

Böhme, Kai et al.

**Research Report**

## Response to the European consultation on the future of the Europe 2020 Strategy

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# Response to the European Consultation on the Future of the Europe 2020 Strategy





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This position paper was prepared by members of the Ad-hoc Working Group "Europe 2020" of the German Academy for Spatial Research and Planning (ARL):

*Dr. Kai Böhme, Spatial Foresight GmbH, Heisdorf/Luxembourg*

*Prof. Maros Finka, Slovenská technická univerzita v Bratislave, Bratislava/Slovak Republic*

*Dr.-Ing. Evelyn Gustedt, Academy for Spatial Research and Planning, Hannover/Germany*

*Dr. Karl Peter Schön, Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung im Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung, Bonn/Germany*

*Dipl.-Ing. Franziska Sielker, Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Erlangen, Germany*

*Dr. Sabine Zillmer, Spatial Foresight Germany GmbH, Berlin/Germany*

Department of the ARL:  
„Spatial planning, spatial policy“  
Head of Department: Dr.-Ing. Evelyn Gustedt (gustedt@arl-net.de)

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Academy for Spatial Research and Planning (ARL®)  
Leibniz-Forum for Spatial Sciences  
Hohenzollernstraße 11, 30161 Hannover  
Tel. +49 511 34842-0, Fax +49 511 34842-41  
[arl@arl-net.de](mailto:arl@arl-net.de), [www.arl-net.de](http://www.arl-net.de)

## **Preface**

The German Academy for Spatial Research and Planning (ARL) is a registered organisation and has contributed to the public consultation process of the EU Commission on the Future of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The following text is also available on the respective website of the EU Commission (see address below) where it has been uploaded at the end of October 2014. In order to better present our position in this print version we keep a consistency in the layout, that the questions asked by the EU Commission are presented in the left column followed by the corresponding answers on the right side.



# Response to the European Consultation on the Future of the Europe 2020 Strategy

The German Academy for Spatial Research and Planning (ARL) welcomes the consultation process on the mid-term review and future perspectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The Europe 2020 Strategy, including experiences so far and ideas for its future, has induced intense and interesting discussions. Given the broad character of the Strategy, a wide range of different perspectives emerge in such discussions.

As part of the consultation process the ARL contributes to the comprehensive discussion of the Europe 2020 Strategy with this position paper, focusing exclusively on certain key points. Within these key points, the ARL highlights the territorial and regional development dimension of the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy, contributing not only to growth but also to the Lisbon Treaty goal that aims to achieve more territorial cohesion in Europe.

With regard to the further development of the Europe 2020 Strategy the objective is to present key aspects that the ARL view as worth pursuing. The positions presented below follow the main headings and the questions of the consultation process.

## 1) Taking stock: the Europe 2020 strategy over 2010-2014

### Content & implementation

For you, what does the Europe 2020 strategy mean? What are the main elements that you associate with the strategy?

**Framework for policy coherence.** In terms of content and objectives, the Europe 2020 Strategy did not bring any radically new ideas. In light of the critical review of the Lisbon Strategy implementation process, it rather builds on the state of the art across the majority of the Member States, their regions and municipalities as mirrored in many national and regional policy objectives. In this sense the Europe 2020 Strategy provides a framework with the potential to facilitate better horizontal and vertical coherence between different sectors, subjects and levels of governance. The ARL welcomes the idea of such a framework for the improvement of coherence in the European multi-level governance system(s). The strategy should build upon coherent policies reflecting the diversity and complementarity of territorial capital across the enlarged European Union.

Overall, do you think that the Europe 2020 strategy has made a difference?

**The Europe 2020 Strategy has improved coherence** in the European multi-level governance system(s). However, boosting Europe's global competitiveness and the transition to a sustainable knowledge based economy requires more efforts than those set in motion by the Europe 2020 Strategy.



Has there been sufficient involvement of stakeholders in the Europe 2020 strategy?

**Lack of identification, responsibility and ownership.** The Europe 2020 Strategy is (and is perceived by stakeholders as) a top-down approach coming from the European Commission and the national level in the Member States. As a wide range of stakeholders across different sectors and levels of governance are expected to cooperate on implementing the strategy, the Europe 2020 Strategy requires much stronger ownership throughout Europe. This has not yet been achieved. The Strategy is not even known to all relevant stakeholders, which may be the result of a lack of communication but possibly also of a too narrow application of the OMC method (involving only a rather limited number of stakeholders). Stakeholders across the different levels, especially when expected to refer to the Strategy (e.g. in ESIF programs and projects), have paid lip-service to the Strategy in a more or less declarative sense rather than taking an executive approach that would involve actually engaging with it. There is a need to complement the existing process with a stronger bottom-up approach.

**Insufficient communication.** The success of parametric governance largely depends also on the degree to which the indicators and performance with regard to the indicators can be communicated to a wider public. ‘Naming, faming and shaming’ is an important component which increases the pressure on the stakeholders to work towards achieving targets – if the general public can be engaged in debating the progress made. Overall, communication to the general public has not been successful in relation to the Europe 2020 Strategy. There is a need to create a public debate about who contributes how much and why.

## Tools

Do the current targets for 2020 respond to the strategy's objectives of fostering growth and jobs?

**Useful target indicators.** Translating objectives into quantifiable targets and indicators greatly helps implementation and monitoring of the Strategy. However, the question remains as to whether the indicators actually reflect the objectives of the Strategy in the best possible way. Quantitative and qualitative indicators need to be balanced and objectives need to be translated and broken down into different types of territorial units characterized by differentiated territorial capital.

Do you find it useful that EU-level targets are broken down into national targets?

**Lack of a territorial dimension.** When it comes to the use of indicators, the Europe 2020 Strategy lacks territorial differentiation. The objectives and targets put forward in the Europe 2020 Strategy are rather general and do not take sufficiently into account the territorial diversity within the EU and within member states. Different locations (regions and cities) have different potentials to contribute to specific objectives, or face specific challenges with regard to other objectives. The diversity of Europe is only taken into account through the setting of targets at the level of Member

States and by acknowledging that the European targets neither should nor can be achieved in all regions. However, this is not sufficient and present developments show that the lack of territorial differentiation (and ownership) hampers achievement of the targets and risks increasing territorial disparities within Member States.

## 2) Adapting the Europe 2020 strategy: the growth strategy for a post-crisis Europe

### Content & implementation

Does the EU need a comprehensive and overarching medium-term strategy for growth and jobs for the coming years?

**Need for an improved overarching framework.** The ARL is convinced that an overarching policy document is of high value for Europe – providing a European-wide reference framework for decision making at different levels of governance and in various sectors. We therefore encourage the European Union and its Member States to further develop the Europe 2020 Strategy.

**Need to make better use of territorial capital across Europe.** A further developed Europe 2020 Strategy should make efficient use of the differentiated territorial capital across Europe, supporting transformation towards a competitive knowledge based economy and society, and reflecting the principles of sustainability and territorial cohesion. These principles go beyond mere growth objectives.

What are the most important and relevant areas to be addressed in order to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?

**Increased consideration of European diversity.** In the course of crisis-driven development and discussion the EU faces challenges from outside through globalization processes and from inside through ‘re-nationalization’ tendencies. Further strategy development focusing on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth should allow for policies to explicitly consider European diversity.

What would improve stakeholder involvement in a post-crisis growth strategy for Europe?

**Broad involvement in development of the Strategy.** To increase the broad inclusion of such a reference framework, the ARL advocates the involvement of stakeholders from relevant sectors and relevant levels of governance in the development process of the Strategy and not only in its implementation. The local and regional level but also (where they exist) macro-regional strategies and transnational cooperation areas could serve as anchorage points into the territory.

**Broad involvement in implementation of the Strategy.** For efficient implementation of the Strategy relevant stakeholders at the local and regional level need to be addressed explicitly. Their efficient involvement is a precondition for successfully implementing the Strategy. At the same time, the limits of the administrative and financial capacities of sub-national and local authorities also need to be born in mind.

## Tools

What would best be done at EU level to ensure that the strategy delivers results?  
What would best be done at Member State level?

**Efficiency and differentiation of the implementation tools.** Reflections on the differentiation of existing and potential territorial capital across Europe consequently lead to the need to also use differentiated tools. The exact mix of tools and approaches will differ between policy sectors, levels of governances and certainly between Member States.

**Specific objectives by the types of territories.** The ARL highlights the need to break down the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy to lower levels. To make better use of territorial diversity in Europe and to show how this can contribute to achieving the overall European objectives, the ARL proposes considering the specification of objectives for different types of territories. This could work in a number of ways. A promising approach could be to differentiate e.g. objectives for various types of regions such as metropolitan areas with strong R&D profiles, rural areas with high potential for the production of renewable energy, regions in demographic decline, etc. In order to further increase ownership of the EU 2020 Strategy it could be helpful to enhance linkages between different sectors within the territories with which they are concerned. This territorial break down could be promoted by the Commission and may be further considered when updating national objectives.

**Regular monitoring reports.** To strengthen transparency and the follow-up of the implementation efforts and achievements made, the ARL is in favor of a regular monitoring report related to the objectives of Europe 2020. This report should consider the pan-European, the national and the regional level. The focus should not only be on development with regard to the indicators, but also show the efforts made and put this in relation to regional pre-conditions. To facilitate future evaluations, one may consider distinguishing between input, output, outcome and impact indicators. Such a report should speak a clear language and follow the idea of 'naming, faming and shaming'. Given the data basis, ESPON could perhaps take on the task of preparing a regular monitoring report.

**Communication efforts.** In order to increase momentum, general awareness and regular public debates about achievements on the way to 2020, clear communication efforts need to be undertaken. Substantial efforts are needed to address a wider public. The main objective should be to increase mass-media attention rather than only communicating to the circle of stakeholders already involved.

Would you recommend adding or removing certain targets, or the targets in general?

**Territorial differentiation of indicators.** Given the lack of territorial differentiation, there is need for further territorializing indicators. This could concern both target setting and monitoring. When it comes to target setting, the ARL is somewhat doubtful about establishing targets at regional level, i.e. specific target values for every region in Europe. Therefore the regional level could be used mainly for monitoring – though recent monitoring approaches at NUTS 2 level are not considered to be sufficient. At the same time – as mentioned above – objectives and targets could perhaps be differentiated by types of regions.

**Additional types of indicators.** To fully exploit the power of the indicators linked to Europe 2020 objectives, the ARL suggests also considering different types of indicators. Instead of mainly focusing on reaching final levels or absolute quantities of objectives, more and better indicators could be chosen on the level of change (e.g. increase R&D expenditure by X% in certain types of regions) and possibly also indicators on the policy efforts to be undertaken (e.g. proportion of the ERDF expenditures linked to a specific objective in a region, or proportion of the amount of Horizon 2020 funding attracted for recipients in a region in relation to total expenditures for R&D).

**3) Do you have any other comment or suggestion on the Europe 2020 strategy that you would like to share?**

The ARL acknowledges the importance of an overarching strategy such as the EU 2020 Strategy, favors further development of the EU 2020 Strategy and supports the consultation processes of the European Commission. With its contribution, the ARL has proposed basic ideas on how to adjust the Europe 2020 Strategy thereby highlighting the importance of a stronger recognition of the EU's territorial diversity.

The ARL is interested in a continuous process of debate with regard to various aspects raised: the ownership of the strategy, the broad involvement of stakeholders, the specification of objectives by types of territory, the elaboration/definition of additional types of indicators, the monitoring and, of course, the strengthening of communication efforts.

The ARL offers support to the European Communities in the further development of aspects highlighted above. The ARL – represented by its Presidential Board and by the authors of this position paper – welcomes the EU Commission and those involved in the strategy to discuss these ideas further.

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