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*In Favour of a Social Europe,  
the Developing Countries,  
more Humane and  
Environment-Friendly Globalisation*

# ELECTRONIC VIVANT- EUROPE

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## 1. EDITORIAL

A Precolloquium was held in Brussels on 22 November 2005.  
Here are the Programme, a Report and the reactions and reflexions of three participants.

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<sup>1</sup> Precolloquium in preparation for a Colloquium planned in the framework of the CESE??? at the end of May 2006 on the subject of the relation between work and European taxation systems.  
(Socio-economic and macro-economic implications.)

## 2. PROGRAMME OF THE PRECOLLOQUIUM (Issues around Work)

### 1. INTRODUCTION by Jean-Paul BRASSEUR

#### 2. Bernard VAN ASBROUCK, *specialist on socio-economic development*

“The City faced with threats from markets and the stakes of economic democracy”

Debate...

#### 3. Jacques BERTHILLIER, *French economist*

“Full work and its socio-economic implications”

By correspondence : communicated by Marilena di STASI

Debate...

#### 4. Marc HALEVY, *master in Economics, civil engineer and Doctor of Applied Sciences*

“The notion of work in the light of the evolution in values”

By correspondence : communicated by Jean-Paul BRASSEUR

Debate

#### 5. Roland DUCHÂTELET, *founder and President of VIVANT-Belgium*

“The problem of the work market as a chief executive”

Debate

#### 6. At 2130 hours José MONTERO, *teacher*, will give his impressions on the debates.

## 3. ARGUING FOR EUROPE

### Precolloquium of 22 November 2005 in Brussels

#### A. Report by Marilena di Stasi

A precolloquium, organised by the VIVANT-EUROPE Movement, devoted to “**Issues around Work**”, took place on Tuesday 22 November in the Brussels offices of VIVANT.

M. Jean-Paul BRASSEUR, responsible for the VIVANT-EUROPE Movement, made the introduction. He indicated that what was at stake today was the place **of work in employment** in our society. Work no longer constitutes **the sole means of social integration**. Some (in France) suggest **replacing** the notion of full employment with that **of full work (remunerated or not)**.

M. Jean-Paul Brasseur underlined the need for new visions and innovative mechanisms for structuring society in the future. In order to do that, it would be necessary :

- **to remove tax** from work in Europe and to tax only products (Programme of VIVANT-EUROPE)
- **to put in place** a more democratic economic system to restore people’s initiative and creativity
- **to go beyond** social dependency by introducing a universal allowance (basic income), which by the safety-net it provides would enable people to act on their own responsibility in their lives -- politically, economically and socially
- **to opt** for entrepreneurial capitalism within a system of more and more mobility and softer technologies.

**As the first speaker,** M. Bernard VAN ASBROUCK, specialist in socio-economic development, developed the theme **“The city faced with threats from markets and the stakes at play in economic democracy”**.

By “city”, he indicated, **“one should understand a corpus of direction and action that unites individuals who share the same space/time without impinging on their diversity.”**

In the light of this approach he tackled more specific questions such as employment, markets and the organisation of the city itself.

Employment comes about when **a new order of exchange** between competences and needs is constructed upon and around what is called **capital**, namely accumulated wealth. Thus wealth captures **a capital of competence** in order to organise a response to needs through products and in doing so **captures the wealth gained**. Employment is therefore closely linked with the notions of **added value and profit**.

**In this way employment has become a central organising factor in our democratic societies.** Seen from the city, employment thus had a regulatory, redistributive, integrating and motivating role.

Employment enables individuals having only **a capital of competence** to offer to live, to be citizens of the city, and helps society to structure itself, to develop itself and to last.

**From this it can be seen that employment and work are two different things.**

Work consists in using a competence for transforming the environment. In itself it does not imply societal organisation, even though it is theoretically necessary to work when employed and in every society there is work going on.

The problems being posed now, by the evolution both in types of exchange between competences and capital and in types of wealth creation, are those **of the durability of employment as a way of organising the city** and of the ways of remunerating the performance of activities vital for the city.

**If employment no longer fulfils its role, the city loses its vital resources.**

The astonishing thing is that **“we have never created so much wealth as we do today, yet there is a lack of means for satisfying the needs of citizens”**.

This is owing to the fact that in the market place all attention is placed on costs, which always have to be cut. In this context, employment can be seen only as a cost to be minimised, linked in this case **with added value and profits**.

And markets thus have a natural tendency to destroy and engineer one of the fundamental bases of the present organisation of the city, namely employment.

**We may neither ignore the city nor engineer it**, for fear that it lose its legitimacy in the eyes of citizens faced with very dynamic and increasingly autonomous markets, thus creating two classes : the winners and the excluded.

**There is no political democracy without economic democracy**, and exclusion is a sign of its absence. It is the role of **the State** to provide economic democracy through redistribution.

*Democracy is not a dimension of the markets and has no reason to be, since it does not enter into their definition.*

*This is why one can imagine cities without markets, but not markets without cities.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Editor’s note. Nonetheless, the citizen may exercise democratic power over markets - through choice as a consumer or as an investor.

**The second speaker**, Mme Marilena di Stasi, responsible in Brussels for the VIVANT-EUROPE Movement, pointed out that work today is seen as a necessity for living and not as a way of constructing one's own life. Drawing on an extract <sup>3</sup> from a communication sent to the precolloquium by Jacques BERTHILLIER (French economist), (*"it is better to speak not of full employment, in view of its rarity, but of full work"*), she argued in favour of abolishing taxes on work, which would unshackle work and provide space for the durable development of the individual as a person, a subject under law, with obligations and choices.

When work is relieved of all forms of taxation, the individual is strengthened, can reach fulfilment and autonomy. In this context, the State should now adapt to the realities of the third millennium. <sup>4</sup>

And Europe should seek political solutions to the problems of unemployment and ageing populations rather than **look for ones based only on hard financial considerations**.

Europe should find her heart again by means of a new social model. The social contract with her citizens should be renewed and her values should be redefined in the light of recent socio-economic disturbances.

It is the only chance she has of holding her own in the face of the rapid advances being made by the giants - China, India and Russia (which have no rules and no social model).

So might Europe stand at the crossroads of the civilisations and bring to them values of humanity and peace.

### (3) Communication from Jacques BERTHILLIER :

*"We are used to thinking of work only as **an activity that is remunerated**. Yet this reductionist outlook ignores, marginalises and devalues too many activities which are of genuine social utility.*

***Take housework**, so abundant and so necessary. Far too many people fail to appreciate it at its true value, and in particular minimise the importance of the role of parents in the home. When they give up employment to devote themselves to bringing up their children **let us remember that they relieve society of considerable costs in infrastructure and staff** (nurseries, kindergartens, canteens, transport...). Furthermore, educational activities carried out in the home strengthen **the home and thus also the fabric of society, which is so often stretched to its limits**.*

*The way this activity is valued officially leads to a curious **paradox** : if two persons, each of whom was doing the housework and looking after the young children, decided that one of them should carry out that work for the other by going through the labour market, the Gross*

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In moving to another political, economic and social era, individuals must create a critical mass in the exercise of their fourfold power :

- That of voting for and demanding participative democracy
- That of giving weight to ethical considerations by action within the corporation
- That of buying or boycotting
- That of directing their investments.

<sup>3</sup> See para. 3 below.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. para. 4 below.c

*Domestic Product and **the level of activity of the population would suddenly go up, even though no further wealth was being created.***

*Equally, the amount, interest and value of the work done by all **the voluntary workers** in numerous associations, **humanitarian, cultural, sporting and other, should not be underestimated.** **Such work nourishes** the whole of society at all levels. The worth of this contribution is such that if society as a whole **were deprived** of it it would be well-nigh impossible to maintain the quality of the various services, **even if substantial budgets were allocated for them.** This irreplaceable contribution is the concrete expression of one form of collective solidarity, so much needed in society today.*

*Nor should we forget that, in a human life in which remunerated time continues to diminish thanks to technical advances, personal fulfilment is still necessary for the promotion and maintenance of a peaceable and cohesive society in good physical and moral health; and that this is achieved not only through paid work but also, and perhaps more so, **through diversified relationships with others, in numerous individual and collective activities which are totally unpaid.** These allow each one of us **to occupy idle** hours with an intelligent occupation, be it looking after the body with a healthier lifestyle or sensible physical exercise, or be it developing artistic talent, cultural enrichment, even the simple contemplation of nature, its beauty and harmony. Through such work individuals **can be strengthened, fulfil themselves and gain autonomy** ; they enrich both themselves and society : for the latter is dispensed of the need to pay the increasingly expensive costs of medical care, or of providing the assistance too often demanded - or of a police intervention.*

***These moments in life, intelligently occupied, thus form an integral part of full work.”***

**Taking up the reflections** of M. Marc HALEVY, Master in Economics, who also sent in a communication, M. Jean-Paul BRASSEUR indicated the need to reformulate the notion of work in the light of today’s ethical values and political and socio-economic changes.

“Now is not the time for drawing-room dithering and specious quibbling,” indicated M. Marc HALEVY.

The ten directions set out below are essential for our new times; for entering into the new century means **being able to** :

1. Transcend speculative capitalism in favour of entrepreneurial capitalism.
2. Transcend physical relocation in favour of virtual mobility.
3. Transcend heavy industries in favour of soft technologies.
4. Transcend economic servitude in favour of mental creativity.
5. Transcend social dependency by means of the universal basic income.
6. Transcend parliamentary democracy in favour of personal responsibility.
7. Transcend the pillage of natural resources through ecological frugality.
8. Transcend bureaucratic control in favour of gratuitousness.
9. Transcend legalism in favour of individual ethics.
10. Transcend hedonist materialism in favour of spiritual achievements.

“It is not a question of making a Revolution, for history shows that revolutions drown in the blood they shed,” wrote M. Marc HALEVY, “but to anticipate an evolution **which is beyond mankind and which will destroy him if he continues to contemplate the navel of his disastrous failures.”**

Jean-Paul BRASSEUR pointed out that the two following quotations showed just how hard it was to see over the horizon and **stop contemplating our “disastrous failures”** :

## TODAY’S YOUTH

*“Young people today are fond of luxury and bad manners. They disregard authority and have no respect for age.*

*Today’s children are tyrants; they no longer stand up when an elderly gentleman enters the room.*

*They contradict their parents, talk in the presence of others, eat noisily and tyrannise their masters.”*

*SOCRATES, 480 B.C.*

*“I have no hope for the future of our people if it depends on the superficiality of today’s youth ; young people today are quite unbearable, disrespectful and pretentious.*

*When I was young we were taught good manners and respect for our parents.*

*But the youth of today pretend they know better than their elders and never shut up.”*

*HESIOD, 500 B.C.*

**Finally**, M. Roland DUCHATELET, founder and President of VIVANT-Belgium, made a presentation on “The work market in a service society.”

He started by underlining the fact that in our society there are too many taxes and our social security is financed in a self-destructive manner. In a world where 10% of the population produces all the food and products that we buy, a person deciding to work is penalised by being obliged to pay heavy taxes.

Furthermore, in order to make sure of its revenue the State constantly tracks the worker as a carrier of funds !

According to M. DUCHATELET, such a mind-set should be stopped and public service expenditure re-shaped by simplifying the legislation and the way it is administered. A good way is to introduce more rationality and information technology (e-Government).

In addition, the way of financing social security should be improved, for the present way gives advantages to firms that move abroad.

M. DUCHATELET pointed out : **“The charges and taxes imposed on work increase the cost of work, reduce demand for manpower and increase unemployment.”**

To remedy this situation, it is necessary to :

- **Abolish** taxes on work.
- **Pay** for social security not just through employers but through the whole community (consumption tax).
- **Remodel** work legislation so that it favours the neighbourhood economy.
- **Make** it easier for employees to become employers (greater freedom to set up businesses).
- **Allocate** a fair share of support to people who decide to work in the neighbourhood economy.

**At the end of the afternoon,** M. José MONTERO (teacher) gave the assembly his first impressions, as an immediate reflection on the bare essentials of what had been said.

Following the success of this precolloquium, the VIVANT-EUROPE Movement is organising a colloquium of a European character on 30 May 2006 to discuss its programme, which may be summarised in a simple idea : abolish tax on work and tax only the product, and do this at the European level. Members of the European Commission, the European Parliament, VIVANT-EUROPE and other interested parties would be invited to this colloquium.

Several economists would be asked **to measure the socio-economic and macroeconomic impact of financing social security through indirect taxation.**

## **B. Reactions and reflections of three participants**

### **I. Monique DURIN (Braine-le-Château) (Belgium)**

I have been familiar with VIVANT's proposals for several years, yet with each new serious encounter with those responsible or the committed some points become clearer, some ideas or priorities emerge.

In this colloquium I have particularly appreciated the definition of employment : "*an agreement between competence capital and financial capital*" and that of work : "*using a competence for transforming the environment*" (Bernard VAN ASBROUCK). This clear distinction leads to the imperious necessity **of rethinking work and employment**, of widening the angle of vision so as to go beyond the role of generating individual income and arrive at social insertion in the City, personal fulfilment and collective socio-cultural enrichment. This is made possible by the Basic Income, which might more judiciously be called "*Citizenship Income*" (Jimmy NOTERMANS).

This represents a real revolution in mentality, motivated by the facts (which R. DUCHATELET clearly reminded us of) : 10% of the population (4) are enough to produce all the goods we buy and the present system of social security financing is self-destructive, penalising both the unemployed and employers.

The market economy cannot be expected to bring this revolution about. A new model will have to be imposed **politically**; to the political we **must return**.

But then a question comes up, which has worried me for years : "*Why do our political decision-takers not pay heed to VIVANT's so obvious truths?*" What stops them? At which basely individualist blockages should one point the attack?

In conclusion, I think VIVANT's **priority is precisely to overcome these blockages.**

### **II. Catherine DE LIMBURG STIRUM (Forville) (Belgium)**

One or two essential points came to me during this precolloquium :

**Tools** must be identified, **applicable throughout Europe** - and why not in the whole world one day? - which countries that retain their sovereignty can use to obtain socio-economic benefits according to their own primordial preoccupations.

Each country may use these tools as they see fit.

It's a bit like building : provide the building materials and the cement; and then with them each entrepreneur builds what he likes.

The three tools : abolish taxation of work, tax the product and support the individual with a basic income. **What appears to me very important is that they cannot be dissociated!** If one of them is left out, the "social cohesion" becomes deficient because a piece vital for its happening is missing.

Roland DUCHATELET showed us very well how this worked for getting the economy and consumption in Europe going again.

These tools are easy to put in place and can put Europe in a position of fair competition with countries like China.

We can understand the generous spirit in which the possibility is offered today to Third World countries to live in greater comfort, but it is founded on a competitive situation which is too out of balance for it to benefit for long either the "little Chinese" or the "kind Europeans".

**The citizens of Europe are becoming poorer** (15% more homeless people this year in Charleroi than last year, for example; and I believe the figure for impoverishment of the population is also significant in Brussels) and the profits of Chinese companies are not distributed in the population. And non-Chinese companies are the first to benefit from the low untaxed wages in China.

One thing is sure : if consumption tax has the effect of increasing the price of goods exported from China, **they will still have to find consumers somewhere!** Maybe they will have to find them in China. And then salaries in such countries will have to go up.

So long as the potential consumers are found in Europe, there is no reason to increase salaries in the Third World. They don't need consumers from there.

### III. Pascal ROUSSEL (Wavre) (Belgium)

What struck me in this colloquium was **the distinction it is necessary to draw between "work" and "employment"**.

For VIVANT "full employment" is a myth : as Roland DUCHATELET has shown, in the Western World 10% of the population (4) produces all the food and goods that we buy. On the other hand VIVANT is in favour of a society of "full work"! (3)

#### (4) "L'Age de la connaissance" ("The Age of Knowledge")

"Principes et réflexions sur la révolution noétique au XXIème siècle" ("The Principles of and Reflections upon the Knowledge Revolution of the 21st Century") by **Marc HALEVY**

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## **THE AUTHOR**

Graduate of the Ecole Polytechnique, Master in Economics, Civil engineer and Doctor of Applied Sciences, pupil of the Nobel Laureate Ilya Prigogine, Marc Halévy has been helping company managers face complex situations for the past twenty years. Since the beginning of the 1990s he has been working with futurology. His conviction is that the world is veering radically from an industrial economy (manufacture and trade of material objects) towards a knowledge economy (creation and proliferation of abstract ideas). He helps companies and managers in facing this change.

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