

Brussels, 6/07/2010
C/2010/4467

Dear Ms Kinberg Batra,

The Commission would like to thank the Riksdag's committees for their very thorough examination of the consultation document on a future Europe 2020 strategy and of the Communication "Europe 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" {COM(2010)2020}. The Commission took good note of the report of the Committee on Finance, as well as of the opinions of the other committees and of the dissenting views.

The Commission is grateful for the overall support expressed by the committees for its proposals and would like to make the following more detailed comments.

The Commission fully shares the view that the new Europe 2020 strategy should become a key part of EU policy to overcome the crisis and to steer the EU economy towards sustainable development in a world of new markets and new competitors. The Commission equally agrees that in this context the future EU strategy should have a broader focus than the Lisbon Partnership for Growth and Jobs and concentrate on creating conditions for long-term structural growth of the EU economy based on a vision of a smart, sustainable and inclusive society. In this context, the Commission also shares the importance attached by the committees to research and innovation, to a better use of economic instruments in environmental policy and labour market participation of underrepresented groups, and especially women.

The Commission agrees with the emphasis put by the Riksdag's committees on the importance of increasing the employment rate of women not only as a way to reach the overall target, but also as a crucial factor for meeting the objectives of the strategy as a whole. In this context, the Commission points out that the Spring 2010 European Council decided to set a 75% employment rate target for women and men aged between 20-64. The Commission also took good note of the studies referred to by the committees that demonstrate the important link of higher employment rates of women with the overall macroeconomic performance. In this context, it can be useful for Member States to set more specific national targets to track performance in areas where most progress is needed, including women employment. The Commission would also like to note that according to its proposal for guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (Employment Guidelines) "Member States should increase labour force participation through policies to promote active ageing, gender equality and equal pay

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(...)", and that "work-life balance policies with the provision of affordable care and innovation in work organisation should be geared to raising employment rates, particularly among youth, older workers and women (...)"

The Commission further welcomes and agrees with the importance of developing entrepreneurship including through a continuous simplification of the business environment. This will be a cross-cutting theme throughout the whole strategy and in particular for the Flagship actions "An industrial policy for the globalisation era" and "Innovation Union".

The Commission thanks the Riksdag's committees for their views on the reform of the EU budget which are a very useful input in the debate on the future financial perspectives. In the context of the Europe 2020 proposal, the Commission fully shares the opinion that the future EU multi-annual financial framework will need to reflect the EU long-term growth priorities.

With regards to the need to safeguard public finance sustainability, the Commission fully agrees that the key objective is to quickly return to a budgetary position within the limits set by the Stability and Growth Pact.

Finally, concerning governance of the Europe 2020 strategy, the Commission welcomes the importance attached to the partnership approach and would like to reassure the Riksdag's committees that national competences will be fully respected.

To conclude, the Commission agrees that effective implementation is essential. This should be ensured among other things by a stronger involvement of the European Council in the strategy's formulation and implementation. The Commission would also like to stress the importance of debate and ownership at national level and welcomes in this context the committees' intention to continue to follow the Europe 2020 strategy.

Yours faithfully,

/-/ Maroš Šefčovič