

Contribution of the Czech Chamber of Commerce to the consultation paper of the EC about the EU 2020 strategy

Czech Chamber of Commerce as the largest business representative organization in the Czech Republic supports the proposals of the EC and namely the basic approach that it is possible to attain the goals of more jobs and fulfilment of the social requirements only through the renewal of the growth using the following tools: support to entrepreneurship, removal of the administrative burden, better regulation, support to innovation, improvement of the competitiveness not only inside the EU but vis-a-vis third markets, flexibility of the labour market, better education and training, better use of the results of research and development, interaction between universities and enterprises, removal of the remaining barriers of the internal market and other measures proposed in the EC document.

The Czech Chamber of Commerce should like to draw the attention to one issue that should be much deeper covered by the new strategy for the EU 2020 and this is the situation of **the self employed people**. They represent a large and important social and economic power of the European economy and society. In the same time their position is extremely complicated and unsecured (many have become selfemployed not by their real will) and may have tremendous impact on the social and economic development. It is not possible to consider self employment as the real alternative for unemployed people but only one of many opportunities that not everybody can use. The removal of obstacles for higher employment such as the administrative burden and high costs of labour should be the most effective way to decrease the unemployment and the number of involuntary self employed people.

To play their important role in the society the self employed people need a friendly business environment in the same way as other types of enterprises. In the same time they have a special position since they are not the real employers neither employees. Self employed have almost no access to different support programmes and very seldom are able to use the structural funds. It is therefore necessary that their interests and special position is taken care of in the process of preparation, creation and implementation of the EU and national regulations.

Self employed people in some sectors like services or construction may become in future a very serious social problem due to the fact that their social security is very low because of their low contribution to the pension systems. This is reflected mostly when they retire because of their health problems or the age when they are threatened by social exclusion. Besides the regulatory measures they should be targeted also by education and awareness raising campaigns that would explain the relations between the contribution to the pension schemes and the calculation of their pensions.

Self employed people face many other problems such as health and security at work, waste disposal, observing of complicated rules, quality standards etc. It is therefore necessary that the relevant EU and national authorities elaborate and finance programmes that would solve these problems.

Special comprehensive support centers for the self employed people providing advisory services, training and assistance would be the appropriate tool to improve their situation. Their problems should be dealt with also by social partners and become a part of the social dialogue where the self employed people should be represented by the organizations defending their rights. Czech Chamber of Commerce whose many members are self employed is ready to take over this role with the support of the relevant institutions.

It is also necessary to concentrate in future period on the fight against all forms of undeclared labour. Undeclared labour is deforming the market and competition and undermines social security systems. The self employed people are mostly those who are engaged in undeclared labour many of them not by their own choice but because of uncorrect or unexisting regulation of the labour market. The fight against undeclared labour should not be the fight against the self employed people but against its causes and should be concentrated on the precautionary measures and information campaigns.

The above mentioned issues should be incorporated in the EU 2020 strategy because if they are not solved they would hamper the real growth and provision of more and better jobs in the next decade.