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European Economic and Social Committee

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EESC to play a key role in the establishment of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the International Labour Office (ILO) held a conference on "Civil society in the Black Sea region and the Eastern Partnership countries – Promoting civil and social dialogue" in Brussels on 2 and 3 March 2009. The participants requested the EESC to use its expertise in developing civil society networks and play a key role in the setting-up of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum.

All participants in the conference stressed the importance of civil society's active involvement in the Black Sea and the Eastern Partnership initiatives through its networks at national and regional level.

The civil society network, officially dubbed the "Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum," needs to include all relevant representatives of civil society in the region – social partners, NGOs and other interest groups – in order to bring added value to the implementation of the Eastern Partnership Initiative. The establishment of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum should start immediately after the official launch of the initiative in order to make it operational in the second half of 2009.

Other recommendations include the need for civil society to be consulted in the upcoming negotiations for Association Agreements between the EU and partner countries as well as a much needed coordination of future actions in the framework of the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy. The need to build up the capacity of social partners and other civil society organisations in the region was also voiced by speakers. The conclusions of the conference will be forwarded to the European institutions and national governments of the countries involved.

During the event the participants were addressed by a number of distinguished speakers, among them **Mario Sepi**, EESC President, **George Dragnich**, ILO Executive Director for Social Dialogue, **Liudmyla Denysova**, Minister of Labour and Social Policy of Ukraine, **Sergiu Sainciuc**, Deputy Minister of Economy and Trade of the Republic of Moldova and **Marian Hošek**, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic.

The conference was attended by over 120 representatives of employers', employees' and various interest organisations from the EU Member States as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine. Other participants were from non-governmental organisations, think-tanks, regional socio-professional organisations, governmental institutions, the EU, ILO and other international organisations.



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The European Economic and Social Committee represents the various economic and social components of organised civil society. It is an institutional consultative body established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome. Its consultative role enables its members, and hence the organisations they represent, to participate in the Community decision-making process. The Committee has 344 members, who are appointed by the Council of Ministers.