

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

35TH MEETING OF THE EEA JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

Strasbourg, France

RESOLUTIONS

Adopted pursuant to Rules 11 and 13 of the Rules of Procedure,
at the 35th meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Committee

in Strasbourg, France on 24-25 November 2010

- 1. Resolution:** *Europe 2020: Innovation and the EEA* (Ref. 1102699)
Co-rapporteurs: Ms Thorgerdur K. Gunnarsdóttir (Independence Party, Iceland)
Ms Paul Rübzig (EPP, MEP, Austria)

adopted unanimously.
- 2. Resolution:** *The European Year 2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion*
(Ref. 1102698)
Co-rapporteurs: Mr Svein Roald Hansen (Labour Party, Norway)
Mr Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE, Ireland)

adopted unanimously.

RESOLUTION

on

Europe 2020: Innovation and the EEA

The Joint Parliamentary Committee of the European Economic Area:

- A. HAVING regard to the conclusions of the European Council of 17 June 2010 which finalised the European Union's new strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (Europe 2020 Strategy) and which agreed as one of the headline targets for the strategy improving the conditions for research and development, in particular with the aim of raising combined public and private investment levels in this sector to 3% of GDP,
- B. HAVING regard to Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Innovation Union,
- C. HAVING regard to the initial Lisbon Strategy and its re-launch in 2005 as the Growth and Jobs Strategy,
- D. HAVING regard to EEA EFTA participation in the Lisbon Strategy, through the Internal Market and legislation under the Community programme/method, a wide range of EU programmes, several Open Method of Coordination processes, and inclusion in Eurostat,
 - 1. welcomes the more ambitious, comprehensive, and coherent nature of the new Europe 2020 strategy and urges all stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental, to work much harder than in the previous ten years of the Lisbon strategy to reach the overall goal of smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth; and calls for strong synergies between the Innovation Union flagship and other relevant flagship initiatives, as well as with other EU policies such as the Single Market Act;
 - 2. stresses that in the decade passed since the Lisbon Strategy was adopted, Europe has been faced with a whole new set of challenges, characterised by intensified globalisation and increased competition from emerging markets, climate change, acute energy security issues, and negative demographic trends and thus; underlines the need for a more comprehensive, efficient and smarter growth strategy whereby Member States commit to and implement new, necessary and more ambitious reforms;
 - 3. underlines that although Europe has no shortage of potential, with world leading researchers, entrepreneurs and companies and unique strengths, it faces weaknesses when it comes to innovation which includes under-investment in the knowledge foundation, unsatisfactory framework conditions, ranging from poor access to finance, high costs of IPR to slow standardisation and ineffective use of

the potential of public procurement to support innovation, and too much fragmentation and costly duplication;

4. draws attention to that the EU is under-investing in its knowledge base, spending every year 0.8% of GDP less than the US and 1.5% less than Japan in R&D, with major gaps in business R&D and venture capital investments; and highlights the facts that private sector R&D is increasingly outsourced to emerging economies and thousands of the EU's best researchers and innovators have moved to countries where conditions are more favorable;
5. stresses that although the EU market is the largest in the world, it remains fragmented and insufficiently innovation friendly and in spite of the fact that the services sector accounts for 70% of the economy, knowledge intensive services are still under-developed, with countries like China and South Korea catching up fast and moving from being imitators to leaders in innovation;
6. recognizes the importance of Europe's competitiveness on a global scale as well as the importance of smart regulation ensuring an analysis of competitiveness on all levels of regulatory EU interventions, notes in this context that the competitiveness of energy-intensive industries is key to achieving the long term strategic goals of Europe 2020, as these industries provide an important part of the value chain of the manufacturing industry in Europe and have become one of the world leaders in energy efficiency; therefore highlights the importance of setting the framework conditions to ensure that those energy-intensive industries find conditions for competitive production in Europe in the future, inter alia by taking into account the risks of carbon leakage as well as possible indirect impacts of energy price increases caused by emission trading;
7. welcomes the main premises of Innovation Union which sets out a bold, integrated and strategic approach whereby innovation is the overarching policy objective; a medium- to longer-term perspective is taken; all policy instruments, measures and funding are designed to contribute to innovation; EU and national/regional policies are closely aligned and mutually reinforcing; and last but not least, the highest political level sets a strategic agenda, regularly monitors progress and tackles delays;
8. stresses that the success of the Innovation Union depends on a common planning, a common involvement and a responsible task-sharing between all relevant members of the European Commission implementing an efficient, well-coordinated and integrated innovation policy in Europe.
9. stresses that at times of significant austerity measures and budget constraints it is pertinent for Europe to safeguard its sources of future growth and jobs by prioritising investment in education, training, R&D&I and key technologies, including key enabling technologies, and by developing strong policies for human resources in science, technology and innovation;
10. underlines that the EEA EFTA States have been involved in the Lisbon Strategy through the Internal Market, selective OMC processes, and inclusion in Eurostat,

and that it will be important to explore the EEA relevance of new Europe 2020 proposals, and therein ensure closer cooperation between the EEA EFTA States and the EU in key policy areas as well as take into account each other's policies;

11. calls on the EEA EFTA States to increase their internal coordination and joint actions vis-à-vis the EU in order to more effectively influence EEA relevant processes, policies, and legislation under Europe 2020; underlines that this cooperation should go beyond the technical expert level and include coordination at the highest diplomatic and political level to discuss where closer EU-EFTA cooperation is needed to ensure smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth in the EEA;
12. draws attention to that Europe 2020 will arguably constitute future challenges for the EEA EFTA States due to the comprehensive nature of the strategy which makes it difficult to agree on common EEA EFTA positions as that would entail common positions in areas where the EEA EFTA States have so far not had common approaches and where this would be a significant departure from current positions in a number of areas;
13. urges the EEA EFTA States to increase their involvement in aspects of Europe 2020 that are EEA relevant such as the Single Market as key instrument in Europe 2020; underlines the importance of for the EEA EFTA States to effectively influence EEA relevant processes under the new strategy at both expert based and political level;
14. encourages the EEA Council to include Europe 2020 on the agendas of its upcoming meetings, to allow for timely discussions at the highest political level of the EEA structures, especially during the implementation of the strategy;
15. welcomes the EEA EFTA States' significant contributions through the EEA Grants and Norway Grants in the fields of climate change and energy security and with regards to Green Industry;
16. highlights that eco-innovation should be one of the main components of the overarching European innovation policy agenda, as it plays a key role in achieving objectives related to the environment and climate, energy, resource and material use and biodiversity;
17. highlights the importance of further improving the business environment especially for SMEs; takes note of the considerable progress already achieved under the Lisbon strategy and the small business act, however recommends further progress in application of "think small first" principle in support of eco-innovation, internationalisation and cooperation between enterprises; moreover notes that this can be achieved by recognising the importance of regional cluster initiatives that are connected EU wide, within the context of smart specialisation and achieving critical masses for R&D, innovation and funding;
18. welcomes that the Commission will design future EU research and innovation programmes to ensure simple access and stronger involvement of SMEs, in

particular those with a high growth potential; and urges that the EU should put in place financial instruments to attract a major increase in private finance and close the market gaps in investing in research and innovation;

19. urges an improvement of access and participation of the business sector, particularly SMEs in the Framework Research Programme of the European Union as the goal of a 15 %-share of SMEs has not yet been reached; in addition, recommends a better integration of SMEs in the Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs) as well as in the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs);
20. welcomes the launch of a pilot partnership on active and healthy ageing by the beginning of 2011 and the execution of a pilot project in order to determine the most suitable format for upcoming Partnerships;
21. urges the development of more effective education and training programmes for creative people and researchers whereby high level of mobility can be facilitated and links between universities, research organisations and industry, both publicly and privately funded, are strengthened;
22. stresses that the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men should be an integral part of the European innovation strategy, in order to foster the involvement and creativity of women in research, innovation and competitiveness;
23. underlines that coherence and coordination between different EU policies and between EU and national, regional and local policies and programmes must be enhanced in order to mobilise resources in an efficient way;
24. stresses that the European Union and its Member States should treat scientific cooperation with third countries as an issue of common concern and develop common approaches, wherever appropriate; and underlines the need for European Union Member States to put into place policies to ensure that leading academics, researchers and innovators reside and work in Europe and to attract a sufficient number of highly skilled third country nationals to stay in Europe; and highlights that the external dimension must be taken into account in EU research and innovation policies, with the aim of ensuring open and competitive markets, and attracting investments, researchers, and innovative talent;
25. recognises the importance of standardization in promoting innovation and R&D which is a key element of the internal market; and urges the European Commission to present an integrated, well-developed standardisation policy ensuring market-access by SMEs in particular; highlights the difficulties that persist in European research programmes, notably the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), such as limited coordination between national, regional and European research policies, excessive bureaucracy, low risk tolerance, poor efficiency and undue delays;
26. underlines that scientific excellence and basic and applied research, supported by world-class infrastructures, life-long learning, training and higher education, in

particular in science and engineering are the preconditions for an efficient innovation system.

RESOLUTION

on

The European Year 2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

The European Economic Area Joint Parliamentary Committee:

- A. Having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 20 October 2010 on the role of minimum income in combating poverty and promoting an inclusive society in Europe;
- B. Having regard to the European Parliament legislative resolution of 17 June 2008 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010),
- C. Having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 14 March 2007 on social services of general interest in the European Union,
- D. Having regard to the European Parliament legislative resolution of 20 May 2008 on the proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States,
- E. Having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 6 July 2010 on atypical contracts, secured professional paths, and new forms of social dialogue,
- F. Having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 15 November 2007 on social reality stocktaking,
- G. Having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 9 October 2008 on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the EU,
- H. Having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 6 May 2009 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market,
- I. Having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 6 May 2009 on the Renewed social agenda,
 - 1. emphasises that the current financial, economic and social crisis has had a tremendous social impact, including the erosion of working conditions, increasing difficulties for people to access basic needs and services, increased homelessness, over indebtedness and financial exclusion, increasing social tensions;
 - 2. stresses that the world is currently facing a severe economic downturn and competition for jobs is fierce which brings the risk that those already excluded will face greater pressure and will be left further behind; and highlights that these negative consequences affect first the most vulnerable including young people, older people, children and women, as well as ethnic minorities and migrants;

3. welcomes the European Year 2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (EY2010) as a means to emphasise these pertinent issues and; mindful of that it needs to be considered as the beginning of a process, and not as an end in itself;
4. welcomes the active participation of the EEA EFTA States in the European Year 2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion which goes to show the deep involvement and cooperation between the EU and the EEA EFTA States on a wide array of policy issues;
5. stresses that in 2008, 17% of the population was assessed to be at-risk-of-poverty following the concept of relative poverty adopted in the European Union and that 20% of children were at-risk-of poverty in the EU; highlights that on average, social protection reduced poverty by 32% in the EU with large discrepancies between countries and that one European in ten lives in a household where nobody works;
6. emphasises that holding a job is not always sufficient to escape from poverty and 8% of the EU population were at-risk-of-poverty in 2008 despite having a job; and highlights that in 2008, approximately 85 million people in EU-27 (17%) lived below the poverty threshold, a situation likely to hamper their capacity to fully participate in society;
7. welcomes the renewed political commitment of the EU and its Member States to combat poverty and social exclusion constituted in the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion; and supports the the key objectives of the EY2010;
8. underlines that employment must be viewed as one of the most effective safeguards against poverty and social exclusion, and; urges the Commission to reinforce and clarify the original Lisbon target of eradicating poverty by the adoption of a clear headline target for the EU to reduce the levels of poverty measured against GDP by 2010 and to develop a set of social inclusion standards against which to judge the results of the social inclusion strategy;
9. considers that minimum income schemes - consisting of financial support plus easier access to services for people on low incomes - are the most effective way to guarantee an adequate standard of living and foster social integration;
10. stresses that a living wage must always be above the poverty threshold and that workers who remain below that threshold should receive top-ups that are unconditional;
11. notes that Social Services of General Interest form one of the pillars of the European social model and play an essential part in securing civic peace and the European Union's economic, social and territorial cohesion, as they contribute to economic growth, prosperity, employment and social cohesion;
12. stresses that a right balance must be found between rules on competition, public aid and the market on the one hand, and concepts of public service, general interest and social cohesion on the other and; highlights that positive synergies between the economic and social aspects should be promoted and that rules on competition,

public aid and the internal market must be compatible with public service requirements;

13. stresses that social inclusion and social protection are a basic value of the members of the EEA and a fundamental right for all individuals, regardless of ethnic origin, age, gender, disability, sexual preference and religion;
 14. emphasises that adequate minimum income schemes are a fundamental prerequisite for a European Economic Area based on social justice and equal opportunities for all, therefore it calls on all EEA States to ensure that an adequate minimum income is provided for periods out of work or in between jobs;
 15. calls on EU and EEA institutions, Member States and organised civil society associations to address poverty eradication by means of a holistic approach and urges Member States to reduce child poverty by 50% by 2012 and to allocate sufficient resources in order to achieve this goal;
 16. emphasises that inclusive labour markets are the goal and that discrimination has to be tackled as well as other social and physical barriers to accessing the labour market;
 17. cautions that some of the so-called incentive measures to encourage people into work, particularly loss of benefit, do nothing to address questions of poverty, which is especially problematic if that work may be short-term, casual or part-time;
 18. stresses that in the framework of the current economic crisis it is crucial that social policy goes hand in hand with economic policy aiming at a sustainable recovery of both the European people and the European economy, and; stresses that the renewed social agenda should focus on the policies that contribute to the above.
 19. reminds that for actions to be effective they should be built up on a democratic and a bottom-up participatory process carried out locally and close to the citizen.
 20. welcomes the continued commitment of the EEA EFTA States to contribute to reducing economic and social disparities in Europe.
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