civil society organisations from Hungary, Slovakia and Austria for a brainstorming session. This year's Stakeholders' Forum took place in the border town of Sopron in Hungary on 7 and 8 October.

The venue was not chosen by chance. Some 20 years ago, in August 1989, the town of Sopron witnessed the Pan-European Picnic, during which the Iron Curtain was lifted briefly and the stream of East Germans crossing the nearby border and heading for West Germany became a flood, said EESC Vice-President Irini Pari.

EESC Members Beatrice Ouin, Thomas Delapina and Martin Chren addressed the forum, and other prominent speakers included Mercedes Echerer (an Austrian actress and founder of EU XXL film), Professor Pal Tamás (from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) and Commission representatives Gábor György and Marc Fähndrich.

In addressing youth unemployment, participants got to the root of the problem and identified a substantial mismatch between state-provided education and the needs of the labour market. They underlined the need to make farming more attractive for young people. Drawing more people into agriculture and tourism is a natural development of the 'green economy' which is in full swing, the participants reasoned.

Looking into the future, stakeholders called for a Europe 'that is multi-coloured in culture but united in action'. Discussions revealed a recurrent demand for stronger civil society involvement in decision-making in order to make the body politic more democratic at all levels. To achieve this, argued participants, the governance model of the nation states and of the EU needs to be rethought and new consultation procedures have to be introduced. (mb)

Coming soon in the EESC

Move together towards a new culture of urban mobility

On 7 and 8 December, the EESC will host the conference and exhibition 'Better mobility — Move together towards a new culture of urban mobility', marking the conclusion of the Move Together project. This project was launched in June 2008 at the EESC by an international consortium supported by the European Commission, and aims to demonstrate that a cultural shift is imperative if we are to evolve towards more sustainable mobility in our cities.

For more details, contact: AnaCristina.Costea@eesc.europa.eu (ac)

Twenty years of the European Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers: Time to celebrate and look ahead!

Over 20 years ago the EESC launched the social charter and the European social action programme and spurred European political leaders to turn it into a legally binding process that became the 'social chapter' of the Treaty. This anniversary provides a good opportunity to look back and to take stock of what was achieved and, in particular, what lessons are to be learnt for future integration. Together with 'Notre Europe', whose Honorary President Jacques Delors fought for the implementation of the charter, the EESC will host a conference on 30 November 2009 to mark this milestone in its history. (ah)

MEMBERS' NEWS

Healthy and dignified ageing

'It is very important to focus on individual elderly persons in order to enhance dignity and quality in care,' said Renate Heinisch, who represented the EESC at a conference on healthy and dignified ageing in Solna. She also met Queen Silvia of Sweden, the founder of the Silviahemmet non-profit foundation. (cw)



IN SHORT

EU-former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Civil Society Joint Consultative Committee

On 25 September 2009 the EESC held the first meeting of the EU-former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Civil Society Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) in Brussels.

JCC members asked for the accession negotiations between the EU

and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to be opened as soon as the benchmarks set in the accession partnership had been met.

The JCC will now allow civil society organisations from both sides to monitor the country's path towards European Union membership, and to adopt recommendations for the attention of the government and the EU institutions. (aj)

Be(e) diverse — EESC Design ZeroNine winner

The winner of the first European Award for a Sustainable Present competition is the 'bee house' project designed by James Ennis from Ireland, selected out of more than 100 contributions. The EESC Design ZeroNine competition is the very first 'green public procurement' project by a European institution involving the world of design.



Winning project

The concept behind the bee house, which was awarded a prize of EUR 10 000, is 'United in diversity, living with biodiversity'. James Ennis, who was born in Dublin in 1976, now works in Milan, Italy. His project, based on scientific research,

consists of a window box containing flowers and is in fact a micro habitation for bees, raising awareness for the vital role of bees in food production and life in general.

An exhibition displaying the 30 most significant projects will open at the EESC in Brussels on 9 December 2009, in the framework of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. The winning bee house will be produced in Europe and used by the EESC as a promotional gift. (cw)

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