

The President  
Le Président

15 January 2010

## COMMISSION WORKING DOCUMENT CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE "EU 2020" STRATEGY

The European Council of Spatial Planners representing professional organisations involved in environmental and spatial planning and development throughout Europe welcome the consultation on the future "EU 2020" strategy. We wish to contribute towards the development of a well balanced strategy for the development of Europe in the aftermath of the financial crisis.

Our comments aim to enhance certain elements of the proposed strategy. We also wish to suggest ways in which planning can help achieve its objectives and to strengthen the effectiveness of proposed actions.

The document has been written in the aftermath of a very serious financial crisis which has not yet entirely lost its grip. It is recognised that to ensure a more robust future, we need a more well educated and innovative population, more creativity, greater ability to take risks and pursue entrepreneurial activities that may result in new jobs, new ways of thinking with regard to industrial and probably financial policies as well as new approaches to thinking about energy and transport.

Though the paper does not say it explicitly, to find a new direction requires a different way of thinking about social values, the ethical aspects of relations between man and the physical environment and about the need for solidarity in the search for a future in which it should be possible not only to survive, but to live healthy and meaningful lives in safe environments.

It is emphasised that an overriding objective must be a greener economy and a greener future. This future, it is said, must be inclusive and smarter, and it must be a 'sustainable social market economy'. Dealing successfully with poverty, lack of integration and social exclusion and dealing with an increasingly ageing population are all necessary conditions for the achievement of a sustainable future. It is recognised that as it is necessary to become more productive, it is also necessary to shift the economy through targeted regulation, energy efficiency, emission control and –trading, tax reforms, grants and other public financial instruments as well as through targeted innovation, research and budgeting.

The prescriptive part of the document seeks to 'harness existing instruments in a new approach' by recognising the advanced independence' between

- member states and spill-over effects between these,
- levels of government
- different policies and between policy instruments
- local, regional and global conditions.

Thus, European policy must reflect the challenges of a global context. Economic growth must be sustainable, smarter, connected and greener. Financial policies, public budgets and governmental systems must be shaped and reshaped to enable a change of direction.

The ideas that are expressed in the strategy document recognise the need to find a balance between the requirements of sound competition in an open market and the long term needs of the community with regard to essential human needs such as a healthy environment, equality of opportunity, justice and participation.

The emphasis on a greener economy, renewable energy, new and improved transport and the need to reduce pollution is essential.

It is the view of the ECTP that the essence of the 2020 strategy is both sound and worth while and that it should be encouraged.

We nevertheless have two critical remarks. Firstly it may be questioned to what extent or how the development of an environment which will be sustainable in the foreseeable future may coexist together with an ever accelerating economic growth. We will not propose a final answer to this, but underline the fact that to handle these very complicated questions, it is necessary to view what happens locally in a broad and global context and to accept responsibility for consequences both locally and in a wider context.

Secondly, it should be pointed out that though the paper recognises the need to look at policy in an integrated and interdisciplinary way, it offers few guidelines on how to proceed. As planners, dealing with cities and regions, with physical as well as social infrastructure, we are trained to deal with policy issues in an interdisciplinary context and it is our view that we should play an important role in the implementation of policies as set out in the consultation paper. Many of the essential climatic and environmental challenges we are faced with, are associated with urbanisation and the changing roles as well as the increasing interdependence and division of labour between cities and regions within individual countries as well as on a global scale. The challenges we are facing are of a variety of natures from scientific and technological to social and economic and they need to be dealt with in a common framework.

### ***A key proposal: European cities and regions towards 2020 and beyond***

It is the view of the ECTP that a key element in a policy on the future of Europe towards 2020 and beyond should comprise a strategy or a programme for setting out the direction in which our cities and regions and the interconnections between these must develop. We therefore strongly recommend the establishment of a European urban and regional programme aimed at developing directions and practical policies for a sustainable future.

Our comments to the central policy objectives:

#### *Creating value by basing growth on knowledge*

A considerable innovative potential can be released by combining and integrating knowledge and expertise of different business sectors. It is necessary to focus on relations, connections, chains, networks, and the development of clusters of knowledge and business relations. Such a focus has a spatial as well as a structural dimension and it is necessary to be concerned with both. The fragmentation of education, research, development and production can be addressed by intensifying the cooperation and communication within and between cities and regions: by enhancing the territorial cohesion.

#### *Empowering people in inclusive societies*

Inclusive societies respecting people with different cultural backgrounds, income groups and age groups provide for attractive, well maintained local and regional environments. Sound spatial planning is therefore indispensable. Vibrant cities can provide arenas where cultures and identities can mix. Such arenas can provide the right conditions for emerging creative societies. The involvement of stakeholders and the public when preparing urban and regional development plans helps to empower and connect the various groups in society.

#### *Creating a competitive, connected and greener economy*

Strategic spatial planning aims at sustainable, effective physical patterns.

A core concern of strategic planning is to locate activities and infrastructure in such a way that the need for movement is minimized. The functioning of urban and regional territories is heavily dependent on well –

functioning facilities, social as well as physical infrastructure. Well planned and efficient infrastructure is a necessary condition for energy efficient and resource saving cities and regions. Good planning and good infrastructure are also important measures necessary to achieve cost efficient and competitive cities and regions. Sound and sustainable spatial development and improved territorial cohesion will contribute to a competitive, connected green economy.

#### Harnessing instruments

Integrated policy and planning approaches are essential to the achievement of complex policy goals such as sustainability, social and economic as well as territorial cohesion. Today's practice of management and governance is too fragmented to be effective in achieving such goals. Our means of administration, decision making and policy implementation are quite simply too complex, bureaucratic and slow.

The lack of clarity and legislative transparency act against new initiatives. There is an urgent need for simpler, more flexible, clearer and shorter procedures of decision making and approval.

It is important to note that a focus on efficient and integrated policy making and implementation is not only a question of what happens at one level of government and management. It is equally important to be concerned about the vertical integration of such processes. In other words, we need ways of developing and improving links, interaction and cooperation between different levels of government, between cities and between regions.

The ECTP will of course be happy to contribute towards the formulation of such a programme.

On behalf of the ECTP-CEU Executive Committee

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'João M. P. Teixeira', is displayed on a light green rectangular background.

João M. P. Teixeira  
President