

## **European Consumer Center – Bulgaria**

### **Contribution to the political consultation on the future Strategy “EU2020”**

The European Consumer Center in Bulgaria supports the initiating of a debate on the specific developments of the key priorities of the future strategy “EU2020”. We believe that the main sources for facing the challenges of the financial crisis and the further sustainable development of the Union afterwards, will be the creation of an economy based on the knowledge and innovation. In this regard we think that European businesses should get more involved into the public policies both in European and national levels. This means their inclusion in the restructuring measures to be taken for providing more qualitative knowledge to people and in the field of science. They should get more committed to the processes of development and implementation of innovations, and this have to be encouraged by the European governments through special measures. The economic crisis is the cure of an obviously ill economy, and our actions today are of a crucial significance for shaping the face of our economy tomorrow. By supporting innovative businesses and involving them actively in the development of the public policies we could achieve their willingness and commitment to support these policies. This is the way that the businesses will have the feeling of an “ownership” of the public policies and would be their natural advocates. Therefore the solution for problems with unemployment and creation of new types of jobs would be made easier; the rights of the citizens, and particularly the consumers, would be much more respected; the ecological concerns will be shared and consciously observed.

Regarding the three main objectives:

#### **1. Creating value by basing growth and knowledge**

Efforts should be taken to achieve higher level of education in those EU countries, where this is marked as a problem. There should be an equal system for issuing diplomas and certificates and equal criteria for evaluation of the level of knowledge. Businesses should get much more involved in the financing of the research activities through providing better stimulus of the kind of lower taxation and crediting resources. This could mark the establishment of new types of jobs and a need for educating new types of specialists. The relations between educational institutions and businesses should be closer. More practical trainings should be provided in a real, business environment, so that the theory could be matched with practice. Programs for financing of students from businesses should be strongly encouraged.

The education is the main instrument for inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups of citizens. Special measures should be taken in this direction by encouraging families to keep their children to attend school – by providing a full day school education; providing extracurricular activities in languages, sports, cultural activities and networking.

The educational and science institutions, through their close cooperation with the businesses, have to focus strongly on the development of the IT. This means that both educational and business structures have to make efforts in providing qualitative experts and scientists working in this field; to integrate IT in the real business; and to offer a highly competitive sphere for realization of specialists.

## **2. Empowering people in inclusive societies**

The life-long learning is the strongest instrument for keeping and increasing the productivity of the working force in a situation of decreasing population in the Union. Transition between jobs and training should be managed by the businesses and educational institutions through development of short or middle term strategies. These could aim to match the need for supply and demand and could give the employed people more chances to effectively realize their potential. These strategies should think of more flexible ways of both education and work through using the options for distance learning and distance working.

All these actions should be encouraged by the governments through adequate social, pension and security systems. There should be more freedom of choice offered to the entrepreneurs, SMEs and the employed people – freedom for selection of social, pension and security systems, providers, and levels. This would allow themselves to better implement their future financial plans.

Another measure by the governments could be reacting strongly against monopolists and unfair competition, and providing beneficial environment for all new companies and self-employed people.

## **3. Creating a competitive, connected and greener economy**

By involving the businesses in the ecological concerns and stimulating them to use greener technologies we would have the strongest partners in the achievement of this objective. It is crucial that the governments and the responsible European institutions negotiate positively with the world partners on the emission trade. This is a burden that has to be shared fairly among the most polluting regions. Therefore very strong, confident and fair EU exterior policy should be lead.

The broadband coverage is also needed all over Europe, but this would also lead to a great challenge to the regulating institutions. The online trading requires that more efforts should be taken to negotiate with the biggest world economies, in order to provide more safety both for traders and consumers, when they are acting outside the EU market. This also requires very fast and non-bureaucratic procedures in the elaboration of legislative base for regulating the “online” rights.