

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

CONSULTATION OF EUROPEAN REGIONS & CITIES

"Your voice on Europe 2020"

(Follow-up to the 2009 CoR Consultation of European Regions and Cities
on a New Strategy for Sustainable Growth)

On 3 March 2010 the European Commission has proposed Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth – as the successor of the Lisbon Strategy (see a description in Annex 1).

The European Council is now requested to endorse the strategy's overall approach and the EU headline targets and to give its final approval to the strategy.

However some important issues relevant to local and regional authorities still remain open in the strategy, concerning the need for differentiated targets at the territorial level, the need for indicators going beyond GDP, the actual role of the local and regional authorities in the design and implementation of the new strategy, the relationships between Europe 2020, cohesion policy and the EU budget and the need to communicate the new strategy to all EU citizens (see a background note in Annex 2).

It is crucial that they are adequately addressed before final adoption of Europe 2020 by the June European Council.

Address your opinion to the European and national leaders who will be meeting at the June European Council: your participation is important.

All details can be found at: <http://portal.cor.europa.eu/europe2020/>

Contributions can be sent in any of the EU official languages and will be publicly posted on this webpage in their original language and in English (without your contact details).

Please send your replies in Word format (doc), possibly using blank spaces in this same file, to consultation@cor.europa.eu
by Monday 12 April 2010



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1. EUROPE 2020 targets

The Commission has translated the 3 priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy (smart, sustainable and inclusive growth) into 5 EU headline targets at European level:

1. 75 % of the population aged 20-64 should be employed.
2. 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D.
3. The "20/20/20" climate/energy targets should be met (including an increase to 30% of emissions reduction if the conditions are right).
4. The share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree.
5. 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty.

To ensure that each Member State tailors the Europe 2020 strategy, taking into account national circumstances and differing starting points, the Commission asks them to translate these targets into national targets before the June European Council.

1.1 Is the balance among the three dimensions of the strategy: economic, social and environmental, appropriate? If not, please explain.

The AEBR cannot answer specifically per country, but only European-wide on behalf of its members.

Generally it is welcomed that the EU perceives itself as a political and not only as an economic community. The economic dimension - taking into account the important social and environmental components (also creating jobs and added value) – has to

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take a central stage seeing that, in times of limited public budgets, the funds have to be granted first before they can be spent.

In the EU it will be more difficult to translate the European objectives to national targets. Unlike other economic areas like the USA, the relatively small territorial EU area is divided by many national borders. They still constrain the implementation of the objectives of a consistent Economic area, a comprehensive and inclusive labour market, or a common research and knowledge area.

1.2 Is the number of targets appropriate and are they sufficiently focused?

The Association of European Border Regions welcomes:

- The incorporation of current and future challenges in the “Europe 2020 Strategy”, as demographic change, combating unemployment, strengthening and promoting social cohesion, increasing energy efficiency, as well as taking measures for saving energy handling through efficient use of means of production and therefore protecting natural resources and raw materials.

European border/cross-border regions are very much affected by many of these challenges.

- The three priorities contemplated:
 - Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.
 - Sustainable growth: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy.
 - Inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.
- To develop the citizens’ capacities to take active part in an integrative society through the strengthening of social cohesion, the enhancement of the citizens’ qualifications, and therefore, higher equal opportunities in the labour market (with the parallel implementation of measures against social dumping).
- To develop a competitive, networked, and environmentally-friendly society, where social, economic and environmental political objectives should be interrelated.

However, the AEBR wants to draw the attention to that there is a risk of taking sectoral policies to the fore under the umbrella of a “new strategy”, putting the successful cohesion policy more to the back seat, and therefore neglecting the essential territorial dimension.

1.3 What other targets should be proposed by your country as national targets, in order to take into account regional circumstances and different starting points at local and regional level?

If a target should be added, it should be strengthening the regional and local dimension as an **instrument**: The regional / local one is the most appropriate level to implement the “Europe 2020 Strategy”. In this way it is as well assured that different circumstances and basic conditions on local and regional level are taken into account.

2. EUROPE 2020 indicators

The Commission has stated that the outcome of the strategy will be annually monitored "on the basis of a set of indicators showing overall progress towards the objective of smart, green and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion". Nevertheless, no indicators were specified in the proposal.

The political guidelines of the economic strategies are made on the basis of measured performance. Currently, there is already a broad consensus on the need to combine GDP with indicators that better measure economic performance and people's living standards and quality of life.

2.1 What kind of indicators should be used to monitor progress towards the targets set at European level?

In any case the EU-Commission should make clear at an early stage which indicators it wants to establish on EU-level to measure progress, so that announcements are possible in due time. This is the most necessary as the national governments can determine own indicators. Thereby a certain degree of coherence between the EU and the national level needs to be ensured. Besides the GDP, indicators like "Accessibility", "Education" and "Unemployment" (especially of younger and elder people) can be used.

2.2 What kind of challenges do you foresee in the use of those indicators?

It is difficult to record the indicator „accessibility“ in an European-wide comparable way. On the other hand it is relatively simple to quantify changes in the education sector and unemployment.

3. EUROPE 2020: the role of local and regional authorities

The Commission suggests that

"All national, regional and local authorities" should work in partnership, "closely associating parliaments, as well as social partners and representatives of civil society, contributing to the elaboration of national reform programmes as well as to their implementation".

However, when coming to put this principle in practice - in particular, with respect to the seven "flagship initiatives" that should pursue the Europe 2020 ultimate goals (see the annexed info) - the Commission proposes the coordination of works and initiatives at the EU and the national level, while the role of regional and local level is not elaborated.

3.1 Is there in your country any institutional mechanisms that could help to effectively involving regions and cities in the elaboration of the strategy (defining national targets and reform programmes) as well as its implementation? How can regions and cities be sure that the strategy be more focused and adapted to local and regional differences?

The AEBR cannot answer specifically for one country, but can give general remarks in favour of regional **and** also cross-border development strategies/programmes, taking into account national plans and programmes. New national plans and programmes have to take these regional development strategies/programmes into account (and vice versa). In doing so a dynamic interaction between region specific and national development plans/strategies is generated, influencing each other in a positive way.

In the preparation of these regional and cross-border development strategies/programmes all partners in the region have to be involved to create a sustainable basis and animate it.

3.2 How do you perceive your role in the implementation of EUROPE 2020 (in general, and, in particular, in the design of flagship initiatives)?

European social, cultural and economic diversity, historically conditioned in a relatively small territory, has to be faced as a great potential to be better exploited and developed. **This applies especially to regions and municipalities near the EU internal and external borders.**

So current European challenges can be more flexibly and accurately faced with a common strategic framework, in which the regions with their diversity have to play a major role.

For this reason, the Association of European Border Regions asks to take into account the following recommendations:

- If European municipalities and regions could place their potentialities in the “Europe 2020 Strategy”, this should be seen clearly in line with the principle of subsidiarity. With the “EU Territorial Agenda” and the “Leipzig Charter for Sustainable Urban Development”, the responsible European ministers jointly with the European Commission, have already provided the route to follow.
- An enlarged EU needs territorial cohesion and a consistent implementation of the bottom-up principle with due regard to subsidiarity and partnership, and participation of all actors. **The regional and local authorities have to play a**

key role, also in designing and implementing “flagship initiatives”.

- The Territorial Agenda clearly requests that it is necessary to coordinate not only the member states policies, but also the EU-policies and between both.
- Therefore, the sectoral policy areas of the EU have to be better coordinated, taking into account the territorial dimension.
- One European task is to ensure its cohesion and regional policy to define strategic guidelines and secure the strategic coherence of programmes. All other important matters should be realised by the regional and/or local level in partnership with the national and European levels and the social partners.
- Territorial cohesion offers the opportunity to strengthen the role of regional and local authorities and other actors in the implementation of the EU-policies.
- Territorial cooperation in connection with spatial development strategies at European level contributes to territorial cohesion and helps to solve the spatial fragmentation of the EU, the inconsistencies and the lack of coherence caused by national differences.
- Within territorial cooperation, cross-border cooperation should obtain first political priority further on, and remain a political objective which should be strengthened.
- Cross-border cooperation is mostly affected by territorial cohesion. If there is no cohesion along the European borders then it would be very difficult to realise European integration and territorial cohesion as a whole.
- Cross-Border cooperation can sustainably foster the main objectives of the “Europe 2020 Strategy” through a qualitative “jump” because their potentialities have not been exploited by far. It is about cross-border research, development & innovation, healthcare or regional transport networks. The enlargement of the Schengen area to the EU old external and new internal borders creates even new requirements, and they should be taken into account.

4. EUROPE 2020, EU Funding and Cohesion Policy

The Committee of the Regions stresses that the objective of cohesion policy is that of "reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions" (Treaty on European Union, Art. 174). If the Europe 2020 "inclusion" priority has to provide the key link between growth and (economic, social and territorial) cohesion goals, it has therefore to be translated into credible objectives.

The European Commission Europe 2020 proposal states that "(...) cohesion policy and its structural funds, while important in their own right, are key delivery mechanisms to achieve the priorities of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Member States and regions".

It also adds that

"The discussion should not only be about levels of funding, but also about how different funding instruments such as structural funds, agricultural and rural development funds, the research framework programme, and the competitiveness and innovation framework programme (CIP) need to be devised to achieve the Europe 2020 goals so as to maximise impact, ensure efficiency and EU value added",

acknowledging that

"It is also essential that the benefits of economic growth spread to all parts of the Union, including its outermost regions, thus strengthening territorial cohesion".

4.1 How, and under which conditions, could cohesion policy deliver on its key Treaty objective of "reducing disparities" while contributing to the Europe 2020 priorities of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?

The measures to be taken against the current crisis and the new challenges have to **integrate sectoral policies in the long term into a coherent European strategy, in which the regional and local authorities have to play a major role.**

The cohesion policy is a horizontal approach comprising sectoral policies in its multi-annual programmes. In this respect the cohesion policy is **the** instrument of the EU-Commission that is able to ensure the often requested cooperation and coordination between the individual policies. This strategic-programmatic approach has demonstrably contributed to remove disparities and, at the same time, taking into account the balance between economic, social and environmental policy. Therefore, cohesion policy should, as well as territorial cohesion, be understood as strategic framework in which sectoral policies of the EU have to be integrated. Then cohesion

policy can provide the most added value.

4.2 How should the EU funding contribute to territorial cohesion and to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, in terms of both (A) its overall size and (B) its distribution between different funding instruments such as the structural funds, agricultural and rural development funds, the research framework programme, and the competitiveness and innovation framework programme (CIP)?

Thus, the financial resources for cohesion policy must rather be upgraded. If more funds should be provided for sectoral policies, they have to consider the objectives of the strategic framework.

Reducing the funds for cohesion policy in favour of sectoral policies may hardly create added value. Under the precondition that EU-funds for the objective "Convergence" will stay within the cohesion policy, only relatively small funds are remaining for objective 2 "Growth" and objective 3 "Territorial Cooperation".

If these funds will be allocated to sectoral policies, only small funds are available for each of these sectoral policies for a period of seven years. Broken down to one financial year and 27 member states, the financial volume created hardly allows to make a European-wide policy. Sectoral policies must, to be successful with these small financial resources, follow a top-down approach - which hardly will be accepted by the member states - Therefore, their implementation could be more than difficult and it is doubtful if the funds are absorbed in the anticipated extend.

5. Communicating EUROPE 2020

In 2009, contributors to the CoR Consultation on the future of the Lisbon Strategy suggested that the Lisbon Strategy failed to be perceived as relevant to the life of ordinary citizens.

The European Commission acknowledges an important role for the regions in explaining the need to commit to EUROPE 2020 and the contribution that Europe and its Member States expect from their "citizen, businesses and their representative organizations" to carry out the necessary reforms.

To this effect, it will propose "a common communication tool box", taking into account "national circumstances and traditions".

5.1 Do you think that the Europe 2020 proposal can be better communicated to EU citizens than the Lisbon Strategy? In light of the experience of the Lisbon Strategy, what parts of the European society and territory should be the target of a special

communication effort?

The „Europe 2020 Strategy“ can only be better communicated to citizens as the Lisbon-Strategy, if it really can be managed to strengthen the role of the regional and local authorities in its implementation. Programmes directly affecting the regions and in which they play a major role, demonstrably reach the citizens (see evaluation of INTERREG). For an acceptance of the “Europe 2020 Strategy” it is essential that the regional and local authorities and the social partners in a region identify themselves with it. This succeeds if the “Europe 2020 Strategy”, with its direct impacts, is perceived as an own experience by the citizens and social partners in a region.

5.2 What elements should be included in the tool box proposed by the Commission? And how should it take into account economic, social, territorial and cultural differentiations across EU countries and regions?

In the tool box regional info points should convey on the ground the effects of the „Europe 2020 Strategy“. Because of the present experience it is necessary to underline the political contents more clearly and not only emphasize quantitatively on the allocation of funds. As far as our experience goes, EU-policies are rather financially explained (with a break down how much funds each member state has received). At the same time the political aspect often takes the back seat.

Annex I

Europe2020: Background Note

by Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform of the Committee of the Regions team

1. The EC Europe2020 blueprint meets some key requests from EU cities and regions

The proposal put forward in the European Commission's Communication "EUROPE 2020. A European Strategy for smart, green and inclusive growth"² **meets to a large extent five key issues CoR has been requesting**, giving a constructive answer to the Own Initiative Opinion the CoR adopted in its Plenary Session on 3-4 December 2009³, as well as to some of the "Questions on the future of the Lisbon Strategy" which emerged from the CoR Consultation of European Regions and Cities on a New Strategy for Sustainable Growth carried out earlier in 2009⁴. After the 5th Territorial Dialogue, held on 18 January 2010, these issues were summarized in a joint letter by the CoR President and the Spanish Council Presidency the European Council President Herman Van Rompuy.

- **First** and foremost, the EC proposal acknowledges that the **EU local and regional authorities must be seen as permanent partners in the design and implementation of the strategy**, which the CoR has been pleading for since 2006. Actually, the "Who does what?" section of the EC proposal (par. 5.2) states that (our underlines) "All national, regional and local authorities should implement the partnership, closely associating parliaments, as well as social partners and representatives of civil society, contributing to the elaboration of national reform programmes as well as to its implementation. By establishing a permanent dialogue between various levels of government, the priorities of the Union are brought closer to citizens, strengthening the ownership needed to deliver the Europe2020 strategy". In addition, the proposal recognises also that "(...)exchange of good practices, benchmarking and networking - as promoted by several Member States - has proven another useful tool to forge ownership and dynamism around the need for reform". However, in spite of what the Commission affirms, these networks have been created by a variety of stakeholders, such as regions and cities or the CoR, more than by Member States themselves, Their role should be better recognised and a room in which they contribute should be better identified

² COM(2010)2020 (3.3.2010).

³ The future of the Lisbon Strategy post 2010 (CdR 25/2009).

⁴ www.cor.europa.eu/europe2020.

- **Second**, as requested in CoR Opinion⁵, EUROPE 2020 declares that the Committee of the Regions should be "*more closely associated*";
- **Third, it puts the social and environmental pillars on the same level as the economic one**, thus remedying the overlooking of the social and environmental aspects that most EU cities and regions saw as a major weakness of the Lisbon Strategy. The Commission proposal also points out rightly that targets related to the Europe2020 *smart, sustainability and inclusion* priorities should be seen as "*interrelated*" and mutually reinforcing. It also meets the CoR's call to "*develop Europe's competitiveness in the green economy*"⁶;
- **Fourth, it acknowledges that the strategy should adapt to different starting points in a flexible manner.** In fact, while adopting EU-level targets covering the three mentioned priorities, the Commission acknowledges that "*Each Member State is different and the EU of 27 is more diverse than it was a decade ago*", that "*traditional sectors, rural areas*" and "*high skill, service economies*" show different situations. Therefore, the EC proposes that each Member State translates the EU goals into "*national targets and trajectories*" so that "*Investing in research and development as well as innovation, in education and in resource efficient technologies (...) will reinforce economic, social and territorial cohesion*";
- **Fifth**, the EC proposal also acknowledges that Europe2020 must meet the need for solidarity between the richest and poorest areas of the Union and it considers that its outcomes will contribute to implementation of the Lisbon Treaty objective of territorial cohesion, stating that: "*It is also essential that the benefits of economic growth spread to all parts of the Union, including its outermost regions, thus strengthening territorial cohesion*".

2. However, other issues relevant to the EU local and regional authorities are not adequately addressed

Other key issues raised by the CoR are not dealt adequately in the Europe 2020 blueprint, in particular:

- while acknowledging the need for stronger economic governance, the Europe2020 proposal **does not answer** the CoR request that EU Member States' **national governments are provided with "*stronger incentives to commit themselves to delivering the new strategy's objectives*"**⁷. Instead, it relies on the effectiveness of the mechanisms based on the country-specific

⁵ The future of the Lisbon Strategy post 2010 (CdR 25/2009)

⁶ *ibidem*

⁷ *ibidem*

recommendations issued by the European Council and the subsequent policy warning that the Commission could issue if a Member State does not comply with the recommendations after two years;

- as for the **role of the local and regional authorities**, in contradiction to the positive acknowledgements mentioned above, the proposal does not stress the need to involve them in a permanent and structured manner in the **design and implementation of the flagship initiatives**;
- in spite of recognising that **the CoR** "*should be more closely associated*", the proposal does not elaborate on how to involve it in the design, implementation and monitoring of the new strategy;
- the proposal calls for a **discussion "about how different instruments such as structural funds (...) should be devised to achieve the Europe 2020 goals"**. The simple recognition that "cohesion policy and its structural funds" are "important in their own right" should be more elaborated. CoR has always stressed the danger of the currently increasing cross-regional economic disparities (when the disparities between countries are decreasing) and consequently inequalities in social conditions, which play against the European social model. Therefore, in the context of the debate about the size and the rationale of the EU budget, **the link between cohesion policy and EUROPE 2020 should be more carefully reconsidered**, taking into account the role played by cohesion policy for inclusiveness.
- the proposal is silent on the CoR call to go **beyond the "use of GDP as the primary indicator to measure economic performance"**⁸ and the subsequent need to complement it with new indicators to better reflect the several phenomena influencing quality of life and (economic, social, environmental) sustainability issues. Indeed, there is a spread awareness and a large debate around the world on the need to combine the GDP with indicators that better measure the economic performances and quality and standards of living of citizens⁹. In fact, the proposal announces that "*The EC will monitor annually the situation on the basis of a set of indicators showing overall progress towards the objective of smart, green and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion*", **but does not disclose what these indicators will be**;
- Europe 2020 states that the proposed EU-level targets "*are representative, not exhaustive*" and invites Member States to set their own additional indicators

⁸ *ibidem*

⁹ A plethora of studies can be mentioned on this topic (e.g. "Measuring the progress of societies" initiative by OECD or the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress) as well as the progressed work by the European Commission itself (Communication, "GDP and beyond", (COM(2009)433 final).

and targets, if they wish so. However, the Europe2020 proposal **renounces to support the identification of additional indicators at the EU level**, which is essential if they are to be used throughout the EU for governance purposes (comparison and benchmarking; monitoring and evaluation; management of territorial policies);

- as for the **need for more effective communication** to citizens and stakeholders, the Europe2020 proposal announces a "common communication toolbox", on which no details are provided though. It remains an essential element for the success of Europe 2020 on the ground. The CoR in its Opinion¹⁰ called for "a more effective communication strategy (...) to raise awareness and promote the key messages of the new Strategy" while contributors to the CoR Consultation¹¹ requested a strategy "more relevant to the lives of ordinary citizens".

¹⁰ The future of the Lisbon Strategy post 2010 (CdR 25/2009)

¹¹ CoR Consultation of European Regions and Cities on a New Strategy for Sustainable Growth, www.cor.europa.eu/europe2020.

Annex II

Europe 2020: Commission proposes new economic strategy in Europe on Europe 2020 (Press Release IP/10/225, 3rd March 2010)

The European Commission has launched today the Europe 2020 Strategy to go out of the crisis and prepare EU economy for the next decade. The Commission identifies three key drivers for growth, to be implemented through concrete actions at EU and national levels: smart growth (fostering knowledge, innovation, education and digital society), sustainable growth (making our production more resource efficient while boosting our competitiveness) and inclusive growth (raising participation in the labour market, the acquisition of skills and the fight against poverty). This battle for growth and jobs requires ownership at top political level and mobilisation from all actors across Europe. Five targets are set which define where the EU should be by 2020 and against which progress can be tracked.

President Barroso said, "Europe 2020 is about what we need to do today and tomorrow to get the EU economy back on track. The crisis has exposed fundamental issues and unsustainable trends that we can not ignore any longer. Europe has a growth deficit which is putting our future at risk. We must decisively tackle our weaknesses and exploit our many strengths. We need to build a new economic model based on knowledge, low-carbon economy and high employment levels. This battle requires mobilisation of all actors across Europe."

First of all, Europe must learn the lessons from the global economic and financial crisis. Our economies are intrinsically linked. No Member State can address global challenges effectively by acting in isolation. We are stronger when we work together, and a successful exit therefore depends on close economic policy coordination. Failure to do so could result in a "lost decade" of relative decline, permanently damaged growth and structurally high levels of unemployment.

The Europe 2020 Strategy therefore sets out a vision for Europe's social market economy over the next decade, and rests on three interlocking and mutually reinforcing priority areas: Smart growth, developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation; Sustainable growth, promoting a low-carbon, resource-efficient and competitive economy; and Inclusive growth, fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

Progress towards these objectives will be measured against five representative headline EU-level targets, which Member States will be asked to translate into national targets reflecting starting points:

- 75 % of the population aged 20-64 should be employed.
- 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D.
- The "20/20/20" climate/energy targets should be met.
- The share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a degree or diploma. .
- 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty.

In order to meet the targets, the Commission proposes a Europe 2020 agenda consisting of a series of flagship initiatives. Implementing these initiatives is a shared priority, and action will be required at all levels: EU-level organisations, Member States, local and regional authorities.

- Innovation union - re-focussing R&D and innovation policy on major challenges, while closing the gap between science and market to turn inventions into products. As an example, the Community Patent could save companies 289€ million each year.
- Youth on the move - enhancing the quality and international attractiveness of Europe's higher education system by promoting student and young professional mobility. As a

concrete action, vacancies in all Member States should be more accessible through out Europe and professional qualifications and experience properly recognised.

- A digital agenda for Europe - delivering sustainable economic and social benefits from a Digital Single Market based on ultra fast internet. All Europeans should have access to high speed internet by 2013.
- Resource-efficient Europe - supporting the shift towards a resource efficient and low-carbon economy. Europe should stick to its 2020 targets in terms of energy production, efficiency and consumption. This would result in €60 billion less in oil and gas imports by 2020.
- An industrial policy for green growth – helping the EU's industrial base to be competitive in the post-crisis world, promoting entrepreneurship and developing new skills. This would create millions of new jobs ;
- An agenda for new skills and jobs – creating the conditions for modernising labour markets, with a view to raising employment levels and ensuring the sustainability of our social models, while baby-boomers retire ; and
- European platform against poverty - ensuring economic, social and territorial cohesion by helping the poor and socially excluded and enabling them to play an active part in society.

The ambition of Europe 2020 means that leadership and accountability must be taken to a new level. The Commission invites Heads of State and Government to take ownership for this new Strategy and endorse it at the Spring European Council. The role of the European Parliament will also be enhanced. The governance methods will be reinforced to ensure that commitments are translated into effective action on the ground. The Commission will monitor progress. Reporting and evaluation under both Europe 2020 and the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) will be carried out simultaneously (while remaining distinct instruments) to improve coherence. This will allow both strategies to pursue similar reform objectives while remaining as separate instruments.

For the full text of the Europe 2020 proposal and for further information, go to:
http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/index_en.htm