



Dear Sir, Madam,

Below are my personal comments on the consultation about the strategy to make the EU a smarter and greener social market.

In general the document demonstrates a perspective that acknowledges the interrelatedness between sectors (such as energy, transport, education), technological trends and developments (such as the information society, smart grids), and policies.

However, what this perspective is not sufficiently taking into account is the social level of change. If resources are to be used more efficiently, and if new and greener technologies are to be applied, one essential stakeholder in all this is the citizen-consumer. This citizen-consumer needs to be motivated to change his or her (purchasing) behavior and needs to accept and/ or adopt (depending on the scale of the technology) new and greener technologies to accelerate their market uptake and thus increase the competitiveness of our economy. In the document this citizen-consumer however is only described as a rational decision-maker that can be motivated to act in the right way by means of targeted regulation, tax reform, grants, subsidies and loans. A significant volume of (recent) literature however has demonstrated that citizen-consumers act and decide in a bounded-rational manner, a behavior which in addition is not stable, but can change in time. Even more so, recent research demonstrates that the behavior of citizens and consumers is the outcome of a complex mix of personal traits and a vast amount of external context factors, certainly not only financial ones, and that if an individual is to change his or her behavior, the social and technological-infrastructure environment and community of that individual needs to change as well. In my opinion, the consultation document insufficiently focuses on this social level of change, and in particular on its potential to empower EU citizens to take responsibility and feel a sense of ownership for the future.

The statement in the document that there is dire need for an agenda that puts people and responsibility first highlights the need to indeed empower people to participate in this new collective EU effort towards a more sustainable, greener, smarter and social market. In addition, a participatory perspective on citizens and their role in public and political decision making is also highlighted in the Lisbon Treaty. Public participation can take different forms, and this consultation is one of them. Public participation could also be sought after in the form of active co-creation of this more sustainable social market. In fact, or more precisely, in practice, many trends, both on the level of citizens initiatives, societal movements but also including the information society (with indirect participatory processes such as Google trends) demonstrate that societal actions, often on the community level are increasingly becoming a driving and shaping force behind innovation and sustainable movements (i.e. carrot mobs, co-creation, co-innovation).

Instead of the rather technocratic and top-down approach now advocated in the consultation document, a more balanced approach that also allows for bottom-up input and building on already existing and emerging initiatives, needs and actions or movements would be valuable and could be fed into the decision-making process about the shape the different targeted regulations, tax reforms, grants, subsidies and loans and policies might take. This would however require that the consultation document also focuses on the importance of creating a regulatory framework that facilitates the involvement and engagement of citizens in the decision-making processes dealing with the creation of the greener, smarter and social market of 2020. An expected outcome of this public participation would be a more tailored, and therefore successful creation of a market.

In addition, through this more inclusive, participatory and bottom-up approach to creating effective policies, social inclusion is fostered in a broader sense than now present in the document. The definitions of both empowerment and social inclusion used in this document seem to be limited to empowering people through capacity building in terms of skills, and jobs (and switching between jobs), whilst empowerment and social inclusion are also very much linked to and influenced by the possibility to actively contribute to the design and creation of a new, smarter, greener and social market. Social inclusion can of course to some extent be fostered top-down by the EU and national governments, through the creation of policies and regulations that lead to the development of new skills and jobs and so forth, but social inclusion can also be fostered by allowing the citizen and consumer to be included in relevant decision-making processes. This inclusion through empowerment has the added benefit of creating a sense of ownership that will strengthen the movements set in motion.

In addition to the more general comments above, the bullets below list some individual comments/questions:

- The document mentions the need for a more efficient use of resources and materials and increased productivity, but omits to discuss the need for a better waste management and recycling of materials. This would certainly need to be part of a more sustainable social market. In addition, increased attention for waste and recycling might foster the creation of a new sort of jobs.
- Linked to the comment above, the more efficient use of resources should also apply to human resource (knowledge and skills) which are to a certain extent still very much locked in individuals and generations. The educational forms of the future could also very much benefit from a more service based education which intergenerational two-way transmission of knowledge and resources.
- The document repeatedly speaks of the need to stimulate growth, and although this growth can take place simultaneously with achieving of our environmental goals, this can occur only if consumption of non-renewable energy and resources is diminished and made more efficient. What the document does not discuss is that on our way to 2020, growth will to some extent still be achieved by an increase in consumption of non-renewable energy and resources. What this issue exemplifies is that there will be a transition period between the



current market and the future sustainable social market. Policies, regulation, tax rebates and all other mechanisms should likewise be focused on facilitating this transition, and perhaps start with facilitating the picking of the low-hanging fruit (most easily achievable changes) and through goal setting and commitment and (voluntary) agreements with all (social) partners become increasingly ambitious.

For any questions I am at your disposal.

Sincerely yours,

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