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## EUROPAFORUM NORTHERN SWEDEN

### Future EU 2020 strategy – Europaforum opinions

Europaforum Northern Sweden consists of a network of politicians at local, regional, national, and European level from the counties of Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland and Västernorrland. Its objective is to increase knowledge and awareness of policy at EU level, but especially to increase involvement in shaping EU policies in matters pertaining to Northern Sweden.

Europaforum Northern Sweden welcomes the invitation to dialogue – the Public Consultation on EU2020 – issued by the European Commission and recognise the importance of a common vision for EU 2020. Europaforum Northern Sweden wish to leave the following comments and opinion concerning the – “what and how” - the common vision of an EU 2020 and the methods achieving these goals and vision.

- Europaforum Northern Sweden welcomes the debate on a future EU 2020 strategy
- Europaforum Northern Sweden believes that regional policy plays an important role in achieving the vision of EU 2020
- Europaforum Northern Sweden strongly support multi level governance where dialogue and engagement of all levels of governance on issues on common concern is very important
- Europaforum Northern Sweden believes that the regional and local level are essential both designing policies and accomplishing sustainable growth in Europe
- In achieving a vision of EU 2020 Europaforum Northern Sweden stress the importance of future cohesion policy available for all regions in EU
- Europaforum Northern Sweden agrees on stated priorities for EU 2020 – creating value by basing growth and knowledge; empowering people in inclusive societies; creating a competitive, connected and greener economy.

#### **EU 2020 – a strategy for growth, competitive and development in EU – cohesion policy**

Europaforum Northern Sweden believes that EU needs an ambitious strategy for sustainable economic growth and development that focuses on our common challenges and possibilities.

Since its design and introduction, EU cohesion policy has contributed considerably to economic and social development in EU regions, meaning also in northern Sweden. Europaforum Northern Sweden supports a strong future cohesion policy for sustainable development, competitiveness and employment in the European Union. Thus, Europaforum Northern Sweden believes that EU regional policy is of great importance achieving the EU2020.



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Strengthening the territorial perspective in cohesion policy, with consideration given to the specific conditions of a territory and the development of its potential and strength, does not only contribute to the development of that territory, but also to that of the entire EU. It strengthens not only the objectives of future EU 2020 strategy, but also those set for cohesion policy by the European Union.

### **Regions participating - Multilevel governance**

Europaforum Northern Sweden strongly supports multi level governance and wants on an ongoing base to participate in a constructive and creative dialog with the EU level on issues of common concern such as designing a future strategy for EU and realising a common vision of sustainable growth and a competitive and cohesive EU.

The Lisbon strategy has shown how important it is to involve the regional and local level in achieving the goals of the strategy. Multilevel governance suggests that the responsibility is shared by all concerned levels of governance and is supported by the democratic legitimacy and repetitive nature of contributing actors. Thus, regions and regional policy plays an important role in developing Europe and it is important that regions are actively involved in developing new strategies for the European Union in areas of common concern. Europaforum Northern Sweden firmly believes that the principal of subsidiarity should guide our work.

The EU cohesion policy has become an important part of the European integration process and should be continued after 2014. Therefore Europaforum Northern Sweden wishes to stress the importance of availability of financial funds that are offered all regions in the European Union stimulating sustainable development.

Further, an instrument for territorial cooperation has a high added value for a cohesive European Union supporting collaboration cross borders. It should remain an essential part of cohesion policy and should be further strengthened.

### **Creating value by basing growth on knowledge**

Europaforum Northern Sweden agrees that an efficient, effective and well-resourced European research is an indispensable part of the vision EU2020, although stresses the importance of the structural funds to reach the vision by 2020. The regions in Europaforum Northern Sweden has been working accordantly to the recommendations in the CREST report, using the structural funds to enable regional stakeholders, especially the SMEs, to take part of EUs framework programme.

We consent to the need of EU to provide more attractive framework conditions for innovation and creativity. Europaforum Northern Sweden recommends the commission to further support the development of SMEs through an expansion of EU capital investment funds. With a Triple-helix perspective; partnerships between authorities, universities and privet businesses, capitalisation of innovations will easily be realised.



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Europaforum Northern Sweden notices the will of the commission to work closer with the member states by creating a research partnership. An expansion of the partnership to involve local and regional authorities as well as universities is of benefit for all partners involved.

### **Empowering people in inclusive societies**

Europaforum Northern Sweden agrees that skills are the key element for Europe's economic and productivity growth and for job creation. The Europaforum Northern Sweden region has suffered hard during the last year of economic crisis. Thanks to the European Social Fund, many people have gotten the possibility to increase their competence instead of directly become unemployed. On the basis of the demographic conditions, young people must be so included on the labour market that they can see a prosperous future. Europaforum Northern Sweden recommends the commission to promote more actions for youths in the overall respond to the high levels on unemployment in the EU. Further, with long geographical distances in the region, distance learning and distance working are methods that we have good experience and knowledge of. Therefore, we strongly support the attention on life long learning and on distance learning and working possibilities.

We fully agree on the importance of a better politic on integration of immigrants. Improved employment rates of immigrants are decisive, not at least for handling the ageing European population. However, the importance of an improved employment rate for women in general – not only for migrant women – should be clarified in the document. Gender equality is one of the key horizontal themes of the EU Lisbon strategy. The strategy defines targets in terms of participation rates for women in the labour market and also on entrepreneurship development.

Europaforum Northern Sweden welcomes the focus on a more entrepreneurial culture to create new jobs. The region has had great experiences from structural funds financed projects stimulating entrepreneurship. This is something we look forward to continue in order to create new jobs.

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

Europaforum Northern Sweden welcomes the green vision of EU2020 and points out the importance to find better internal transport infrastructure and design of energy grids for increased internal use of energy both in a north-south as well as in an east-west perspective.

To make Europaforum Northern Sweden region in the future to be a prosperous region, which contributes to the EU2020 strategy implementation requires a systematic effort to develop industry and infrastructure. The EU2020 strategy on the European level will strengthen our opportunities for employment, education, and good environment with renewable energy, good communication and positive demographics with good public health if a complementary strategy is added on how to make people employable. This focus on health and social determinants of a successful inclusive society will certainly help stimulate regional development as well as empowering people.

Europaforum Northern Sweden therefore stresses the need of policies that stimulate the development of new environmental technologies such as climate friendly housing, biogas and



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other renewable energy sources. Europaforum Northern Sweden propose policies that transform the transport infrastructure into a system based on eco-friendly transportation and developing innovative ways of utilizing ICT and e-solutions by providing living labs for testing new technologies to increase energy efficiency.

Developing methods for sharing good practice in the field of service is important, for example e-Health solutions; this to find instruments for development and innovation between communities in EU's sparsely populated areas. Strategies to encourage people with special competences to move to the area are essential to secure a continued growth of the traditional natural based industries as well as emerging sectors such as cultural/creative industries, SMEs developing around major industrial projects, the service sector and industries producing high value added products. Enlarging functional regions by more effective communications and infrastructural improvements are necessary features in a policy for creating larger markets.

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