

To: The Commission of the European Communities
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From: The Association of Nordic Engineers (ANE)

13 January 2009

Memorandum on the Future "EU2020" Strategy

In general the Commission's working document COM(2009)647/3 strikes the right key policy areas for the successor to the current Lisbon Strategy. It is crucial how the Commission will transform these areas into headline objectives and specific policy actions to be taken by the EU and the Member States, when the Commission adopts its formal Communication addressed to the Spring European Council early in 2010.

Representing more than 250.000 engineers in Scandinavian countries the Association of Nordic Engineers (ANE) underlines that the key target of the EU2020 strategy must be sustainable growth with more and better jobs.

ANE is of the opinion that the EU2020 should focus on promoting concrete results, which can be measured and/or controlled. Experience has shown that it is extremely difficult for the Spring European Council and the Member States to reach an ambitious and binding agreement with clear targets. Nevertheless a firm political commitment in March 2010 is necessary to ensure a proper implementation of the EU2020 strategy.

The working document gives the impression that the Commission is lowering the level of ambition compared to the present Lisbon Strategy. Europe shall still be a leading knowledge economy but no longer the most competitive in the world. The possibility to put pressure on Member States by ranking them in scoreboards seems to disappear, and it is unclear whether the Commission and the Council will continue to develop and strengthen common European guidelines and indicators. In stead the Commission gives priority to national objectives corresponding to the situation of the single Member States.

The Commission rightly emphasizes the need for a new sustainable social market economy and a smarter, greener economy, where prosperity will come from innovation and better use of resources. The key input is knowledge.

ANE has initiated an international project (Future Climate). Engineering societies from USA, Europe, India, Japan and Australia were invited to elaborate national climate plans pinpointing practical solutions on how their home countries can reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses and promote a green economy. More information can be found on the website www.futureclimate.info. The Danish Society of Engineers (IDA) has e.g. in its climate plan estimated that Denmark can

create 30.000 new jobs in the wind sector alone and up to 200.000 new jobs in the export sector as a whole.

Coming back to the fact that the EU2020 strategy must be clear and precise if it is ever to create tangible results, ANE has a few remarks on the need to focus on attracting people with high educations.

If it is the intention to make Europe a leading competitive knowledge society with sustainable growth, better jobs, new technologies, innovative products and services then it is crucial to realise the specific need for more highly educated engineers and candidates of natural sciences.

- How can member States stimulate the interest for natural sciences already in primary schools?
- How can they make technological and scientific studies more attractive for both women and men?
- How can they ensure better cooperation between universities/polytechnics and companies including SME's?
- How can they enhance the quality of educations on universities and polytechnics through crossborder cooperation?
- How can they promote technological research?
- Do we need a European version of the American MIT?

The Commission mentions in its working document the need for supplementing measures at European level such as transnational research structures, free movement of knowledge and researchers and benchmarking the European universities against the best in the world. ANE welcomes these ideas.

Governance

The present Lisbon-strategy has basically two methods:

1. Governance through common objectives, recommendations, indicators and benchmarks
2. Exchange of experiences and best practice inter alia through peer reviews

The Commissions working document seems to transfer more governance to the single Member States setting their own national objectives. ANE is concerned that national objectives will be at the expense of common efforts to raise European standards to an appropriate level.

The exchange of experiences and best practice should be made more visible. What has member States learned from each other? If the Commission is leaving the present scoreboards because Member States do not like shaming and blaming, a more positive strategy could be naming and faming the best experiences and practices.

Structure

ANE has noticed with sympathy that the Commission wants to involve the European Parliament more in the EU2020. It is a good idea as long as the European Parliament respects the exclusive competences of the Member States. It is also very important to involve the national parliaments in the debate on the national reform programs. National parliaments normally play a crucial role adopting the national budgets. Their participation may therefore ensure better implementation of the strategy.

ANE urges the Commission and the Member States to consult the social partners at all appropriate levels on EU2020. Press conferences raising questions to the national reform programs with participation from the Government, the national Parliament and the social partners could make the importance of the strategy much more visible in the Member States.

Conclusion

ANE welcomes the overall approach in the Commissions working document on the future “EU2020” strategy.

But the Commission must make the strategy much more specific building on guidelines and indicators which can be measured and controlled.

The strategy should at intervals call attention to and explore particular themes such as the need of educating and attracting more engineers and natural scientists.

The governance should be strengthened and the value of exchanging experiences and best practice should be made more visible. It is crucial that the Member States commit themselves to achieve and implement the common goals.

The social partners should be involved at all appropriate levels. National press conferences could make the importance of the strategy much more clear and visible.

PS

The Association of Nordic Engineers (ANE) was established in May 2007 as a binding cooperation between the founding organisations. Engineering societies in Nordic countries are admitted as members.

The founders are:

The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers (Sveriges Ingenjörer)

The Danish Society of Engineers (IDA)

The Norwegian Society of Engineers and Technologists (NITO)

The objective of ANE is to strengthen the ability of affiliates to handle the interests of their members in international affairs. ANE makes it possible for the affiliates to speak with one voice concerning transnational matters.