

Adopted resolution

Towards a social and green EU 2020: from vulnerability to sustainability

Introduction

For the European Greens, the EU 2020 strategy must put Europe at the leading edge of the green revolution of the 21st Century and the implementation of the Green New Deal, which must reconcile human development with the physical limits of planet Earth and put human well being and social justice as goals of the economy. It is only by doing so that Europe will build its future on a solid basis and enable sustainable quality job creation.

We strongly criticize that the procedure for drafting the 2020 strategy that was pushed forward by Barroso very fast, without proper consultation of stakeholders and civil society, the European Parliament and before his cabinet was built.

For the next years the major features will be coping with the economic and environmental crisis, the unsustainable level of public debt, rising unemployment and poverty.

We propose a strategy which consists of comprehensive ideas and proposals for a sustainable green and social economy and must not be relegated to a subsidiary status of the economic dimension. Otherwise they are in danger of degenerating into hollow words. We want people and green innovation at the heart of the EU 2020 Strategy. The Lisbon strategy was a complete failure, but the Commission did not properly assess the shortcomings nor take these failures into account while drafting the 2020 resolution. Instead, we, European Greens, propose real alternatives for sustainability, social justice gender equality and decent jobs as well as a strategy for governance.

Key goals for a successful EU 2020 strategy

As the EU Council is set to define the headline targets of the EU 2020 strategy at its spring meeting, the European Greens consider the following ingredients to be the key for success of that strategy to put Europe on the path towards a green economy.

Redefining growth to Greening the economy

We European Greens want to drive the economy away from a pure material growth concept towards a broader vision of sustainable development for our society. This requires a brand new set of indicators that, beyond GDP and other usual indicators, reflect environmental and social gains and losses. As a global player, the EU must also commit to promote the use of such alternative indicators in the international flora. In the transition towards a green economy some sectors will grow while others need to be transformed.

Sustainable and quality jobs instead of pure flexibility

Promoting good work and sustainable jobs has to be a cornerstone of the next strategy regarding job creation. This includes besides social security rights, equal opportunity (equal pay for equal work, equal treatment for men and women in the workplace, access to lifelong learning and career development...), work organization, fair wages and health and security issues at the work place as well as family friendly working conditions.

The labor market has to be greened through labor policy and social dialogue. We have to work actively to better include workers with a migrant background.

The restructuring as a result of the impact by climate change, has to be properly anticipated and managed. Workplaces Quality indicators have to be introduced to measure and monitor all these dimensions.

Given the skyrocketing unemployment rate, the ageing of society and the need to balance work life and private life, the redistribution of working time and on a longer term the question of diminution of working time should be considered seriously.

We need legislative action to close the loopholes in the Posting of Workers Directive, so that the principle of equal pay for equal work can be implemented and to remove any opt-outs from the Working Time Directive.

We need the revision of the existing legislation on the principle of equal pay for men and women, the so-called gender pay gap.

The EU should strive to reduce the gender pay gap by half every 5 years (i.e. reducing the gender pay gap to 8.5% in 2015 and to 4% in 2020)

Apart from this we need decent European minimum wages in every country. The level of that minimum wage has to be related to the average level of wages in each country. In order to be effective it is important to also cover the non-standard employment by minimum wages provisions. Furthermore regarding the growing importance and lack of transparency of transnational corporations it is very important to strengthen the rights of employees codetermination in the European Works Council Directive

Green New Deal: Greens Jobs and a sustainable industrial policy

A green economy is a sustainable economy. Europe therefore has to formulate a long-term industrial policy based on its energy and climate objectives and not exclusively on share holder value.. Furthermore environmental technology is a future engine of job creation. A fair, just and equitable green economy also includes women into training and re-training, trades and profession.

For European Greens the question of how we build Europe as a low carbon and resource efficient economy has to lie at the centre of this policy. Therefore stronger links have to be developed with the current and forthcoming Research and Development Framework Programme. Public procurement representing about 16 % of GDP is a lever to prompt enterprises to engage in eco-innovation and to foster the adoption of a new sustainable way to produce and to consume.

The EU should set itself the following targets

- Cuts its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 30 % by 2020; with a view to increasing this to a 40 % reduction in the event of a UN climate agreement
- Increase the resource efficiency of its economy by 3% annually;
- Invest 4% of its GDP on R&D targeted especially on SME and eco-innovation (and excluding military and nuclear s) and based on Open Standards;
- Move to 100 % of green public procurement.

Social cohesion is more than employment

Greens demand that the social inclusion and equality become part of the social cohesion objective of the EU 2020 Strategy, including dimensions such as access to quality services for all, minimum income, ensuring decent housing for everyone, overcoming discrimination and increasing the integration of persons with disabilities, LGBT , ethnic minorities and migrants.

The notion of « ecological equity » has also to be put at the agenda of EU 2020 Strategy and of non EU member states. People living in permanent precariousness are often not sensitive to ecology since they are constantly living in the « here and now » of fulfilling their most basic needs.

The European Green Party encourages all EU governments to take the notion of ecological inequity into account in the design of their social policies.

To achieve this we call for

- an adequate core income guaranteed by an EU Framework directive implemented and managed by all Member States,
- an ambitious poverty reduction target of reducing poverty by half every 5 years, i.e. a target of level of poverty of 8.5% by 2015 and 4% by 2020. Poverty must be measured as "relative poverty" to help identify those at risk of exclusion (not as "anchored in time poverty rate" as suggested by the European Commission).
- new EU methods to fight unemployment and social deprivation, for instance by providing specific support to unemployed people instead of pursuing and stigmatizing them, especially when jobs are getting rare and during crisis periods.
- the taking into account of ecological inequities
- a different financial regime including progressive taxation,
- strong rights-based antidiscrimination,
- social inclusion policies, the definition of a coherent EU-wide approach especially towards extreme poverty, particularly homelessness
- an EU framework directive recognizing the special role of Services of General Interest,
- an EU directive on Social and Health Services.

Education as a means for "smart, green and inclusive growth"

The European education policy has to become more important and the benchmarks as more public spending for education, life-long-learning, fewer juveniles without school degrees, primary education, more child-care - have to be compulsory. The EU 2020 strategy should include clear qualitative targets and indicators for primary and secondary education. Than the final objective, to reach a 100% secondary education, will follow suit. Equal university access has to be enabled for all. To that end "youth on the move" strategy in the EU2020 agenda has to be revised.

Fighting Socio-economic disparities, making structural funds work

Development of solidarity mechanisms inside the EU and close monitoring of member states are necessary to cope with (asymmetric) economic shocks. Therefore, the feasibility of creating a solidarity fund to which countries would contribute in good times should be examined.

Structural and cohesion policies should support the regions that face severe difficulties and help them to catch up. These policies must be made to overcome the inequalities between regions and strengthen the solidarity between Eastern and Southern Europe.

The European Commission will have to ensure that the EU Structural Funds should be linked with strong social and environmental conditions and should therefore contribute to the EU climate goals by introducing a climate check for all structural funds intervention, starting with major projects immediately.

The next period of Structural Funds programmes should aim to halve interregional disparities by 2020.

Greening environmental policy and safeguarding of biodiversity

Substantial improvements in the field of environmental policy have to be made if the EU-2020 Strategy really intends to put the EU on a path to 'a green economy'. In addition to introducing a 30% greenhouse gas reduction target in reference to 1990 levels we need a clear timeline for reaching 100% green public procurement and the raise of green taxes to 10% of all direct taxation and reduce by as much the tax burden on the low skilled. Environmental harmful subsidies must be phased out and environmental externalities must be fully integrated into prices. The EU should make a commitment to halt the further loss of biodiversity and ecosystems.

Greening Fiscal policy and own resources

For us economic governance structure includes an effective, coordinated, anti-cyclical fiscal policy of the member-states, the transition from tax-competition towards tax-cooperation and an increased EU budget based on its own income, which promotes the balancing of uneven regional development. Public services have to be adequately financed as they can be a green job motor and contribute to the needs of an ageing society (e.g. health, care and education).

The current coordination on fiscal policy is limited to the rules laid down in the Stability and Growth Pact that refers solely to public deficit and public debt. It should at least be extended to public expenditures and investments to avoid negative spill-over and tap the full potential of EU integration.

Taming globalization and regulating financial markets

Economic globalisation will continue to produce unfair competition, social dumping and member states blackmailed by big business until the process is controlled by strong social, environmental and economic regulation on the European and the global level. We have to move from tax competition between member states to tax cooperation. Finance has to be put back at the service of the real economy and society, which were so badly hurt lately by the predatory behaviour of financial markets and the reluctance of legislators to take their responsibility. The European Greens will fight for a strong European legal framework for the regulation and supervision of financial markets. The financial industry lobbyists should not be permitted to exclude from regulation any actors, instruments or trading places.

The EU must introduce at least the following policies:

- Rules of international finance and trade have to be overhauled to support the fight against poverty and the green transformation of the global economy.
- The external dimension of EU 2020 Strategy needs a total revision. The current approach of liberalizing sectors in partner countries where the EU enjoys comparative advantage has devastating effects on the global poor and the environment. Instead the EU needs to design the external part of the EU 2020 Strategy with a focus on the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development.

- The EU must take its fair share in financing an effective and fair climate deal by providing at least €30 billion per annum by 2020 to help those countries mitigate the effects of climate change and adapt. The EU should assist especially the most vulnerable countries by organizing the transfer of eco-technologies.
- The target of 0,7 % GDP for public aid to developing countries for which the EU agreed on a roadmap a long time ago and a calendar has to met in due time.
- To put finance back at the service of the economy and society we have to introduce the long overdue financial transaction tax (FTT), which reduces speculation in international financial markets and generates revenue desperately needed for the social and ecological conversion of our economy. If a global consensus cannot be reached we support the FTT on the EU or Eurozone-level.
- Introduction of an EU-wide minimum taxation on corporate profits through a common consolidated tax base and minimum tax rates as well as automatic information exchange between member states for capital income.
- Establishment of a single European supervisor for all cross-border financial institutions.

No successful EU 2020 strategy without proper governance

Good governance is the key for a successful EU 2020 strategy. Objectives such as enhancing social inclusion should be formulated with binding targets. In those areas where we define targets (e.g. places of child care, reducing people dropping out of school, gender pay gap), monitoring of the Member States' accomplishments should be done. The European Greens demand more liability, accountability and incentives for the Strategy described above. All EU strategies and instruments (e.g. the Sustainable Development Strategy, the Social Agenda, the Biodiversity Strategy, the Common Agricultural Policy, the Structural Funds...) must be become consistent and not pursue separate, if not contradictory targets and agenda's.

The Commission should develop policy recommendations on how a European economic governance structure can look like. And put governance back at the core of fiscal policy.

Social partners, like the macroeconomic dialogue and the Social Tripartite Summit, should be involved in the decision making process.

Finally, new mechanisms should be developed in order to allow a bottom-up process when it comes to defining priorities and implementing them, genuine involvement of stakeholders should take place and real multipartite discussions are needed. The new citizen's initiative right contained in the Lisbon Treaty will help to mobilize people.