



2011 EFC and DAPHNE Autumn Assembly

7 November 2011

JDE 62, 12 midday to 1 p.m.

(8 minutes speaking time)

Ladies and gentlemen:

- It is with great pleasure that I would like to welcome all of you here today to the European Economic and Social Committee, for your first ever joint meeting between the European Foundation Centre and DAPHNE;
- Your conference today will address some of the key issues facing foundations and I noted that your final session will examine what is perhaps the core of the matter, namely: how to raise the profile of foundations and how to *collectively* achieve common goals;
- Indeed collectively, the figures available on foundations are impressive: there are some 110,000 foundations in Europe, which employ between 750,000 and 1 million persons and have an annual expenditure of between 83 and 150 billion Euros;
- This is a considerable force, both economically and socially;
- And this socio-economic strength results not only from these statistics, but also from the *function* that you serve, offering important services in medical research, social support, development cooperation, the promotion of cultural diversity, etc;
- Your socio-economic strength *also* derives from the creativity, innovation, flexibility, quality of employment and contribution to local and regional development, to name but a few of the characteristics of foundations;
- All of these factors are of course typical of the social economy at large, of which foundations are an important component;
- And what we have seen during this period of crisis, is that social economy enterprises have performed *better* than conventional companies, continuing to contribute to local development and employment, notably in countries which have a culture of cooperatives, such as Italy and Spain.

- However, what I think has so far been missing in the profile of foundations, is the political dimension;
- By this I am referring to the *political recognition and visibility of the sector* and I hope that your meeting here today will contribute towards identifying

common strategies to promote foundations as influential European public actors;

- Crucial to this process is of course the possibility of a future Regulation on a European Foundation Statute, which the European Economic and Social Committee strongly supported in its Opinion on this topic, last year;
 - In the EESC Opinion, we stated that a European Foundation Statute would directly contribute towards economic benefits for foundations, such as reducing the costs for cross-border activities and that it would enhance efficiency and simplification;
 - Secondly, a European Foundation Statute would help to promote European integration within the Single Market;
 - Thirdly, a Statute would contribute to a definition of foundations within Europe;
 - Fourthly, it would enhance the political visibility of the sector, vis-à-vis national and European authorities;
 - Lastly, it would help to bring Europe closer to its citizens, for example, by introducing a reliable European 'label' for Foundations;
 - Consequently, it would make Europe more visible, tangible, accessible and relevant to European citizens.
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- Ladies and gentlemen, I will not monopolise the podium any longer;
 - Simply to say that you are very welcome here today, the European Economic and Social Committee will continue to support European Foundations and I hope that we can find opportunities to work together again in the near future.

Thank you for your attention.