



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 13.3.2015  
C(2015) 1701 final

*Dear Presidents,*

*The new Commission, which entered office on 1 November 2014, is fully committed to strengthening its partnership with national Parliaments. An active and constructive political dialogue on the Commission's proposals is a crucial part of this relationship, complementing the essential direct contacts between our institutions. The Commission looks forward to working with the Houses of the Oireachtas over the coming years.*

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*The Commission would like to thank the Houses of the Oireachtas for their Opinion concerning the Commission's Communication "Taking stock of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" {COM(2014) 130 final}.*

*The Commission shares the view, as underlined in the Communication, that awareness and ownership by all relevant actors are key prerequisites for the successful delivery of the Europe 2020 strategy. From its start, the strategy relied on a partnership, inclusive approach based on the engagement and involvement of all stakeholders.*

*In addition, the Commission agrees with the Houses of the Oireachtas as regards the importance of complementing the quantitative analysis of progress towards the Europe 2020 targets with a qualitative examination of action undertaken. This is explicitly highlighted in the Commission's Communication and is notably carried out in the context of the European Semester, which involves a thorough analysis of the policy agendas of Member States and their consistency with the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. This analysis translates into country-specific recommendations aimed at improving the performance of European economies. The Commission would like to recall that the Europe 2020 targets are not meant to be exhaustive and to capture all dimensions of a given policy; they rather exemplify key drivers for growth and jobs on which to act at EU and national level.*

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*As regards the social dimension, the Commission would like to underline that social policies are at the heart of the Commission's agenda and feature prominently in the 2015 Annual Growth Survey presented by the Commission on 28 November 2014 {COM(2014) 902 final}. Employment and social indicators are being introduced into the macroeconomic imbalances procedure and should be used to gain a better understanding of the labour market and social developments and risks. Furthermore, as indicated by President Juncker in his political guidelines in July 2014, the preparation of social impact assessments in addition to fiscal sustainability assessments could become an integral part of any support and reform programme for euro area Member States.*

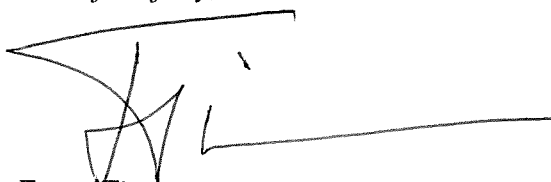
*The Commission would also like to provide a number of clarifications. First, the Europe 2020 strategy does not follow a "one size fits all approach". This is clearly reflected in the fact that Member States were invited to translate the European targets into national ones, to take into account different starting points and country-specific circumstances. In addition, the targets represent an overall view of where the Commission would like to see the EU on key parameters by 2020. Despite disparities in levels of development and standards of living, the Commission considers that the proposed targets are relevant to all Member States.*

*Second, although the Commission recognises the importance of supporting the Europe 2020 strategy through appropriate funding – at European level, the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework is fully aligned with the Europe 2020 priorities – achieving the targets does not only depend on adequate financing, but is also crucially conditioned by the political will and the commitment to carry out reforms in the Member States.*

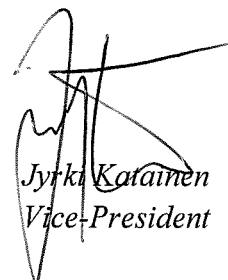
*Finally, the Commission would like to thank the Houses of the Oireachtas for their suggestions regarding the mid-term review of the strategy. The mid-term review is currently under preparation.*

*The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Houses of the Oireachtas and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.*

*Yours faithfully,*



*Frans Timmermans  
First Vice-President*



*Jyrki Katainen  
Vice-President*