



The Europe 2020 Strategy in a snapshot – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

February 2012

1. What is the Europe 2020 Strategy?

The EU2020 Strategy replaces the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs (2000-2010). It is a ten year strategy (2010-2020) comprising of macro-economic, employment and social objectives and guidance for Member States and European level action with the aim of developing a competitive European economy.

The Strategy has three objectives: 1) smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation; 2) sustainable growth: promoting a more efficient, greener and competitive economy and 3) inclusive growth: based on high employment as well as social and territorial cohesion.

In contrast to the previous Lisbon Strategy, the EU2020 process is based on tighter control of Member States budgets to monitor public spending and in particular public deficits whilst advancing towards the objectives of the Strategy.

2. How does it work?

Europe 2020 Strategy is implemented annually through a process of economic policy coordination between the Commission and the Member States called “European Semester.”

Overall guidance

- Five headline targets: 1) 75% employment rate for both women and men; 2) 3% of EU GDP investment in R&D; 3) climate/energy efficiency targets (20% reduction greenhouse emissions, 20% increase in renewable energy, 20% increase in energy efficiency); 4) reduce early school leavers by 10% and increase tertiary education to 40%; 5) lift at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion. Each Member State set national targets to meet these EU targets.
- Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines comprising of six economic policy guidelines and four employment policy guidelines, including Guideline 10 on the reduction of poverty and social exclusion

Annual process at national level

- National Reform Programmes (NRP) submitted every April, which outline the national level targets and measures, and which should be drafted in consultation with regional/local authorities, social partners and other stakeholders. As time evolves, these will provide a basis to monitor and track implementation.
- National Stability and Convergence Programmes

Annual process at EU level

- Annual Growth Survey (AGS), produced annually by the European Commission (November-December), which takes stock of the progress made and outlines the challenges and ‘bottlenecks’ for the coming year, which member states should take into consideration.
- EU annual guidance and recommendations to member states, drafted by the Commission adopted by the European Council. In March the European Council gives guidance for the National Reform Programmes of the Year. In June/July the European Council endorses the country specific recommendations (CSR), drafted by the Commission, that make proposals to strengthen the programmes or address specific issues.



3. Where is gender equality in the overall targets of the Strategy?

There are no specific targets to achieve gender equality in the overall Strategy. The employment target of 75% relates to both women and men. This is problematic as the issue of gender equality could get lost in the overall Strategy.

Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines mention that “a visible gender equality perspective integrated into all relevant policy areas is crucial for the implementation of all aspects of the Guidelines in the Member States”. Guideline 7 refers to “increased labour-market participation of women and men” and highlights issues relating to childcare provision, equal pay, work-life balance and developing employment within the care sector. It is necessary to monitoring how Member States translate these aspirations into concrete actions, and this requires the active involvement of women’s organisations on the ground.

The European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020 adopted in March 2011 makes specific reference to taking the gender perspective into account in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy. It “encourage” member states to “apply a gender equality perspective and to promote gender equality policies” when developing and implementing their National Reform Programmes and “invites” the Commission and the Council to incorporate a gender equality perspective into the Annual Growth Survey, the Country Opinions and the Country Specific Recommendations.”

4. How was gender equality addressed in the implementation of the Strategy in 2011?

National Reform Programmes

If gender equality and women were mentioned, this was in a narrow sense, with the aim to increase women’s employment rate. Gender mainstreaming was not implemented across all the policy areas discussed in the NRPs.

Country specific recommendation 2011

- Eight countries are asked to increase women’s labour market participation through financial incentives for second earners
- Seven countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland and UK) are required to increase the accessibility and in some cases affordability and the quality of their childcare facilities.
- Germany and Netherlands are asked to move from family based taxation to individual taxation.
- Czech Republic is asked to make flexible work arrangements more attractive.
- Austria is asked to implement the national action plan on gender equality

5. What should be done to gender the 2020 Strategy in 2012?

At European level

The EWL will put pressure on the Council and the European Commission when drafting CSRs; an ongoing monitoring process is necessary to keep track of equality between women and men in the EU2020 process.

At the national level

It is crucial that women’s rights organisations get involved in the drafting, implementation and monitoring of NRPs. Contact governments to find out and get involved in the consultation process regarding the drafting of NRP. Along with specific gender equality measures, it is also crucial to verify the impact other proposed measures will have on gender equality and women’s rights. See separate EWL Briefing for more detailed information on how this can be done.