

THE GREEN LISBON AGENDA

"Where do we grow ?"



GREEN MP-MEP MEETING
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Luxembourg



Since the Lisbon Summit in 2000, the "Lisbon Strategy" aims at making the EU the **"most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010, capable of sustainable growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion"**. Fifteen months later, the Göteborg European Council decided to merge Lisbon with a Sustainable Development strategy and acknowledged the three complementary pillars of the Lisbon Strategy: the economic, the social and the environmental pillar.

Today, we are deeply concerned that in its mid-term evaluation the Commission opted for a "growth first, then employment and finally environment" strategy and giving up on the integrated approach as well as on the 2010 target date. The environmental aspects are once again pushed into the background in its Communication to the Spring European Summit.

We obviously share the goals of job creation, innovation and modernisation of the European economy, but we clearly disagree with the instruments put forward by the Commission. It is essential for us to develop an integrated strategy that combines the economic, social and environmental goals, thus avoiding a turnback towards the economic policy of the eighties.

While acknowledging that enhanced global competition is a fact and has to be considered in the Lisbon strategy, the Greens want to stress the overwhelming importance of intra-EU trade, which amounts to 70% of total EU trade.

Moreover, an exclusive focus on free competition with the ensuing fiscal and social dumping, negates all efforts towards social and environmental objectives and will amplify social segregation. The services or so-called Bolkestein directive for example (country of origin principle) would create the danger of social and quality dumping and contradicts the green vision of sustainable growth. Therefore, we ask for the withdrawal of the services directive.

Greens request the re-integration of the ecological and the employment aspects into the Lisbon Strategy. We need to pull the elements of environment, economy and employment together. High social and environmental standards must not be considered only as a cost, but primarily as an added value and, hence, an economic benefit.

Our European model of society is not only about growth and employment, but also about values, culture and quality of life. Economic growth is not a goal in itself, but part of an integrated approach towards well-being and quality of life of the 460 million European citizens and should stand for a fair sharing of resources and wealth between citizens living on each side of our planet. In this regard, the EU must reinvigorate the implementation of its biodiversity targets through a funding of the Nature 2000 program, also as a commitment towards future generations.

Returning to a policy of purely quantitative economic growth is an ecological nonsense. What the EU - and the World - needs is growth in those sectors which are dematerialized (services, education, culture,...) or based on high efficiency/renewable resources (public transport, energy-efficient cars, green electricity, environmentally friendly chemicals and farming), whereas the sectors with intensive resource use (energy-inefficient buildings, intensive industrial agriculture, coal power production) or those that create a high risk for health and the environment (nuclear power production, GMOs, carcinogenic chemicals,...) should shrink.

With regard to the latest "growth first" approach of the Commission, as well as to the Kok Report of November 2004 who warned the EU to not become a copy-cat of the US, the Green MP's and MEP's gathered in Luxemburg are putting forward three major priorities: an open and knowledge-based society, social innovation and an eco-efficiency revolution.

AN OPEN AND KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY

We share the Lisbon goals of reinforced investment into people (education, professional training, life-long learning) and into R&D, but we disagree on the priorities. Greens want sustainable investments and an open and participatory society.

While building the European Research Area, European and national research investments need to strengthen the development of effective R&D that contributes to the enhancement of the quality of life and to the strengthening of the economy. The FP7 2007-2013 should focus on social sciences, information society including Free and Open Source Software, preventive and public healthcare, eco-technologies and sustainable development related activities such as ecosystems, renewable energy and environmentally friendly agriculture. We deplore that nuclear technology (a.o. ITER) is given a greater priority than improving renewable energy sources. The same principle must also apply to the European Investment Bank. Venture capital for clean technologies should be strengthened by the creation of concrete instruments, as outlined by Wim Kok in his report.

SME's are an essential part of the European economy. If we want to use their potential and know-how in the field of research & development, we must streamline the EU Framework programme in order to facilitate the participation of smaller research actors by means of earmarking funding of SMEs and clusters of small firms and laboratories.

An open and tolerant society is a precondition for attracting and retaining talented people who would contribute to technological innovation. Therefore, the deeds and needs of civil society need to be fully taken into account. The active participation of civil society strongly enhances the development and exchange of innovative ideas, as well as a smoother implementation of political reforms. Technical and scientific projects should be subject to open social debates and not restricted to the realm of experts opinion.

Open science should promote guarantees maximum sharing and transfer of scientific knowledge and technical information in all areas of economic activity. More

patents do not always mean more innovation. Patents thickets that can chill innovation in small and young firms must be prevented.

The investment into people must also be sustainable. We cannot meet our environmental obligations without a comprehensive training strategy to make that happen. Therefore, we need to strengthen the Lisbon strategy by increasing funds for education, vocational training and life-long learning. Life-long learning is vital to fight social exclusion and to increase the number of elderly workers. We also need to guarantee every young person access to quality education and training.

In order to attract the best researchers in Europe, we need to further remove administrative obstacles and to encourage international and intra-EU mobility and foster the mutual recognition of professional qualifications. Centres of excellence should be established through collaboration and knowledge transfer between research centres, universities and companies. Science careers must be actively promoted to young people and to women in particular. Finally, we also need to foster the development of stable research infrastructure and projects in countries of the South in order to counteract a lasting brain drain from poorer countries.

SOCIAL INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT

To ease the pressure on the solidarity financed public pension systems, the Lisbon strategy aims at raising the EU employment rate to 70% by 2010 and women's employment to 60% and to 50% for elderly workers.

The Greens support a European goal of full employment with quality work. Fighting unemployment is one of the best safeguards against poverty and social exclusion. EU minimum standards for social security should be set and a co-ordination of social policy developed around specific targets. The EU should work towards establishing the right to income, pension and minimum salary in those member states still lacking respective policies. In addition, the EU's aim must be to guarantee a decent standard of living and the chance of participating in society for every citizen.

We acknowledge the need for solidarity between the generations and redistributive policies to make state pension systems sustainable. An average employment rate of 70%, as well as guaranteeing every young person an access to education and training will help ensuring the sustainability of pension systems.

In order to increase women's employment we need to fight the underlying reasons for women's absence from the labour market: the gender pay gap, precarious jobs and ensuing pension problems, the burden of unpaid care work (child and elderly care) and the glass-ceiling hindering women in their access to high-level careers. The combination of family and work – for both men and women – requires social reforms (paternity leave, e.g.), external infrastructures for child and elderly care and innovative organisational structures for companies.

In Europe's rural areas there is an extraordinary potential for employment and innovation. Following the respective agenda of the EU Commission, we want to focus rural development policies on the creation of jobs and the attainment of sustainable growth. These targets are in close connection with cohesion policies which aim at avoiding social exclusion and the exodus of the rural population.

In line with the reform of CAP and its second pillar especially SMEs in rural areas can be supported in their potential to create jobs. This way, a necessary contribution for improving growth and competitiveness in rural communities, coastal areas and peripheral areas can be achieved.

The Greens also focus their priorities on demand-side policies and labour friendly tax systems. Through an eco-tax reform we would shift the tax burden from labour to capital and resources use and promote a European minimum corporate tax. Social protection levels, minimum wages and their functional equivalents should converge on the highest possible level while at the same time ensuring the labour market entry for the young and low-skilled.

THE ECO-EFFICIENCY REVOLUTION

The Greens want to adjust the Lisbon goal to making the EU the most resource and energy efficient economy by 2010 in a world with limited resources and a fragile ecological space. The best possible use of energy, water, steel, copper, wood, etc. with priority use of renewable energy and raw materials should be considered as a new priority for EU policy making.

The EU Environmental Policy Report of 2004 confirms that an "Eco-efficiency Revolution" will be a win-win-win situation for environment, employment and competitiveness. Resource efficiency is not only an ecological necessity but an economic gain. It will reduce production costs, spark innovation, enhance European competitiveness, create jobs and reduce our dependence on volatile global resources like oil.

The European eco-technologies industry already employs over 2 million Europeans, is still growing by 5% a year and outperforming the rest of the economy. Europe as a region with high skilled workers, a well developed technology industry and high demand for a clean environment has the potential to highly benefit from an eco-efficiency-revolution. If it misses this chance, other regions will step into the gap.

Through innovations beyond the purely end-of-pipe or "clean-up" approaches we want to establish pioneer markets for eco-technologies. First, our highly industrialized countries have the responsibility to develop eco-friendly technologies for a planet that is in desperate need of decoupling economic growth and resource use. Secondly, establishing the EU as a lead market for eco-technologies will provide us the first-mover advantages on the global markets and benefit our economy.

There is the danger that a majority of EU member states will fail to meet the Kyoto targets. A knowledge and innovation based economy should move away from high energy consumption, fossil fuels and nuclear energy as quickly as possible. A long-term vision to fight climate change, legally binding greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets, a rapid switch to renewable energy sources and a phase out for fossil fuels and nuclear subsidies will foster the EU leadership on climate change and can provide the jobs Europe needs. Filling the Kyoto protocol with life, working

actively for a post-Kyoto agreement and bringing on board countries like China and India will also speed up the worldwide demand for eco-technologies.

Eco-technologies are not limited on renewable energy use. It also means clean transport, sustainable agriculture, healthy food products, environment friendly construction, energy and resource efficient electronic products, green chemistry with substitution of live animal testing, as well as of toxic chemicals with innovative and safer alternatives to halt the pollution of our air, water, soil and our food-chain.

Considering the high level of public spending, we want to effectively stimulate eco-innovation by greening public procurement policies on the national and European level. By investing directly into sustainable projects, public authorities must create incentives and attract private investment. The greening of national fiscal policies through a broad eco-tax reform would similarly stimulate eco-innovations. Environmental harmful subsidies must be cut down, the earlier the better.

Furthermore, environment being the least respected area of EU legislation, we need a fast and complete implementation and enforcement of the existing environmental legislation. In this sense, the Lisbon Strategy also needs to integrate legally binding targets and precise national action-plans for eco-innovation.

To make the Lisbon Strategy a success, it is essential for the Greens to develop an integrated strategy that merges the economic, social and environmental goals on an equal basis and to change the present economic policy.

The Greens are convinced that Lisbon strategy still can become a success if the EU and each of its 25 Member states make the right political choices:

- The preconditions for innovation are sustainable investments into the economy and into people, as well as developing an open and participatory society;
- Social cohesion and gender equality must be reinforced and truly integrated in all policy proposals at national and EU level;
- Developing into the most resource and energy efficient economy by 2010 must become a political priority for the EU.

On the paper, the Lisbon Strategy with its three equal pillars is confirming what the Greens have been claiming for over a decade: environment protection is an opportunity for economy, employment and society as a whole. It would be a tremendous mistake to focus – in practice – once again only on the economic pillar. Ecology is the future of the economy and the EU has to play a leading role in this matter.

Luxembourg, March 1st, 2005