



AN COMHCHOISTE UM GHNÓTHAÍ AN AONTAIS EORPAIGH
AN CION POLAITIÚIL MAIDIR LE
ATHBHREITHNIÚ LÁR TÉARMA
AR AN
STRAITÉIS EORAIP 2020
SAMHAIN 2014

JOINT COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN UNION AFFAIRS
POLITICAL CONTRIBUTION ON
MID TERM REVIEW
OF THE
EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY
NOVEMBER 2014

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PART 1

REPORT OF JOINT COMMITTEE

Introduction

1. The European Commission launched a mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy in March 2014. An EU-wide public consultation process formed part of the review process.
2. The Joint Committee considers the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy to be of significant strategic importance. The Joint Committee agreed it would be appropriate and opportune to contribute to the EU public consultation on the Europe 2020 Strategy mid-term review, in line with its orders of reference.
3. The Joint Committee published a public call for submissions on the Strategy from interested parties in order to inform its consideration of the issue. In response, five submissions were received by the Joint Committee. The submissions were received from *Ibec*¹, *Better Europe Alliance*², *an Irish Delegation from the Committee of Regions*³, *European Movement Ireland*⁴ and *Eurofound*⁵.
4. The Joint Committee wishes to thank the stakeholders for their assistance in relation to its work on this important issue.

Decision of the Joint Committee

5. On 4 November 2014, the Joint Committee agreed to provide a political contribution to the European Commission as part of review of the Europe 2020 Strategy. It was also agreed to provide the Minister for State for European Affairs and the European Parliament with a copy of the Report.
6. The contribution, in Part 2 of this Report, was agreed on 4 November 2014 and is hereby formally communicated to the European Commission for consideration and response; and to the Minister of State for European Union

¹ **Ibec** is the national voice of business in Ireland and provides a wide range of direct services to its 7,500 member companies

² **Better Europe Alliance** Ireland is a network of groups and individuals working against poverty

³ **Committee of Regions, Irish Delegation** is the body that represents local and regional authorities from the 28 Member States in the EU decision-making process

⁴ **European Movement Ireland** is an independent organisation facilitating links between all sectors of Irish society and the EU.

⁵ **Eurofound** is a tripartite European Union Agency, whose role is to provide knowledge in the area of social and work-related policies

Affairs and European Parliament. The Report will also be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dominic Hannigan', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Dominic Hannigan T.D.
Chairman

4 November 2014

PART 2

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTION ON THE MID TERM REVIEW OF THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

The following are the general observations and recommendations of the Joint Committee on the Europe 2020 Strategy, in the context of the mid-term review of the strategy, based on its consideration of the issue following engagement with stakeholders.

The Joint Committee:-

1. welcomes the timely mid-term review of the Strategy and the public consultation in that regard;
2. believes that a sense of ownership among citizens must exist in order for the Strategy to succeed; a strategy that encourages better engagement at citizens' level will assist in removing the 'disconnect' between citizens and European Institutions;
3. is of the opinion that the Europe 2020 Strategy as a framework to facilitate sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe is necessary and continues to be relevant in that regard;
4. believes that the Strategy has the potential to deliver a successful framework for a long term policy which promotes smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and welcomes the process of target setting, coordination of policy and assessment, which the strategy aims to achieve;
5. further believes that the Strategy should continue to be linked to the European Semester to ensure effective policy coordination and assessment;
6. recognises the need for and the importance of the strategy's headline targets in providing political focus and direction for Member States and also to assess progress made;
7. is of the opinion that the current one dimensional numerical targets must be complemented, where feasible, with additional indicators with a qualitative dimension;
8. believes, that in order for the targets to be achieved by Member States, adequate funding supports must be provided and maintained at EU level, with no further reduction in the EU budget;
9. in the context of a 'post-crisis Europe', believes that the output of the mid-term review should result in a 'crisis-proof' strategy, where the impact of broad economic conditions should not significantly impact on the ability of Members States to achieve strategy targets;

10. believes that the impact of economic and financial policy decisions at EU level must complement the current Strategy, not over-shadow it;
11. is of the opinion that the Strategy must include a territorial dimension in order to avoid a widening in regional disparities in the EU and within Member States;
12. is of the further opinion that Member States will fail to deliver the strategy targets if implementation is centre driven with a top-down and non-inclusive approach and this is a weakness of the Strategy;
13. encourages greater engagement between government and regional and local stakeholders in Member States with a strong emphasis on a partnership approach in development of implementation strategies; and
14. would further encourage adherence to the 2010 guidance from the European Commission regarding a partnership focused approach in the programming, implementation and assessment phases.

The Joint Committee in their examination of the Europe 2020 Strategy would make the points in relation to the sectoral specific issues:-

Enterprise/Jobs/Education

15. in relation to the employment target, it is of the opinion that consideration be given to introducing a 'job quality target' to promote the sustainability of jobs and thereby impacting positively of employment levels;
16. is of the view that the current education target is failing to monitor whether the skills obtained through education systems match the requirements of the labour market resulting in a 'skills gap';
17. believes that the education target should contain a set of sub-targets which takes into account the different participation and outcome levels for specific groups of young people, ensuring more equitable educational outcomes for all children and social groups across the system; and
18. is of the opinion that to achieve the strategy's target of reducing school drop outs to less than 10%, further investment in early childhood education is required – this will also assist in addressing the social exclusion rates and impact positively on the poverty target;

Social Inclusion

19. welcomes the inclusion of a poverty target in the Strategy;
20. is of the opinion that this lack of progress of Members States in achieving this target is reflective not only of the austerity programmes in Member

States in response to the recession but also the complexity of the issue itself;

21. is of the view that the poverty target needs to be enhanced and taken seriously by the EU and Member States;
22. recommends integrated approach to policy development to achieve the poverty target to address poverty and social exclusion such as, early childcare and early childhood education; tackling education disadvantage; adult literacy; literacy in technology; and quality jobs; and
23. believes that the social indicators, as set out in the Alert Mechanism Report, should be used to monitor any negative social outcomes and to promote positive measures on poverty, equality and social inclusion;

Regional Issues

24. recognises that the Strategy will fail to deliver its targets if it remains a top-down and non-inclusive process and the Joint Committee encourages greater engagement between stakeholders with a strong emphasis on a 'partnership approach';
25. is of the view that the Strategy has a 'one size fits all' approach in achieving targets and that addressing regional disparities between, and within Member States, is vital in order to prevent growing regional inequalities;
26. believes the introduction of a 'territorial dimension' will allow regions and local authorities to contribute to country targets. This dimension will also encourage a mixed top-down and bottom-up planning process; and
27. that sub-targets in interconnectivity be included in the Strategy to address the serious deficiencies in telecommunications, including the availability high-speed broadband in MSs, and within regions, which is impacting negatively on economic activity.

The Joint Committee hopes its recommendations can be taken into account and looks forward to receiving a response to its observations from the European Commission and the Minister of State for European Affairs.

**Joint Committee on European Union Affairs
4 November 2014**

Appendix 1

Membership of the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

Deputies: Dominic Hannigan TD (LAB) (Chairman)
 Eric Byrne TD (LAB)
 Seán Crowe TD (SF)
 Timmy Dooley TD (FF)
 Bernard J. Durkan TD (FG)
 John Halligan TD (IND)
 Seán Kyne TD (FG)
 Dara Murphy TD (FG) (Vice-Chairman)
 Joe O'Reilly TD (FG)

Senators: Senator Colm Burke (FG)
 Senator Terry Leyden (FF)
 Senator Aideen Hayden (LAB)
 Senator Catherine Noone (FG)
 Senator Kathryn Reilly (SF)

Orders of Reference for the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/euaffairs/Orders-of-Reference-June-2011.doc>

Joint Committee on European Union Affairs Work Programme for 2014

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/euaffairs/JCEUA-Work-Programme-2014.pdf>

