

Consultation on the Future EU2020 Strategy (COM(2009)647/3)

Comments by the Finnish NGDO Platform to the EU Kehys
15.1.2010

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The European Union stands at an important crossroad and we urgently need a major shift in the EU's strategic direction to be able to act for a better future for the EU and the world. The EU is the world's biggest economy and big global actor and has powerful instruments to set environmental targets, reduce inequalities, and regulate the market. What's needed now is the political will to make a sustainable and fairer EU a reality, with the support of the strong civil society movements that exist.

The Future EU 2020 Strategy highlights, that the exit from the current crisis should be the point of entry into a new sustainable social market economy, a smarter, greener economy where our prosperity will result from innovation and from using resources better, and where knowledge will be the key input. The strategy aims to enable the EU to make a full recovery from the crisis, while speeding up the move towards a smart and green economy.

The EU can move from being part of the problem to part of the solution. Although we are currently suffering the worst economic crisis since 1929, it also presents us with an opportunity to change, specifically because:

- There is an increased support for a new global architecture with more regulation of markets (particularly financial markets).
- There is an increased awareness of the need to take urgent action to confront ecological and social challenges.
- Civil society movements and entrepreneurs are active in developing alternative solutions to these challenges.
- Large investment programmes are being put in place to cope with the crisis, and these can be designed to promote sustainable developments.

Kehys is the Finnish NGDO Platform to the EU, offering services to NGOs on EU development policy issues. Kehys provides information on EU development policy and cooperation, on EU funding for Finnish NGOs, training and consultancy and support for NGOs to influence the EU. Kehys promotes debate about EU development policy, networking and information-sharing between NGOs in Finland, in the EU and globally. Kehys has 37 member organizations and is an active member of CONCORD the European NGO Confederation for relief and development.

Considering the consultation on the Future EU2020 Strategy (COM(2009)647/3) **The Finnish NGDO Platform to the EU Kehys would like to comment the following:**

Global responsibility:

- This is a critical moment for global social and economic development and justice. There needs to be decisive action from the European Union to address the basic problems of unequal and unsustainable development also

at the global level, and ensure a coherent EU approach to achieving also an equitable globalisation strategy.

- The importance of the role of the EU as a global actor and Europe's responsibility in the world and of development policy.
- The EU should put in place coherent, social, economic, trade and security policies that promote the right to sustainable development and responsible citizenship both for citizens of the EU and the rest of the world.
- Although maintenance of the well-being of European citizens is a fundamental objective of the EU, the EU has failed to create real social cohesion. Statistics demonstrate growing income disparities amongst EU citizens and a growing part of the EU population threatened by poverty in one of the world's richest regions. Trade, agriculture, environment, migration and many other policies have an impact on sustainable development. Yet, these policies have not sufficiently and directly contributed to poverty eradication at the EU, as well as the global level.
- In addition, the fact that the implementation of these policies exacerbates the situation of people outside the EU is very often ignored. And yet the EU has a responsibility to all the citizens of the world not to harm but to honour their right to development.
- The EU should define economic and trade policies that guarantee social cohesion and poverty reduction. Sustainable development can not be achieved when the rights of large parts of the global population to social development are being denied. EU policies should be in line with development objectives and that the EU becomes a leading player in the promotion of human rights and sustainable development.
- Current economic and financial policies and institutions have managed an economic system which has prioritised high economic growth, benefiting primarily corporations and the wealthy instead of leading the world firmly towards a shared, sustainable prosperity. This model contributed to increasing poverty and inequality, lack of decent work, global inequity and an environmental catastrophe long before the current economic crisis.
- Importance of access to health, improving education and decent work for not just for Europeans, what is stated in the document, but also point out that these are universal rights for all humans and that the EU has a responsibility to play a leadership role in promoting and protecting, and a responsibility not to contribute to the denial of these rights.
- Importance of combating discrimination and racism; guarantee gender equality and respect for migrant's rights. The EU today is composed of people with diverse cultural backgrounds and ethnic origins, people with disabilities, different sexual orientations, and different ages and religions. While this diversity is increasingly recognised and valued, many people still suffer from discrimination, and women and men are not treated equally. This reality goes against the basic principle of equal treatment in the EU's current Treaty and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Policy Coherence:

- Trade, agriculture, fisheries, environment and many other European policies have an impact on developing countries. Yet these policies have not sufficiently and directly contributed to poverty eradication and sustainable development in the EU as well as globally. Sustainable development cannot be achieved when the rights to development of large parts of the global population are being denied. Additionally, policies that are inconsistent with development goals are costly and can overshadow the money spent on development aid.

Finance for development:

- The European Union provides most of the development aid in the world, which gives it a crucial responsibility in the fight against global poverty. The EU has made a clear commitment to both further increase the volume and quality of its aid, but it has not yet fully delivered. Development aid is more important than ever, since the financial crisis has shrunk other sources such as private capital flows, remittances and export revenues to developing countries. The realisation of human rights also plays an essential role in the eradication of poverty.
- Deliver at least 0.7% of Gross National Income in Official Development Aid (ODA) by 2015 at the latest, and agree annual and binding timetables to reach this target. Dedicate at least 20% of all Community assistance to the basic social services, such as health and education, as repeatedly called for by the European Parliament.
- The consultation says that the EU should “reflect political priorities in our public budgets”. The political priorities should include ODA commitments and MDG targets.

Environment:

- European policies and their implementation foster a lifestyle that leads to the depletion of natural resources and contributes to climate change, whose signs have been acknowledged. This will not only affect the well-being of future generations of EU citizens, but also affects poor people in the South, who are already bearing the costs of deforestation, overfishing and pollution, problems to which they have hardly contributed. There is an undeniable responsibility for the EU to help reverse the situation and to support developing countries in order to diminish the impact of climate change. In a world of limited resources, only economies that also respect environmental justice will have a chance to be sustainable and peaceful.
- Years of climate policy and environmental protection have done little to reduce EU greenhouse gas emissions, and globally they continue to rise. The impact of these emissions on the Earth is much more serious today than scientists thought a decade ago, and their effects on humankind will be irreversible.

- Over-consumption of natural resources has caused the diversity of plant and animal life on our planet to decline. The EU's ecological footprint, which measures the human impact on natural resources, is more than twice EU's capacity. The EU holds considerable responsibility for the swift depletion of the Earth's resources.