

## THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE MEMBER STATES UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

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### Abstract

*The Europe 2020 strategy, the main instrument for implementing the Lisbon Treaty, has emerged from the impact that the economic and financial crisis has had on the European economy. Through this strategy, the European Union pursues the progress of the concepts of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, but also of social dialogue. The European model envisages both the perpetuation of economic growth, while respecting long-term sustainability and sustainability, and the adaptation of Member States and the EU to new economic realities (globalization, climate change and an aging population). Europe 2020, with the help of the instruments used, managed to strengthen the way of supervising the activities, carried out in the pre-existing framework, respectively the analysis of negative externalities which allowed it to take measures to avoid the lack of immediate reactions from member countries. Monitoring the strategy is an impetus for Member States to meet EU targets.*

**Key words:** *economic growth; Sustainable Development; economic indicators; Europe 2020 Strategy; European Union.*

**JEL Classification:** *O52, P48*

### I. INTRODUCTION

The European Union coordinates its activities according to an economic model that puts economic and social objectives on an equal footing with the processes of growth, economic, social and territorial cohesion. In order to ensure the best coordination of European policies, it shall lay down measures and take initiatives which will also benefit Member States. Among the most important decisions taken by the EU is Europe 2020 (adopted in 2010), a strategy set for a period of 10 years, which continues the actions initiated by the Lisbon Agenda for Jobs and Growth. According to the European Commission, the success of the Europe 2020 Strategy, to meet the challenges posed by the economic crisis and globalization, will be ensured by the two pillars on which it is based. One of the pillars highlights the thematic approaches that have the role of achieving a union between priorities and objectives, and the other pillar favors the process of preparing country reports, thus giving partners the opportunity to establish strategies closely related to the concept of sustainability (Şaguna and Radu, 2016).

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The European Union pursues a simultaneous approach to both economic and social objectives and the processes of growth and cohesion, which shows that the European model of economy has as its distinctive feature bivalence (Dinu et al, 2005). The 2020 Strategy sought to provide answers on how Europe will reach that level of economic growth that will position it at a higher level compared to other world economies. In this regard, priorities and objectives have been identified to support this growth, and their combination has led to the creation of initiatives that, on the one hand, will promote and strengthen sustainable, smart and inclusive growth, and, on the other hand, they will support the Member States and the European Union in developing national and European policies (Begg et al, 2010). Thus, the initiatives will achieve the proposed objectives and establish specific actions to be implemented, both at EU and national level (Samardžija and Butković, 2010), and among European policies, cohesion policy will be implemented. It will continue to play a role in ensuring the framework for bridging the gap between regions and Member States, and in establishing investment strategies that will lead to the achievement of the European Union's growth, sustainable development and sustainability objectives. The Europe 2020 strategy aims to act as a catalyst for cohesion policy to attract additional funding and provide that dose of confidence among investors. The flagship initiatives have succeeded in creating an environment in which the EU and the Member States form a core of equity and equality, supporting each other's efforts in areas considered a priority for the development of society (European Commission COM (2010) 2020 final).

The European Union is a community that faces many problems due to its size and the different degree of development of the Member States. It must focus not only on reducing the distance between Europe and the United States, but also on the distance between the old and the new member states. Through development programs, as in the case of the 2020 Strategy, the EU implements its strategic objectives which, through their materialisation, will succeed in leading the European economy to a dominant position in the world market (Stec and Grzebyk, 2016).

Europe 2020 has been an economic roadmap for partner countries, guiding them towards sustainable investment in research and development, which will form the basis of the EU's long-term sustainability (Ruser and Anheier, 2014). It has also created new strategies that focus on: simplification (European funds will benefit from the same rules), conditions (states will be faced with preconditions, which if resolved will allow access to European funds), strengthening the urban dimension (cities will benefit from project funding), combating social exclusion (supporting marginalized communities), connecting to economic reform (non-compliance with economic rules by Member States can lead to loss of EU funding) and results, which must be properly defined and measurable to increase the responsibility of Member States (Şaguna and Radu, 2016).

Within the strategy, the methodological guidelines follow, on the one hand, the methods of analysis of development needs, and, on the other hand, the formulation of strategies on how to carry out the whole partnership process - clear attributions have been established for all partners and information was provided on the institutional construction that is the foundation of the operational programs (Dinga et al, 2011). From an operational point of view, the methodological guidelines have a dual role, as they create a favorable environment for the development of European projects and ensure the increase of the level of absorption of European funds. In addition, monitoring this strategy will create the conditions for the right decisions to be made to ensure that the EU's goal is met, namely: Europe to have the most competitive knowledge-based economy (European Commission, 2010).

Member States must support this effort, individually analyze changes in development levels and find common ground with those set at European level. The Europe 2020 strategy, considered part of the economic development plan, aims to ensure that comparative measures are applied between Member States and a partner country and the EU through the application of qualitative and quantitative measures (Stec and Grzebyk, 2016).

By coordinating and monitoring national policies, the European Union encourages member countries to be more open to the exchange of good practices on poverty and social inclusion, and the training and development of entrepreneurial skills. The Europe 2020 strategy provided a new course of action, on how to share efforts between the EU and partner states, and succeeded in introducing mechanisms that led to an increase in the convergence of European policies (European Commission, 2010).

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study on the Europe 2020 Strategy, based on theoretical approaches, leads to an intensification of reflections on the effectiveness of the methods and programs used by the EU to increase the economic, sustainable and inclusive dimensions. In this work, related to the research objective, both a method of analysis and a method of careful observation of the role of the 2020 Strategy in the development of Member States and the EU were used. From a methodological point of view, this approach can be considered as qualitative, because it analyzes the dimension of the interaction between the actors involved in the development of Europe from a thematic perspective, and not a statistical one. In order to reach a positive result, the specialized literature was used. The information gathered can provide a longitudinal and cross-sectional investigation, and this work can be of an observational nature.

### **IV. FINDINGS**

The Europe 2020 strategy is an important document that has sought to identify the best policies that provide viable alternatives for the further development of the European integration area (Terem et al, 2015). This strategy has accentuated, on the one hand, the positive impact resulting from the implementation of objectives and targets across the European spectrum, and, on the other hand, the need for joint actions to gradually stabilize the European environment and for the initiation of other targets that will lead to new growth and development at EU level (Balitskiy et al., 2014). The Europe 2020 strategy has pursued three key pillars (smart growth, sustainable growth and inclusive growth), which can be connected and mutually supportive, which can be included in the idea of sustainable and balanced development (Sulmicka, 2011). At the same time, the European strategy has set social goals, and to measure the progress made following their implementation, developed synthetic indicators with which it was possible to make comparisons between the results obtained, both at national and Community level. Also, it was observed to what extent the Member States achieved their set social objectives (Kryk, 2017).

To address the challenges faced by the partner states, an integrated framework has been created that has created the right conditions for the implementation of the European strategy at European level. In addition, subsequent programs (Common Strategic Framework and Partnership Agreement), which use Community funds to achieve the objectives of the European Union, have sought to implement new sets of strategic actions to strengthen cohesion policy at EU level, and with the help of The Committee of the Regions was involved in the regional decision-making process. Thus, it was encouraged: the permanent dialogue between the levels of government, the establishment of clear reference objectives, the exchange of good practices, as well as the achievement of optimal communication networks. For a better evaluation of the progress made, in the fight to meet the targets, the Monitoring Platform of the Europe 2020 Strategy was created with the role of observing the progress made at regional level, but also the involvement of the authorities in the exchange of information and good practices (Operational Program, 2014-2020).

The Europe Strategy, seen both as a method and as a program for connecting Member States to the EU, identified existing problems, aligned national competences with those of the EU and introduced them into policies established at European level. Through its institutional form and content, Europe 2020 has sought the sustainability of the economies of the Member States and the Union through: low energy consumption, adjustments in production processes, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and clear and immediate measures on climate change. Europe 2020 is seen as an EU umbrella which, under its corolla, encourages the coherence of methods and practices related to sustainability (Van Iersel, 2011). This green corolla is based on the principle of equality, according to which present generations should not ignore the needs of future generations, because the irrational use of the planet's resources will sacrifice the future generation's ability to meet its requirements, and this way of thinking it shows ethical behavior, but presents a destructive policy for all humanity (Surmanidze, 2019).

The European Union through the Europe 2020 Strategy, considered an agenda for strengthening growth and competitiveness, aimed to shepherd Europe in a new era: that of reforms that support and promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (Erixon, 2010).

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The analyzes of the strategies, applied so far by the EU, will be the basis for the new sustainable development goals, with 2030 as the target date, through which the European Union must relaunch its growth and jobs strategy, with a much greater ambition to truly secure a sustainable future. The new European model must be in line with the principles of sustainable development, namely: leading to the creation of sustainable jobs, focusing on research and development, pursuing innovation and creativity and, last but not least, skilled labor, and companies to have access to capital. Europe has managed to recover and remain in the same position on ensuring a sustainable future and long-term sustainability. Research has shown that the key priorities and measurable objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy have guided the whole process of sustainable EU development. Europe must create new action plans for 2030, ensure equity and solidarity between partners, rekindle hope in the eyes of its citizens and meet present needs without compromising the right of future generations to a healthy environment. The 2020 Strategy has supported Europe in achieving its ultimate goal of prosperity.

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