



Simply a Generation Ahead!

EUROPEAN SECRETARIAT

Brussels, 15 January 2009

European Commission

Mr José Manuel Durão Barroso, *President*

Wetstraat 200

B-1049 Brussels

Consultation on the future 'EU 2020' strategy Contribution of the Young European Federalists (JEF-Europe)

Dear Mr President,

You invited us to take position on the Commission Working Document ('Green Paper') on the future 'EU 2020' strategy. We thank you for providing us this opportunity and we are pleased to submit you our comments and suggestions.

General Remarks

Based on its political commitment to improve the European decision-making process in a more **democratic, efficient, and accountable** way, JEF supports the aim of pooling efforts and resources to ensure a more competitive and sustainable economy. Nonetheless, it considers that the Green Paper requires significant improvements in order to meet the goals of ensuring a sustainable and competitive future to the European economy.

First of all, the strategy requires a better definition of the objectives. Despite a repeated use of the terms 'green' and 'sustainable', **the goals of the strategy in terms of climate, environment and biodiversity protection are not clearly defined**. The goals of competitiveness and innovation also require a better definition.

Secondly, the **proposed measures** – especially in the fields of education and research – **seem far too weak to remove the legal and regulatory barriers** and bridge cultural gaps that still prevent European citizens and businesses to enjoy the five basic freedoms of the single market.

Thirdly, and most importantly, **the proposed governance framework does not ensure a clear division of competences between the different political stakeholders** at European and national level. JEF invites the European Commission to draft a clearer implementation strategy ensuring the accountability of all stakeholders with significant financial incentives.

Before we offer a detailed proposal on some policy and governance elements, we would like to draw the attention to some relevant principles we consider extremely important:

Subsidiarity

The definition of common objectives and of a common strategy to be implemented through multilevel governance needs a clear division of competences to succeed. Following the principle of subsidiarity, the European Commission shall receive the necessary financial resources to implement the policies that can be best realised at European level. The commitment of national and regional governments shall be ensured through the introduction of a scheme of financial incentives. Both the European Commission and national governments shall receive the necessary room for manoeuvre to achieve the objectives through transparent and democratically accountable procedures.

Diversity

Europe is characterised by a wide diversity of cultures and institutions. Diversity is considered as a crucial element to promote creativity and innovation. Hence, respecting and promoting territorial and local diversity is an important precondition to ensure the competitiveness of the European system.

Sustainability

Climate and biodiversity are first and foremost public goods that – according to the established economic theories – need the intervention of public authorities. The individual demand for 'green technologies' can only be created through public incentives and regulations. The first step of the strategy should be to define clear objectives in terms of climate and environment protection to be achieved through financial incentives and a more restrictive regulation.

Mobility

Freedom of movement is the cornerstone of the Single Market ensuring that European integration is not a zero-sum game. Education systems affect the lives of most European citizens as pupils, students, parents, or teachers. A more efficient coordination of national education systems could provide a significant contribution to facilitate mobility for students, teachers and families.

Inclusiveness of the strategy

The strategy shall not be limited to the promotion of 'champions' such as technology clusters, top-league universities, research centres and companies but include the education system at all levels and focus globally on the whole economic system.

1. Creating value by basing growth on knowledge

JEF gives a crucial value to a fair access to knowledge through education and invites the European Council, the Commission, the Council and governments in charge of education and training to vigorously address any kind of discrimination in order to ensure a truly meritocratic system.

Education

JEF fully supports the aim of strengthening **education** as one of the most effective ways of fighting inequality and poverty and to give a greater emphasis to vulnerable groups and promote gender balance. JEF also appreciates the aim of enhancing students' mobility to acquire new knowledge and languages and backs the proposal of launching a new phase of the Leonardo, Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus programmes. Nonetheless, it aims to underscore that the current programmes only involve a small minority of the European population and therefore invites the Commission, the Council and the Parliament to further address some education-related barriers that prevent mobility in order to enlarge and democratise its effects.

The cross-national inconsistency of school curricula combined with language barriers creates a huge disincentive to mobility of families between Member States.

Ensuring the right to mobility to families with school-age children

- The **coordination and harmonisation** of school curricula in the respect of the principle of subsidiarity in order to facilitate relocation of families between different areas and the enrolment of pupils in state schools without major integration problems.



- The development of **language training programmes** for pupils and adults to promote mobility across Member States and the integration of migrant families with school-age children.
- The development of **language immersion programmes** and **students exchanges** at primary and secondary level.
- An **intensified cooperation between school boards in border areas** in order to facilitate cross-border business and the relocation of families through improved language skills.

Ensuring equal opportunities and freedom of movement to teachers

- Set a **harmonised framework of requirements** to access teaching positions and address all legal or regulatory barriers that prevent teachers educated abroad to access the public education system.
- Replace **career and compensation schemes** based on seniority with principles based on qualification and skills.
- Promote the integration of **native language teachers** in the public education system.

Promoting mobility for students, workers and trainees at all levels of education

- The improvement of **exchange programmes** for secondary school pupils, trainees (Leonardo) and university students (Erasmus/Socrates) and avoid financial obstacles.
- The coordination of all volunteer, civilian and national service programmes within a harmonized **European Civilian Service**.
- The promotion of **life-long learning programmes** for working adults in other Member States in order to improve language skills and cross-cultural qualification.

Following-up the fairness of current EU policies

- Evaluate the extent of **cross-national mobility** between secondary education and undergraduate programmes, undergraduate and graduate programmes as well as between university graduation and the first employment.
- Evaluate the **financial burden** represented by relocation and subsistence costs for students starting academic programmes abroad.
- Evaluate possible **discriminations in eligibility for scholarships** and grants based on nationality or residence that prevent mobility and promote the adoption of common criteria for eligibility.
- Evaluate the practice of the **recognition of credits obtained at host universities** by sending universities

Research

A common research policy pooling resources from all the Union and beyond its boundaries achieved in very successful project ranging from aerospace to archaeology. Significant limits to the achievement of a common space of research are set by the low budget for research and development at both national and European level and by the inconsistent regulation of national and European research programmes.

- **JEF demands a redefinition of the spending structure of the European Union in line with the self-proclaimed goals.** Parts of the budget currently devoted to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which represents approximately 45% of the overall budget, could be invested in research on climate change, sustainable technologies and life sciences.
- The current barriers to mobility of research, partly due to career and compensation schemes based on seniority, shall be removed in order to ensure a single European space of research.

The digital economy

JEF supports in general the idea of promoting virtual communication and e-democracy, but we point out the generation gap, so it does not reach the “old people”, the digital gap so it does not really reach “the poor people” and the problem of relevance. For these reasons, JEF asks to review how much the web offers are used and to improve accessibility of websites.

2. Empowering people in inclusive societies

JEF insists on the need of reforming the European labour markets and social security systems in order to ensure their fairness and competitiveness in a better way. JEF condemns the possibility for opt outs from the Charter of Fundamental Rights, since this creates first and second class European citizenship, asks that the European institutions and the member states’ governments live up the Social Policies of the Treaties and commit themselves to promote common social policies.

Moreover, JEF asks to take NGOs and youth programmes seriously since they contribute to the improvement of the employability of young people.

3. Creating a competitive, connected and greener economy

JEF reminds that thanks to the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union literally commits itself in Article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU to ‘combating climate change’. Therefore, the EU has both the capacity and the responsibility to emerge as a true environmental frontrunner. JEF is convinced that finding a solution to stop anthropogenic climate change is not only of an economic or technological matter, but first and foremost a political issue. Therefore, we maintain that the EU must also act as an ‘Environmental Union’ whose environmental legislation is strong enough to make it the catalyst of a world beyond carbon and contribute to the goal of cutting global emissions by 90% by the year 2050, as recommended by a growing scientific consensus.

Making it happen

The proposed implementation strategy, based on a non-binding Open Method of Coordination (OMC), cannot be acceptable since it has already proved its inefficiency for the implementation of the Lisbon strategy.

First of all, the OMC tends to deepen the democratic deficit in a critical way. A decision-making process based essentially around the European Council, the European Commission and national governments hijacks the legislative and policy-making competence of national parliaments and of the European Parliament.

Secondly, the designation of the European Commission and the European Council, which represents the national governments in charge of the implementation of the strategy, as responsible bodies to monitor the process, creates a huge conflict of interests. Therefore, JEF asks for a clear separation of powers and an enhanced supervisory role of the European and national parliaments, towards which the Commission and the governments should be fully accountable.

Thirdly, the simple commitment of Member States to the implementation of the strategy without the inclusion of clear financial incentives and penalties for non-compliance does not ensure the accountability of Member States. JEF demands that the next Financial Guidelines are clearly defined in order to ensure the implementation of the strategy. Spending that does not comply with its objectives must not receive any EU funding. JEF invites the European Parliament and the Council to reject any budget that does not meet the goals of the strategy and the accountability of the involved stakeholders.



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Fourthly, it is also important that all economic and social actors are involved in the implementation of policies, which requires a smooth and transparent flow of information that is not always ensured by the OMC .

That's why the OMC should be combined with an approach, which commits all stakeholders in a more accountable way, through a common policy guidance developed by the European Commission, and adopted by the Parliament and the Council. This common guidance should serve as a macroeconomic framework in which Member States develop their economic policies according to the principle of subsidiarity.

According to JEF, setting EU2020 in a global context includes:

- Strengthening **common external representations**;
- A common and **sustainable industrial policy**, based on the principles of a fair competition and the respect of high social and environment protection standards;
- A common policy of **energy supply**, based on the objective of phasing out hydrocarbons, promote renewable energies and minimise energy consumption and dispersion;
- The promotion of **social and environment protection standards** at the global level as a key element of the common foreign and trade policies.

To conclude, JEF regrets the short time-frame devoted to the public consultation, which limited the options for inclusive debates within the representative organisations of the European civil society as well as of interest and advocacy groups.

Thank you very much for considering our point of view in this consultation process.

Yours sincerely,

YOUNG EUROPEAN FEDERALISTS

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JEF is a supranational, politically pluralist youth NGO with about 30,000 members in over 30 European countries. The goal of JEF is the creation of a democratic European federation as a crucial ingredient for peace and a guarantee for a more free, just and democratic society. JEF fosters true European Citizenship, works for the widening and deepening of the EU and aims at bringing Europe closer to the citizens. Our ideas are spread through international activities and youth exchanges, publications, public actions and co-operation with other youth organisations.