

PERSPECTIVES FOR REVISION OF THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

Launched in 2010, the Europe 2020 Strategy focuses on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as a means of overcoming the structural weaknesses of the European economy, to improve competitiveness and productivity and to lay down the foundations for a sustainable social market economy.

To this end, it has set the following targets:

- **75%** of the population aged 20-64 in employment;
- **3%** of GDP allocated to R&D;
- **20%** reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared with 1990;
- Increase of the share of renewable energies to **20%** of final energy consumption;
- **20%** rise in energy efficiency;
- Rate of young people leaving school and training early lower than **10%** and at least **40%** of 30-34 year olds with tertiary education or equivalent qualifications;
- Reduction in the proportion of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion of at least **20 million**.

Despite results obtained in the areas of climate change prevention, education and the prevention of early school-leaving, outcomes are currently mixed, particularly as regards expenditure allocated to research and development, employment and the prevention of poverty and social exclusion.

The financial and economic crisis that has been unfolding in Europe since 2008 only partially explains these results. The responses provided and the measures implemented at national and European levels in the form of restrictive budgetary and monetary policies also provide a key to explaining these disappointing results. Within this general context, the European Commission should put forward a series of proposals aimed at reviewing the Europe 2020 Strategy by the end of this year.

The ESEC wishes to highlight the importance of this project for the EU that is now more necessary than ever, at a time when scepticism on the part of citizens is increasing concerning the ultimate ends of the European edifice.



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ESEC proposal areas

First, the ESEC sets out a number of proposals that are attainable in the short-term and that are able to remedy and better integrate the strategy's economic, social and environmental spheres in a way that safeguards equality.

Then, going beyond these necessary adjustments, the ESEC attempts to define a new and more ambitious strategy that is resolutely focused on sustainable development, a model that allows Europe to adapt to new global challenges.

REVISING THE METHOD TO MAKE IT MORE BINDING AND TO INVOLVE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

With the exception of the climate change and energy targets which form part of a legally binding framework, each country has been able to set its own targets, which have often turned out to be unambitious.

The "open method" and the "peer pressure" underlying the Europe 2020 Strategy appear to have reached their limits in view of the results obtained.

Also, the ESEC suggests:

- **Setting out all of the Europe 2020 Strategy targets in a more formal, more binding framework as is the case with the economic governance targets.**

The ESEC is also consulted annually by the government concerning the proposed National Reform Programme (NRP). Although it is happy to be consulted, it nevertheless laments the very short deadlines for response and above all the lack of monitoring of its contributions, which are passed on to the Commission annexed to the NRP. It advocates:

- **Greater visibility and impact of the works of the ESEC through referral at an earlier stage and an interactive dialogue with the public authorities.**

Finally, our Assembly is pushing for:

- **Bolstering of the democratic process through the creation of effective forums for dialogue and collaboration.** At both national and international level, the findings are clear: civil society and its organisations have little or no appropriate involvement in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

ACCORD A CENTRAL ROLE TO THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY IN MAJOR EU POLICIES

The ESEC stresses three reasons for this:

- Over the years, it has become increasingly difficult to identify the level of priority given to strategies or policies that are cross-cutting in nature: Europe 2020, the European Semester, Commission Investment Plan, Climate and Energy Package, etc.
- These non-coordinated, non-hierarchical action plans, with differing time frames, muddy the waters for stakeholders and do not make for a clearer understanding of the medium-term outlook for the European project.
- The question therefore arises of coherency and the **risk of marginalisation**, dilution, even quite simply abandonment of the **Europe 2020 Strategy which, despite its imperfections, remains the only strategy seeking to create a balance between the economic, social and environmental spheres.**

FURTHER DEFINE THE FIVE TARGETS TO BETTER TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE SITUATION

Rather than increasing the number of current targets, especially since the excessive number of targets was one criticism levelled against the Lisbon Strategy, it appears more expedient **to refine current targets and add some intermediate targets:**

- **Supplement the employment criteria** with a range of indicators to measure job quality: level of insecurity, part-time contracts (whether voluntary or mandatory), youth unemployment, long-term unemployment;
- **Make social dialogue** a component of the strategy;
- **Add better guarantees on poverty and the prevention of social exclusion;**
- **Diversify environmental indicators;**
- **Expand the Research and Development approach**

REVIEW THE STRATEGY TO ADDRESS NEW GLOBAL PRIORITIES

The economic and financial crisis of 2008 placed on the agenda questions concerning the purpose of growth. Many international organisations such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the OECD, and several studies have clearly highlighted the fact that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is not a pertinent measurement with which to evaluate the quality of growth.

In light of this debate, the ESEC advocates:

- Fully taking into account, when revising the EU 2020 strategy, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that are set to be adopted by the UN in September 2015. This process would assist in bringing about a new way of defining the well-being and progress of societies that would be broader than merely taking account of economic growth alone;
- Pursuing, in order to place the EU on the path towards a new and more balanced development model, reflection on the indicators used, particularly in the 2009 Communication from the Commission entitled: *GDP and Beyond: Measuring Progress in a Changing World.*