

FUTURE “EU 2020” STRATEGY

Observations on the Working Document of the European Commission

1. The triptych of the Lisbon Strategy (Economic Growth – Employment – Social Cohesion) must be maintained. Furthermore, in order to tackle phenomena, such as the deteriorating income inequality, the unemployment and the over-fragmentation of the labour market, the social agenda of the Future Strategy must be enhanced. Despite the position of the Employment Committee (October 2009), the reference made in the Working Document to the subject matter of social cohesion, as a main parameter of the new Strategy, is not adequate. Firm position of Greece is that the social dimension must be set forth as a separate priority in the text.

2. Full employment, improvement in labour quality and productivity and strengthening of the economic, social and territorial cohesion still constitute current objectives and must be explicitly set forth in the text. The same applies for the reduction of existing regional inequalities and the economic and social convergence. The European Employment Strategy and the European Social Protection and Social Inclusion Strategy must play a crucial role in the construction of the Future “EU 2020” Strategy.

3. The objectives of the new strategy must include the prevention of and fight against poverty, social exclusion and all forms of discrimination; the new strategy must mainly care for the implementation of active integration measures and for the provision of adequate and sustainable social protection.

Given the current acute social and economic crisis, the reference to the concept of “flexicurity”, without a relevant reference to the active integration policy, is problematic.

4. The new Strategy ought to take into account the new standards: globalization, socioeconomic crisis, ecological crisis, population ageing, and pressures resulting from migration, which are particularly faced by the countries in the South of Europe, increasing social and regional inequalities, rapid technological advances which affect the production, as well as the quality and the form of labour. As all these problems are global, the external dimension of the community strategy must be strengthened.

5. The quest for *“the transformation of the European Union into a smarter, greener and more competitive economy, which will give impetus to the creation of new jobs and will face the high rates of unemployment”*, proposed in the Working Document, is important and must be welcomed. However, the Future Strategy should also propose a new model of eco-friendly, people-centered and sustainable growth. This new model should focus on the creation of new qualitative jobs, on the relevant transformation of the current jobs into green ones and on the coordinated action in the fields of environment, industry, education, employment, research and technology. The current model of economic growth, which is often based on a disproportionate to the results use of resources, must be reviewed. Research and technology must be reoriented towards new goods and services, as well as towards production methods that will contribute both to preserving resources and to achieving a new, more positive balance between work and free time.

6. According to a recent opinion of the Employment Committee the weaknesses of the Lisbon Strategy “are in the implementation”. The Working

Document of the European Commission mentions the “accomplishments” of the Strategy. However, there is no attempt to fully assess its results, and no explanation of today’s great deviation from its quantitative objectives. We consider that, without the previous objective and overall assessment of the existing Strategy, the design of a new one is a risky task. Such an assessment must focus not only on the weaknesses relating to implementation, but also on the policy objectives themselves, as set forth in the Lisbon Strategy. For example: employment increase must certainly remain our priority, since it constitutes the greatest asset in the fight against poverty and exclusion. However, on its own, employment increase in the period 2000-2009 does not seem to have been of sufficient benefit to those who found themselves outside the labour market, whereas even those persons who are employed are not always safeguarded from the danger of poverty and exclusion.

7. The evaluation of the new Strategy must be linked with specific assessable objectives and points of reference, more particularly in the fields where this is not the case today, such as social protection and inclusion. The indices to be used must be understandable and ensure the relevant comparison among member states. The future Strategy must also take into consideration the particularities of the EU Member States and regions.

8. The EU budget must secure that the goals of the European Social Fund and of the other financing bodies will continue to intertwine with the goals of the European Employment Strategy. Emphasis must be placed on the flexibility of the structural funds and the simplification of co-financed actions.

9. Finally, it is important that the priorities of the Future “EU 2020” Strategy include transparency, actual familiarization of the parties concerned with its content and its planned introduction and presentation to the European

citizens. The Future "EU 2020" Strategy must be of a simpler structure and be clearly articulated. The existing procedures are often dealt with as part of a technocratic routine. Common principles and goals are required that shall help us join forces and shall constitute poles of political mobilization.