

CONV 739/03

CONTRIB 324

COVER NOTE

from Secretariat
to The Convention

**Subject : Contribution by M. Helle Thorning-Schmidt, alternate member of the
Convention:
- “Four good reasons to abolish the Economic and Social Committee”**

The Secretary-General of the Convention has received the contribution annexed hereto
from M. Helle Thorning-Schmidt, alternate member of the Convention.

Four good reasons to abolish the Economic and Social Committee

Contribution to the Convention by Helle Thorning-Schmidt, MEP

May 15, 2003

One of the tasks of the Convention is to ask whether existing institutions and bodies still add sufficient value to the work of the Union or the interests, which they represent. The time has come to focus on the Economic and Social Committee (ESC) and its future role. Should we continue with the ESC as we know it today or should we instead create another forum for the civil society that is cheaper, more efficient, more focused and more European in terms of representativity? I believe the latter and I have put forward an amendment to this effect.

Four good reasons to evaluate the future role of the ESC:

- **Unfocused:** The ESC focuses on too many areas today. This make the ESC's contributions to the decision-makers less valuable because the contributions are not sufficiently targeted. We also see overlapping and duplication of efforts made by other consultative bodies and committees configured around the European Commission.
- **Too expensive:** The cost of financing the ESC will reach almost EUR 100 million yearly after the enlargement. Compared to the actually added value of its work, this does not fit into the concept of value for money. These EUR 100 million could be used in a better way, especially taken into account that the social partners lack resources for the social dialogue.
- **Inefficient:** Since the ESC was created 50 years ago, the political environment has changed considerably. The social partners now play a more significant role and the social dialogue has been strengthened. Furthermore, the civil society is much better organised and new ways of representation have occurred. Neither the civil society organisations nor the social partners seem to rely on the ESC to get their message across. They find more efficient ways to organise themselves and to make the decision-makers aware of their point of views. It is clear, that the civil society still needs a forum to meet and co-ordinate their efforts and messages, however, the ESC does not seem to meet these needs.
- **Not sufficiently European:** The ESC does not involve the European Social Partners and the European interest organisations sufficiently in its work, and does not use European appointments for its members. On top of this, there seem to be problems for the ESC to ensure that information about its activity reaches the grassroots.

On this background it is evident that the Convention needs to reconsider the role of the ESC. As it is today, the European citizens cannot be satisfied with the performance of an organisation, which does not give value for money. We ought to appoint a special expert group with the task to come up with a proposal on how to reorganise the ESC.