

Bulgaria

1. What work, reports or other contributions have been produced in your country?

- Progress

- ✓ At the beginning of 2010, the ESC presented its opinion on the challenges facing the Bulgarian economy, where the emphasis was placed on the impact of the world economic crisis on the key sectors of the economy and the importance of innovation policy in helping competitiveness and economic growth is described.

- ✓ The long-term strategic document “The National Structure Reference Strategy 2007-2013” concentrated on four key priorities – improvement of the basic infrastructure, increasing the quality of the human capital with an emphasis on employment, the promotion of entrepreneurship, an environment favourable to business and good management and assistance for the development of a balanced territory.

- ✓ The “Innovation Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria and Measures for its Implementation” covering the period before 2013 should improve the competitiveness of Bulgarian industry through the building of a knowledge-based industry.

- ✓ The Operational Programme “the Development of the Competitiveness of the Bulgarian Economy 2007-2013” concentrates on the establishment and implementation of innovative products and technologies in the manufacturing processes, the establishment of innovative activities, technological modernisation and renovation, and the implementation of energy-saving technologies in manufacturing.

- Quality of life

- ✓ In its analysis on the Combat against Poverty in Bulgaria, the ESC underlined that the success of addressing questions related to poverty and social exclusion depended directly on macro-economic stability and the achieving of sustainable economic growth. The Council found that the principal challenges had reached considerable disproportions on a regional basis with regard to the quality of life, the qualitative and quantitative parameters had impaired the employment resources and the high morbidity and the negative assessment of the health of populations. The ESC recommended taking measures which would enable the poor to gain productive qualities (education, skills and health) together with initiatives for the promotion of self-employment and the financing of assistance for independent working.

- ✓ In another opinion on Income Policy, a major lever for Improving the Quality of life a Factor for Reducing Poverty in Bulgaria, the ESC stressed the implementation of policies and mechanisms for an accelerated growth in incomes together with the adoption of an official an appropriate poverty threshold and an intertwining of social transfers with this.

- ✓ In demonstrating its consistent commitment for raising the quality of life, the ESC adopted an opinion on the Current Problems and Policies on the employment market in 2010, where it underlined the need to implement an active incomes policy, which would favour the gradual convergence of incomes in Bulgaria with those in the other Member States of the European Union, show the intertwining of the social protection system with the poverty

- threshold and the raising of the minimum wage based on the poverty threshold, employment productivity and the ratio of the minimum wage to the average wage.
- ✓ The optimisation of social protection and social security systems, combating poverty, protecting children and the family and tackling demographic problems are, according to the ESC, the markers for new policies which should be developed and implemented in the social sphere; this is set out in the ESC opinion on Social Security and Social Protection adopted in 2010.
 - ✓ Once again, in its opinion on Health and Safety at Work - and Socio-economic Questions, the Council underlined the significance of employment conditions to reduce professional stress and the need to develop a national policy on Health and Safety at Work.
- Sustainable development
 - ✓ The National Sustainable Development Strategy is concerned with environmental, economic and social questions related to employment, education and training, health, access to a healthy natural environment, responsible management and sharing, together with the reduction and elimination of unsustainable manufacturing and consumption models.
 - ✓ The objective of the “Regional development 2007-2013” Operational Programme is the renewal of towns, tourism development, the drawing up of local and regional transport plans and the stimulation of integrated initiatives for regional and local development.
 - ✓ The objective of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 is the development of a competitive agriculture, forestry and agri-foodstuffs industry based on innovation, in accordance with the protection of natural resources and the environment.
 - ✓ The objective of the National Strategy for Development of the Forestry Sector in Bulgaria is to promote sustainable and multifunctional management of the forestry in order to develop an economically viable forestry sector, which would contribute to economic development.
 - ✓ The objective of the National Strategy for the sustainable Development of Tourism in Bulgaria 2009-2013 is to promote sustainable schemes for the development and management of tourism activities.
 - Relationship between the economy and the use of natural resources
 - ✓ The National Long Term Programme for the Promotion of the Use of Biofuels in The Transport Sector 2008-2020 should promote the use of biofuels through an increase in the profitability of their production, stimulate scientific research in this direction and examine the possibilities for the production of biofuels.
 - ✓ The National Long Term Programme for the Promotion of the Use of Biomass 2008-2020 should implement the general structure for the possibilities for the use of biomass for the purposes of energy production.
 - ✓ The objective of the National Long Term Programme for the Promotion of the Use of Renewable Energy Sources 2005-2015 is that the existing share of renewable energy sources exceeds 8% of gross electrical energy production, while from now to 2015 the target should be 9%.
 - ✓ The objective of the National Long Term Energy Efficiency Programme from now to 2015 is to specify the initiatives and measures for increasing energy efficiency. The emphasis

- is placed on the reduction of the energy intensity of GDP in the economic sectors, which are final consumers of fuels and energy, such as industry, transport, services, household consumption and agriculture.
- Environmental questions
 - ✓ The Environment Operational Programme 2007-2013 provided for the improvement and development of the infrastructure for tap water and waste water in the populated sectors and the processing of waste and the protection and re-establishment of biodiversity.
 - ✓ The objectives of the National Strategy for the Development of the Water Sector and Management prior to 2015 covers the supply of a sufficient quantity of good quality tap water, the protection of surface water, the status of underground water and the development of efficient holdings in this sector.
 - ✓ The objective of the National Plan for the Protection of Biodiversity 2005-2010 is the protection, re-establishment and sustainable management of biodiversity.
 - Development of communal life
 - ✓ The National Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality 2009-2015 is intended to ensure equality of opportunities for men and women in all areas of social life.
 - ✓ The objective of the National Programme Providing Possibilities for Active Ageing, the Participation of Full-time Pensioners in Social Life and the Prevention of their Social Exclusion provides equal access to pensioners to services, possibilities for a more active social life, and the conditions for the development of this at the age of retirement.
 - ✓ The ESC has developed an opinion on the family, good parenting and the opportunities of gender equality to underline the importance of the development of programmes for the eradication of social inequalities among children and to encourage employers to establish company family policies.
 - Population access to public services (education, health, transport, etc.)
 - ✓ The National Health Strategy 2008-2013 and the Action Plan concurrently address fair access to Social Security, the natural environment, political management and socio-economic development.
 - ✓ The objective of the national Action Programme on the Environment and Health 2008-2013 is to dispel and significantly reduce the rates of illness and mortality, to dispel and reduce respiratory illnesses due to atmospheric pollution, the impact of dangerous chemical substances and chemical products (for example heavy metals), physical factors (such as noise), biological agents and harmful working conditions during pregnancy, childhood and adolescence.
 - ✓ The objective of the National Programme for the development of preschool and school education 2006-2015 is to collate the national objectives for school education, describe the principal measures to accompany them and update and make a Bulgarian school education of quality accessible.
 - ✓ The Transport Operational Programme 2007-2013 should encourage investment in the construction, modernisation and re-adaptation of the national transport roadways and the railway infrastructure, improvement in the transport connections to neighbouring countries, navigation and security at sea, in canals and rivers and the development of combined transport.

2) What topics are your ESC currently working on?

The ESC is involved in the development of the anti-crisis programme, with economic re-establishment and improvement of the situation on the employment market. The ESC has drafted three opinions on economic policy, the employment market and finally on social security and protection. It has underlined the importance of the efficient use of innovation and technologies while complying with environmental requirements, the importance of promoting social integration and improving social conditions, as basic conditions prior to the building of a more competitive economy. Special attention was paid to the challenges resulting from the ageing of the population, health insurance and safety at work and to the protection of children and the family.

3) What topics will your ESC be working on in the future?

The Council plans to take an interest in the reform of medical services, the questions of disability and the protection of the disadvantaged and the impact of climatic changes on sustainable development. The ESC is also concentrating on broader social challenges and plans to examine the social dimensions of the Lisbon Treaty and the perspectives of the new 2020 EU Strategy. With a better view of social cohesion and the promotion of the community approach, the ESC has, in its work, underlined societal responsibility and the social audit of Bulgarian companies.

4) If you are not working on these topics, or you have not yet considered that possibility, are you nevertheless interested in doing so in the near future? And if so, on what subjects precisely?

The ESC has shown its interest by examining and broadening the skills of its experts in the field of new indicators (for measuring economic progress). The cooperation established with the public authorities and civil organisations in the country should increase the public debate about the prioritisation of environmental and social aspects in a complete approach to economic activity.

5) What is the interest of your institution in the different topics?

The work of the ESC includes the initiation and drafting of analyses, opinions and recommendations on the questions at stake in order to assist the national authorities in the implementation of economic and social policies. The Council organises public consultations and discussions with the Legislator and the Executive and representatives of civil society, which have helped to clarify the significance of the aspects of sustainable development and increasing prosperity. The ESC also relies on the skills of its experts in the identification of national peculiarities and the proposing of solutions with a view to building an economy that is more respectful of the environment, more innovative and competitive.

6) Which of the fields referred to interest you most, either currently or in the future?

The Council has expressed its eagerness to work on the subjects of sustainable economic and social development, economic prosperity and increasing the innovation potential of the economy and extending the access to social services. A priority of the Council's work is improvement in the quality of life, the implementation of better working conditions, the promotion of regional development and social life.

7) What is the interest of civil society in the different topics?

Civil society is, above all, active on environmental questions, as was found during discussions on the Natura Network Management Programme of 2000. In 2009, the ESC organised an international conference and began a series of discussions on the questions of climate change and the need to take measures in the different economic sectors. The work of the civil organisations should concentrate more on the questions of economic development, which should be both cohesive with and respectful of the environment.

8) What are the main challenges and what are the main practical applications you expect?

The challenges for the development and implementation of a system of indicators and methodological principles for the measurement of economic progress beyond GDP relates to the subjective nature of indicators of individual perceptions of happiness, well-being, etc. It is impossible for these indicators to be covered precisely in terms of quantity and without equivocation. Overcoming these difficulties would ensure more efficient coverage of the economic dynamic.

9) What are the dimensions you consider to be especially important for the measurement of societal progress, development and well-being?

It is particularly important to develop a clear and unequivocal methodology for the measurement of subjective indicators of well-being, happiness, quality of life, etc. The quantitative determination of these indices requires the development of new skills and the enrichment of statistical practices and working methods, together with a change in social and political attitudes.

10) Have you suggestions, proposals or good practices to present?

Improvement in skills in the field of quantitative measurement of specified indicators is significantly important for the Council and we hope that in the future we can also contribute, through concrete results, to this aspect.

11) Have you suggestions, proposals or good practices to present to ensure consultation with or participation by civil society in moving this work forward?

Numerous public discussions have been organised, together with consultations with the diverse structures of civil society. The Council is trying to broaden the scope and aspects of its work with the civil organisations, in order to propose, in the future, the results of the joint efforts with a view to the improvement of socio-economic development.

Indicators

GDP growth rate

Average income growth rate

Number of patents lodged

Average productivity

Tourism share of GDP
Gender income inequalities

Unemployment rate
Employment rate
Rate of Self-employment
% of independent workers
Business climate

Human Poverty Index
WBI Poverty Index

Housing renovation
Level of access to potable water
Quality of potable water
Processing of domestic and industrial waste

Education rate
Rate of access to secondary
Rate of access to higher education
Rate of access to professional training

Biofuel production
Forestry share of GDP
Share of own energy
Energy efficiency
Energy intensity of GDP
Waste management
Biodiversity
Water quality

Index of participation of women
Share of retired people in a situation of social exclusion

Illness rate
Mortality rate
Number of respiratory illnesses due to atmospheric pollution
Morbidity rate
Rate of the population subject to professional stress
Number of work accidents