



PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

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A) Background for the public consultation:

The Europe 2020 strategy was launched in [March 2010](#) as the EU's strategy for promoting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It aims to achieve a knowledge-based, competitive European economy while preserving the EU's social market economy model and improving resource efficiency. It was thus conceived as a partnership between the EU and its Member States driven by the promotion of growth and jobs.

The Europe 2020 strategy is built around five [headline targets](#) in the areas of employment, research and development, climate and energy¹, education and the fight against poverty and social exclusion. The strategy also set out a series of action programmes, called "[flagship initiatives](#)", in seven fields considered to be key drivers for growth, namely innovation, the digital economy, employment and youth, industrial policy, poverty and resource efficiency. The objectives of the strategy are also supported by action at EU level in areas such as the single market, the EU budget and the EU external agenda.

The Europe 2020 strategy is implemented and monitored in the context of the [European Semester](#), the yearly cycle of coordination of economic and budgetary policies at EU level. The European Semester involves discussion among EU institutions on broad priorities, annual commitments by the Member States and country-specific recommendations prepared by the Commission and endorsed at the highest level by leaders in the European Council.

¹ In January 2014 the Commission launched a [framework](#) for energy and climate policies up to 2030. A reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 40% below the 1990 level, an EU-wide binding target for renewable energy of at least 27% and renewed ambitions for energy efficiency policies are among the main objectives of the new framework.

These recommendations should then be taken on board in the Member States' policies and budgets. As such, together with the EU budget, the country-specific recommendations are key instruments for the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy.

After four years, the Commission has proposed, and the European Council of 20-21 March 2014 has agreed, to initiate a review of the Europe 2020 strategy. On 5 March 2014, the Commission adopted a Communication "Taking stock of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" ([Communication](#) and [Annexes](#)), drawing preliminary lessons on the first years of implementation of the strategy. Building on these first outcomes and in a context of a gradual recovery of the European economies, it is time to reflect on the design of the strategy for the coming years.

Through these questions, we are seeking your views on the lessons learned from the early years of the Europe 2020 strategy and on the elements to be taken into account in its further development, in order to build the post-crisis growth strategy of the EU.

B) Questions:

1) Taking stock: the Europe 2020 strategy over 2010-2014

Content and implementation

- For you, what does the Europe 2020 strategy mean? What are the main elements that you associate with the strategy?

For us the Europe 2020 strategy is giving the overall direction and political priorities of the European Union up to 2020. We clearly see a growing influence in our policy area, education and training, as more and more the Education and Training 2020 Strategic Framework (ET2020) is referring to it. The main elements that we associate to EU2020 are the ones related to our sector, being the two headline targets on early-school leaving and tertiary attainment as well as the flagship initiatives on the Digital Agenda, Youth on the Move, the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs and the European Platform against poverty. The fact that two benchmarks are on education was seen as a very important signal in recognising the importance education can play for European societies and puts lights on very important policy areas to focus on at European level. However, in general, we feel that this agenda is only partly implemented, as the main focus is not enough put on reaching an inclusive and sustainable growth.

- Overall, do you think that the Europe 2020 strategy has made a difference? Please explain.

The question being incredibly broad, we can give the point of view of our sector. In terms of targets, EU2020 has most likely made a difference while both targets related to education and training have progressed in the past years. The fact of having targets in those areas has highlighted the importance of the topics. We find it unlikely that for example early school leaving would have received the widespread attention that it has now, if it was not included as one of the Europe 2020 target. However, we believe that assessing the success of those indicators as well as the other ET2020 ones should be done with caution. Are they based on Member State data provision exclusively or do they

take into account the point of view of the various stakeholders involved on the field? A reality check is often missing. Do they hide regional disparities? The study [Mind the Gap](#) shows for instance that eight Member States had a difference of more than 15 percentage points between their top and bottom regions in terms of rates of tertiary education graduates in a region. Is it important to go beyond national statistics by looking at regional/local situations and by also taking into account the perspective of civil society.

In terms of the flagship initiatives, we can say that the EU2020 Strategy has been successful for setting momentums at EU level (Opening Up Education Communication influenced by the Digital Agenda, work on EQF, ESCO, European area of Skills and Qualifications in the framework of New Skills for New jobs, EPAP stakeholders' platform) but repercussions in Member States are sometimes unclear (i.e. success and impact of Youth on the Move national events). For example, the Agenda for new skills and jobs may be a success at EU level but only 9% of EU citizens know to which level of the EQF their national qualification correspond while most respondents say that they have not heard of any of the European information points². Much more efforts should be made in operationalising those initiatives at national and regional level with clear and comprehensive strategies.

- Has the knowledge of what other EU countries are doing in Europe 2020 areas impacted on the approach followed in your country? Please give examples.

N/A

- Has there been sufficient involvement of stakeholders in the Europe 2020 strategy? Are you involved in the Europe 2020 strategy? Would you like to be more involved? If yes, how?

Public consultations are one tool to take stakeholders' input into account but they are not sustainable vectors of dialogue. Sparse initiatives to directly hear from citizens have been launched i.e. the European Citizens Initiative. Examples of more structured forms of civil dialogue can be seen in the field of youth, culture and employment, and notably through the European Platform against Poverty. In most of these cases the issue is always to see the impact of these consultations (how does the Commission take them into account in policy-making) and also to make sure such mechanisms are in place for all sectors. In the case of education and training (DG EAC) there is still some reticence in involving civil society in regular and more structured exchanges. We believe that our organisations should be better involved in the implementation and follow-up of EU2020. For instance, a difficulty to gain access to participate in European Semester's stakeholder consultations on European level has been identified, due to lack of access to the process on a national level. Moreover, the difficulty to ensure a representation of civil society organisations in the new ET2020 thematic working groups or programme committees was noted several times, while social partners are

² European area of skills and qualifications, [Special Eurobarometer 417](#), June 2014

always around the table. There is a clear need to broaden social dialogue to civil dialogue based on representativeness criteria yet to define. Today the involvement of civil society organisations highly depends of the decisions of the different units and directorates within the institutions. This system clearly lacks coherence and transparency.

The open, transparent and regular dialogue evoked by the article 11 of the Lisbon Treaty will not be possible without clear mechanisms of communication, consultation and cooperation. DG EAC management plan 2014 states that *“Policy dialogue and exchange about how to modernise education and training systems will continue to be supported by DG EAC, through the open method of coordination, peer learning, peer reviews and the exchange of good practice involving relevant civil society stakeholders, as well as studies and the collection and use of data from relevant sources, e.g. the European Monitor 2014 (...) and the Education, Training and Youth Forum.”* EUCIS-LLL has already paved the way for a structured dialogue and has made very concrete proposals (i.e. setting up of an Annual Stakeholders Forum by DG EAC). However, in the spirit of the Europe 2020’s partnership approach reflected notably in its 2012 Communication “Rethinking Education”, a structured dialogue has to be established in the field of education and training to improve the implementation of the ET2020 (and thus the overall Europe 2020 strategy), for instance by setting up a coordination body composed of representatives of the different DG EAC and DG EMPL units, Member States and stakeholders - such as the former “Education and Training Coordination Group” - to ensure greater coordination, mutual learning and dialogue between stakeholders. It could meet once or twice per year to review political priorities and initiatives and the progress that is made under the ET2020 and Europe 2020 strategies. Links would also have to be made with the national/regional levels. This dialogue has to be based on clear aims, concrete cooperation mechanisms and a participative and sustainable approach.

The Commission has insisted more and more in the past years in making civil society organisations contribute to the European Semester process as an important lever of the Europe 2020 Strategy. We do agree that civil society could be of great help to give an educated feedback from the grassroots level on Country-Specific Recommendations but the financial and practical means enabling this cooperation have not been defined. A quality input would deserve the allocation of far more resources to civil society organisations so that they can really assess to what extend those recommendations are relevant, and not only subjectively support them and disseminate them in Member States. The same line of thought applies to EU programmes and policies as well as they should be reconciled with a stronger feedback voice of stakeholders in their implementation.

There is a clear gap in reaching out to national stakeholders and citizens. European non-governmental organisations should be seen as important intermediaries in creating such bridges and should be better acknowledged and supported in order to play this role. This is the case for education where more efforts should be put to reach out to national and local stakeholders on European cooperation in education and training notably thanks to Erasmus+. EUCIS-LLL is currently leading the “Lifelong Learning Hub” project initiated under the Lifelong Learning Programme to move forward this policy dialogue at national and regional level. Today civil society organisations suffer from financial cuts all around Europe as well as at EU level, which weaken their capacity to create such a dialogue. This clearly goes against the political intentions stated in the Europe 2020 and related EU communications.

Tools

- Do the current targets for 2020 respond to the strategy's objectives of fostering growth and jobs? [Targets: *to have at least 75% of people aged 20-64 in employment; to invest 3% of GDP in research and development; to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20%, increase the share of renewables to 20% and improve energy efficiency by 20%; to reduce school drop-out rates to below 10% and increase the share of young people with a third-level degree or diploma to at least 40%; to ensure at least 20 million fewer people are at risk of poverty or social exclusion*].

EUCIS-LLL believes that the headline targets related to education are intrinsically very positive and useful, but we would be more careful in linking them to growth and jobs. It is clear that educational attainment levels are linked to more and better employment, health and participation and can certainly be called growth-friendly investments. However this push for more skills has to be balanced with a similar push to correct the inequalities it creates. Pr. Ides Nicaise puts it this way: *“There is a reasonable degree of certainty about the positive impact of investments in knowledge on economic growth. [...] But to what extent does this growth translate into employment, and above all, how is that employment distributed? The dominant pattern appears to be one of ‘skill-biased technological growth’, which means that technological innovations boost the demand for better skilled jobs in particular, while low-skilled jobs are displaced and either disappear or sink lower on the status and pay ladder. This raises inequality on the labour market rather than reducing it. In other words, the knowledge-based society entails a risk of plunging more people (mainly the low-skilled) into poverty.”* (“A smart social inclusion policy for the EU: the role of education and training”, Pr. Ides Nicaise, University of Leuven and NESSE network, Belgian EU Presidency Conference, 28-29.09.2010). Therefore the question could rather be “do the current targets respond to the objective of fostering inclusive growth?” as this is clearly the EU2020 pillar that has been forgotten over the past years.

We do feel that targets and the policies they are reflecting should be thought in better synergy, such as coupling for instance early-school leaving and social inclusion strategies. Real progress has been made on inclusive education in the past years (right focus on early childhood education and care in the Social Investment Package, recent emphasis on Roma pupils within the EU framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, etc.). However those targeted measures are clearly not sufficient and a mainstreamed and comprehensive approach is requested. The Europe 2020 strategy goes in that right direction but if policy fields should be more intertwined, that does not mean that all targets should relate to growth and jobs. Although there is a need to better connect the world of education and of work; the GDP/employment mantra has caused a lot of damage in the educational sector, which is increasingly seen as a giant “skills store”, to be utilized at the service of the labour market. This is an undeniable threat to the essence of what quality education is. Even the UNESCO has made a call to come back to Delors’ vision of a “more integrated and humanistic vision of learning” (see UNESCO’s “Re-thinking education”, 2013). We would gladly welcome in that sense new targets to measure also the wider benefits of learning. OECD’s Better life index could serve as an inspiration.

- Among current targets, do you consider that some are more important than others? Please explain.

All targets are important, but there is a necessity to better link policies and create synergies between different targets. It should not be forgotten that the targets are solely indicators and have to be considered in close correlation with each other. Reducing early-school leaving and poverty/social exclusion for example clearly has to be tackled by comprehensive social policies. In that sense we think that the flagship initiative “European Platform against Poverty” should be supported and made more inclusive for stakeholders. Other DGs such as DG EAC should be more involved in its implementation. Measures such as the Social Investment Package are very positive and heading in this direction. This is a good example on how to approach the concept of employability in a clever way. Indeed, such a broad concept depends on levels of education but also on job creation, appropriate childcare, financial support for learners, etc. In that respect it is crucial to create bridges between sectors but also between the different units and directorates within every DG but also between DGs.

Synergies are also required between the programmes, such as Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund as stated in several legislative initiatives but no practical follow up has been observed in this regard. Finally those indicators are only giving a partial image. As for education, they only represent 2 out of the 5 benchmarks that aim to reflect the situation in the various sectors of education. The participation of adults in lifelong learning for example which is not part of the Europe 2020 benchmark is the one where Member States perform the least. This benchmark clearly deserves more attention and could be an additional Europe 2020 benchmark. Benchmarks should support and not narrow the scope of policy actions.

- Do you find it useful that EU-level targets are broken down into national targets? If so, what is, in your view, the best way to set national targets? So far, have the national targets been set appropriately/too ambitiously/not ambitiously enough?

Several expert reports support the idea that setting one target for all Member States up to 2020 can be counterproductive as not all of them move forward at the same pace, even though benchmarking is always an efficient way to put pressure and create a debate for change by “naming and shaming”. National targets monitored regularly seem to be indeed better adapted to monitor the country’s progress in a realistic way. In this sense and as stated before, the best way to set national targets would probably be to take into account the situation of the country including its regional disparities and to agree on objectives in consultation with all stakeholders concerned, as well as to involve them in the monitoring of the progress in a partnership approach, similar to the guidelines adopted on a European Code of Conduct for the cohesion policy. Another crucial element to set up national targets in cooperation with stakeholders would also be to introduce more qualitative approaches to measurement, as numerical objectives cannot cover the complexity of phenomena such as social exclusion. It is necessary to invest in instruments to measure qualitative progress and to balance the use of indicators with quality data. In order to balance data provided by national authorities it is important to also channel the views of stakeholders; a good example to evaluate could be that of UNCRC and its practices of including parallel, independent and

non-governmental reports from different experts, in addition to official sources of data. This would also pave the way to the challenge of reaching out the grassroots levels in moving towards the mid-term review of EU2020. Finally, what it comes to national targets, they have to be handled very carefully when designing policies in function of their outcomes. How to handle numbers, what to do when a target is reached and how to revise them deserve further reflection.

- What has been the added value of the seven action programmes for growth? Do you have concrete examples of the impact of such programmes? [*"Flagship initiatives": "Digital agenda for Europe", "Innovation Union", "Youth on the move", "Resource efficient Europe", "An industrial policy for the globalisation era", "Agenda for new skills and jobs", "European platform against poverty"*].

As briefly evoked before, several flagship initiatives have proven to lead to concrete results at least at EU level. Under the Digital Agenda for Europe we have welcomed the Communication on Opening Up Education reflecting on how to improve education and training systems in the digital era, while at the same time pointing out that if this strategy is to be successful, a number of other criteria have to be fulfilled. For example, the use of Open Educational Resources should be promoted and mainstreamed in all levels and sectors of education and training, and the recent cutting down of public investments in education which has been seen in some countries must be reversed if investment in ICT infrastructure is to have any positive effect. See our [position paper](#) on the topic. The Digital Agenda Assembly also held fruitful workshop discussions on this theme and the Council has taken up on the Commission's recommendations to make national reforms. Member States have now to mirror this political commitment with national programmes and funds - which are still lacking. Moving from political will to implementation remains the biggest issue with the Europe 2020 Agenda.

Concerning the European platform against poverty, we are satisfied with the stakeholders' dialogue that has been implemented to support the initiative. This is a good practice on how the Europe 2020 partnership principle can be sustained in all sectors and its meeting have proven to be an opportunity for stakeholders to give their opinion on the flagship initiative as well as on EU2020 in general. More concrete efforts should be made to improve its contribution on the decision-making process (e.g. by providing concrete space for follow-up of the recommendations defined yearly by stakeholders in the EPAP Annual convention) as well as to guarantee an improved and genuine involvement of civil society. We still miss the political will to address raising inequalities and poverty in Europe. Austerity measures taken by national and regional authorities undermine the recommendations that are made at EU level and will certainly prevent us from reaching the Europe 2020 targets. We also regret that early-childhood education and early childhood care, which are fundamental in combating inequalities also in education, are not being sufficiently taken into account in the recent developments of the European Platform against Poverty initiative. In the light of this initiative and the upcoming 4th Convention, it's advisable that the risk of child poverty and poverty of families with children is given a closer emphasis.

The Agenda for New Skills and Jobs has led to the New Skills for New Jobs Initiative where concrete steps forward could also be observed in the past years, notably for the European

Qualifications Framework for which the EQF advisory group makes significant progress, including in the field of validation of non-formal and informal learning which is especially important to EUCIS-LLL. We are more critical concerning skills forecasts, sectoral skills councils and the ESCO taxonomy as we believe skills strategies, led by a labour-market driven approach, are too narrow and as such are rejected by some educational actors instead of being tools to bridge the gap between the education and labour-market world. Of course it is important to communicate on the fact that for all professions the level of skills and qualifications will increase in the future. However we see side effects in this approach as having undermined a more comprehensive approach to competences in the legacy of the European framework for key competences for lifelong learning. This framework rightly contributed to foster a lifelong and life-wide learning perspective with a broad meaning of learning outcomes and a more precise terminology of skills and competences. It was supposed to be equally exploited by the New Skills for New Jobs Initiative and instead, we could clearly see that it was abandoned in favour of a more utilitarian approach to education while stakeholders reiterated the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to education notably in the consultation for a European area of skills and qualifications. We do hope this upcoming initiative will reopen the debate on what the flagship initiative on New Skills and Jobs should be about. Little information and debate has taken place on this global initiative at the EU and national level so it had very little visibility (which is the aim of a flagship) so we do not consider it as a success.

Finally, the Youth on the Move flagship was very much welcomed and created a push for Member States to address issues such as very high youth unemployment. This shall remain a strong priority within the Europe 2020 Strategy. Additionally more emphasis should be put on youth mobility. We have seen the great impact of mobility during higher education studies (EC Study: Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalisation of higher education institutions), e.g. higher level of employability, higher willingness for labour mobility and great aspect of self-development. While the quality of such mobility experiences can still be further improved, other sectors should equally benefit from the experiences made in the higher education sector. Today the Erasmus+ programme is not sufficient to give a chance to all learners to access the benefits of European mobility.

2) Adapting the Europe 2020 strategy: the growth strategy for a post-crisis Europe

Content and implementation

- Does the EU need a comprehensive and overarching medium-term strategy for growth and jobs for the coming years?

EUCIS-LLL believes a comprehensive and transversal strategy is indeed needed up to 2020, especially for policies such as lifelong learning that encompasses various policy fields. In order to create more coherence we need to better communicate and coordinate the various policies, programmes and tools with the active involvement of all stakeholders. As expressed above we strongly believe that the work of various units in the Commission should be more intertwined, within DGs but also between DGs. Europe undoubtedly needs growth, jobs, better and more sustainable economies which contribute to improving well-being, equity and social cohesion. A good example is the recent decision to move the adult education and VET

unit from DG EAC to DG EMPL. As much as we welcome increasing synergies and the establishment of a common working language, this decision should not lead to policies overly concerned with skills demands, a loss of what adult education is in its essence (far more than a factor of employability) and dismantled lifelong learning strategies. Such transfers must be accompanied by a solid political will to maintain coherence among portfolios and consider other aspects than the race for growth and jobs.

- What are the most important and relevant areas to be addressed in order to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?

As evoked previously EUCIS-LLL deplures that inclusive growth has been forgotten over the past years. 20 million fewer people were supposed to be lift out poverty and social exclusion. Evidence is striking: the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU increased from 114 million in 2009 to 124 million in 2012. Youth unemployment reached 59,2% in Greece in 2013, while those neither in employment nor in education and training (NEETs) have significantly increased in OECD countries since the start of the crisis. Inequalities persist in European education and training systems where vulnerable groups such as migrants are particularly disadvantaged. Europe cannot afford the social distress we are currently experiencing as alarming symptoms of increasing inequalities. The right emphasis has been placed on the Agenda for new skills and jobs to tackle inclusive growth, especially concerning youth unemployment, but this does not constitute a social inclusion strategy of its own as finding a job is only one of its aspects. The European platform against poverty and social exclusion's objectives have to be rethought and strengthened, in partnership with the civil society organisations involved in the related dialogue. We are particularly satisfied with the progress on early-school leaving, the measures touching education in a global social framework within the Social Investment Package as well as the Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning. We expect now a coherent follow up of those measures and we propose to do so within a new Flagship initiative on fighting discriminations and inequalities in education and training.

- What new challenges should be taken into account in the future?

Another key area to be addressed is citizenship and intercultural understanding. Political disengagement has never been so high, as shown by the lowest turnout to EU elections in 2014 since 1979. This should be a priority for the new Commission, notably through the Europe for Citizens programme but not only. Rising xenophobia and intolerance all over Europe is a challenge that cannot be ignored anymore and the fundamental values of our European democracies need to be defended. A very strong negative political signal has been sent to EU citizens by allocating the least important budget ever for a European year to the EU Year of Citizens 2013. In the field of education the challenge is particularly urgent as some Member States even start to suppress citizenship education from their curricula (Spain). The Council of Europe has produced consequent and inspirational work on citizenship that would deserve some attention. EUCIS-LLL believes Europe should make a

sustainable investment in public goods such as education, health and research both for economic development, social and civic participation and well-being. Only by delivering better on all these aspects will Europe prevent so many citizens to turn their back from our ideal of integration and solidarity. The role of European programmes such as Erasmus+ is undeniable. Recent studies such as the Erasmus Voting Assessment and the ESNSurvey 2013 show that mobility is a crucial factor for political participation and European Citizenship. Further investments need to be done in this regard. Besides, the whole Europe 2020 review process should not be made from an ivory tower. Let us not lose another parliamentary term and look in despair at the 2019 elections turnout rates. European democracy needs a genuine debate on the European political project with everyone on board.

- How could the strategy best be linked to other EU policies?

All EU policies are already very much linked to the EU2020 strategy, which objectives on growth and jobs are always mentioned in policy meetings with EU representatives. But again the question is rather: how could the strategy better serve EU policies, not the contrary. Rather than repeating how education, training, employment, social inclusion policies are essential to growth and jobs, we should rather ask ourselves how an overarching strategy for Europe up to 2020 can strengthen the coherence of those policies. The European Semester process and its Country-Specific Recommendations are a tool to coordinate EU action, but it is still too much of an economic mechanism for national decision-makers to really get ownership of its potentialities, while it could become a genuine lever for the Europe 2020 strategy.

It is important to raise awareness on the Semester process as a way to move forward comprehensively the EU agenda, not only based on growth considerations with the Annual Growth Survey but also on coherent solutions to tackle social and economic challenges. More has to be done to put in practice the Recommendations and to make decision-makers better acquainted with them, for them to be not only agreed at Council level but also become genuine national strategies, designed, implemented and assessed in partnership with relevant stakeholders (i.e. Forums of discussion in Member States). The process has to be transparent and open.

- What would improve stakeholder involvement in a post-crisis growth strategy for Europe? What could be done to increase awareness, support and better implementation of this strategy in your country?

See question on stakeholders' involvement in part 1

Tools

- What type of instruments do you think would be more appropriate to use to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?

As mentioned before, a coordinated strategy implies coordinated working methods between different policy fields on a daily basis (i.e. more collaboration from various DGs such as education, employment, social affairs) but also between various actors within the same sector (i.e. former Education and Training Coordination Group including Member States, civil society organisations, etc.). Another crucial tool to ensure a smooth implementation of EU policies is the Open Method of Coordination. Introduced in 2000, this process needs to be revised to maximise its efficiency, in a similar effort than the one made in 2008 on reinforcing the social OMC (COM (2008)418 final). The OMC is not mentioned anywhere in the Commission Communication taking stock of EU2020 while it is one of the most important levers of the Strategy with its benchmarks and peer learning processes. DG EAC's revision of its Thematic Working Groups and increase of the number of desk officers to monitor country situations is a good example on more targeted and tailored working methods. More can be done to increase evidence-based policy making and regular involvement of various stakeholders.

- What would best be done at EU level to ensure that the strategy delivers results? What would best be done at Member State level?

Again, we would like to put the emphasis on the importance of having a regular and structured dialogue with grassroots stakeholders on the strategy, both sector-wise and transversally. None of the EU2020 objectives or the Country-Specific Recommendations can become tangible if decision-makers of all levels and relevant stakeholders do not gain ownership of the process in a real multi-level governance process and a democratic spirit. It is crucially important that those affected in their daily lives by the strategy participate in its design so that they can embrace its legitimacy, show good will in implementing it and feel concerned by its monitoring process. Those are the basics of the European Code of Conduct on partnerships for the cohesion policy should be mainstreamed in many policy areas.

- How can the strategy encourage Member States to put a stronger policy focus on growth?

One should not ask if the EU needs a comprehensive and overarching medium-term strategy for growth and then what should be done to put the policy focus on growth. This clearly underlines the bias of the questionnaire and the rejection *a priori* of all consultation replies that would suggest other EU2020 objectives than growth for the years to come. Once again, growth and jobs are absolutely necessary in those times of economic recovery but the social disaster that resulted from the crisis cannot be tackled without a strategy truly focused on inclusion.

- Are targets useful? Please explain.

See part 1 on tools

- Would you recommend adding or removing certain targets, or the targets in general? Please explain.

See part 1 on tools

- What are the most fruitful areas for joint EU-Member State action? What would be the added value?

An interesting focus would be: how to make better links between EU policies and programmes in a joint reflection with Member States, so that EU funding has a maximum impact on policy objectives. Programmes are the best ambassadors of what the EU achieves concretely on the ground and most citizens are aware of them, i.e. Erasmus. While the programmes 2014-2020 are still new to many potential beneficiaries and the transition period has entailed a lot of confusion, it is more important than ever for the Commission to keep on communicating on the new format, contents and target groups. There is a true added value on promoting the programmes as real levers to implement a European vision and to get beneficiaries acquainted with policy priorities that would become more visible. It is also important to reflect upon synergies between the programmes to avoid duplication and to achieve coordinated results.

To bring added value, the role of Executive Agencies should be redefined with a priority on communication, consultation and support rather than just being in charge of project management and administrative regulation and control. A coherent EU2020 strategy implies a coherent approach to the various programmes. Such reflection has already been initiated i.e. for Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund (i.e. 2013 Education Forum workshop, discussion in the EQF advisory group) but needs to go further.

3) Do you have any other comment or suggestion on the Europe 2020 strategy that you would like to share?

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please send your contribution, along with any other documents, to SG-EUROPE2020-CONSULTATION@ec.europa.eu.