

14 January 2010

Response to the consultation on the future EU2020 strategy - comments by the regions of Småland and Blekinge

The following actors from the Swedish regions of Småland and Blekinge have gathered their comments on the future EU 2020 strategy:

- Regional Council of Blekinge County
- Regional Council of Jönköping County
- Regional Council of Kalmar County
- Regional Council of southern Småland

The four Regional Councils have been actively engaged in the implementation of the goals and targets posed by the current Lisbon Strategy. Our regions welcome and have great expectations in the EU2020 Strategy and further work around it since it will enable us to become part of the solutions of the major common challenges in Europe and to play an important role in the creation of a stronger Europe in the global arena.

The regions fully agree with the key priorities stated; knowledge-based growth, social inclusion and green competitiveness are in line with our own missions and goals. The regions believe that the full recovery from the current economic, social and environmental conditions can be handled both with the long-term perspectives that the strategy offers and the short-term actions which will facilitate the re-boosting of our societies.

We have three main comments:

1. Inclusion of the local and regional level in the development and implementation of the EU2020 Strategy
 2. Develop concrete actions – use the cohesion policy as a means to achieve the objective of the EU2020 Strategy
 3. Remarkably short consultation period
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1. Inclusion of the local and regional level in the development and implementation of the EU2020 Strategy

The regions consider surprising the fact that the Commission considers the Strategy a tool only for the EU and the national level: "In its Communication, the Commission will therefore set out both the action it considers needs to be taken at national level, and the detailed proposals for action that it will propose at Community level", and "This is an agenda for all Member States, large and small, old and new, highly developed and still developing..." To our disappointment the regional and local levels are not included as implementers of the proposed goals, or at least the intention to do so is not reflected in the document. We strongly believe it to be true that, as the Lisbon Treaty points out, a more open, effective and democratic EU could only be reached if the regional and local dimension is considered.

We are confident that transformation to a greener economy and the creation of more jobs will remain only a theory unless the regional and local levels are involved in both the development of the EU 2020 Strategy and the measures introduced to reach its vision. It is indeed at the regional and local levels that a large number of the targets mentioned in the paper will have to be realised.

Regions play a crucial role in transferring EU policies into measures adapted to unique local conditions. Undoubtedly, such active involvement constitutes a cogent argument to remain a strong voice in shaping EU's future, our future.

2. Develop concrete actions – use the cohesion policy as a means to achieve the objective of the EU2020 Strategy


The EU 2020 Strategy is a diffuse mindset presenting some ideals, but lacking suggestions for concrete actions. We believe that the EU cohesion policy could be a means of translating theories into concrete measures. By aligning the measures of the EU cohesion policy with the objectives described in the EU 2020 Strategy, the cohesion policy can serve as a true force, in the Commission's goal to transform Europe into a "green and smart, social market economy", while serving the common EU objective of territorial cohesion between the regions of the EU member states, as described by the Lisbon Treaty. In this context, we stress that in the future EU funds should be available to all regions since they are crucial in stimulating development on several levels within a region, regardless of its financial standing.

European Territorial Cooperation has a high European added value. It should remain an essential part of cohesion policy and should be further strengthened in the future. Therefore, our regions welcome the work behind the new macro-regional strategies such as the EU Baltic Sea Strategy and consider ourselves the key actors in the implementation process. In this sense, the regions expect the development of concrete and complementing tools and priorities, the process in which they will need to be involved.

3. Remarkably short consultation period

Finally, we consider that to launch this consultation over the holiday period was remarkably badly timed, preventing relevant actors from anchoring and processing comments in an efficient and comprehensive manner.

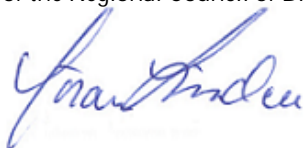
We look forward to being involved in the follow-up process, with regards to the development of actions implementing the Strategy in different areas, as well as to the presentation of examples of good practice.



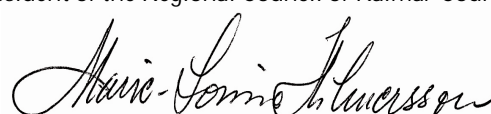
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