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**"EU 2020 - A Better Future For The Economy of The EU - How to Achieve This?" - this is the topic of the written contribution, made by Bulgarian MEP Iliana Ivanova, specially for the participants in the conference's third panel - "Solidarity in the EU – shared responsibility the development".**

*Mrs. Iliana Ivanova MEP (EPP-GERB), who is Vice-Chairwoman of the special Committee on the Financial, Economic and Social Crisis in the EP, was invited to participate in the "Europe 2020 – the Civic Visions" international conference but was unable to attend the event personally because of other important tasks on her agenda.*

*Mrs. Ivanova sent her written statement to the conference which became part of the discussion:*

Europe has never needed to be more united than today, the borders of the European Union more open, the citizens given a big margin of opportunities. Today Europe is witnessing one of the major successes of the European Union - the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty; meanwhile, the citizens of Europe are facing the consequences from the worst economic and financial crisis in decades.

Now it is important that the European Institutions focus on delivering sustainable growth by putting people and responsibility first; take advantage of the world of globalization and interdependence and most importantly start seizing new opportunities. In order to avoid the period of low economic growth and in order to respond to the crisis the EU should implement a bold policy response. It is now that the EU has to make a stronger effort and work together to make a successful exit from the crisis and to shape the next generation of public policies in a very different set of circumstances. The exit from the crisis should be the point of entry to a new sustainable social market economy, a smarter, greener economy, where success and achievements will come from utilizing resources and innovation.

Which key areas should we focus on?

Knowledge

The so much aimed and desired state of sustainable growth is driven by knowledge. In a globalized and fast-changing world, what makes the difference is education and research, innovation and creativity. In order to fight inequality and poverty Europe should strengthen the educational process amongst all its citizens but a greater emphasis should be put on vulnerable groups, gender equality and social cohesion in order no one to be excluded from knowledge. To give more opportunities Member States should also be willing to make reforms and show an attitude to change.

Through research the EU needs to provide more attractive framework conditions for innovation and creativity. The way forward is a research partnership between the EU and Member States which maximises synergy with other policy areas such as education and modernization.

Furthermore, in order to empower this sector the EU should tap fully the potential of the digital economy. This type of economy is extremely favourable to SMEs, both in the production and services sector, in their own right and as suppliers to larger companies. SMEs play an important role in regional development; they act as innovative start-ups, often with high value jobs right across the EU. That is why an ambitious European Digital Agenda that takes concrete steps towards the completion of an Online Single Market will be a key element in Europe's sustainable economic recovery and social development.

#### Empowering people

The right environment should be created in order for individuals with acquired skills, innovative and creative approach to be able to develop entrepreneurship and/or be able to establish a smooth transition between jobs. Skills and lifelong learning are the crucial elements to ensure transition between jobs and occupations, also in avoiding long-term unemployment which would lead to loss of human capital. To achieve this it is of great importance to create a new entrepreneurial cultural wave, one with an attitude towards risk-taking and a capacity to innovate.

#### Competitive, connected and greener economy

The European Union has to both maintain a strong manufacturing base and a vibrant service sector and meet its environmental and climate goals, in order to secure a more efficient use of resources, including energy, and the application of new, greener technologies which will stimulate growth, create new jobs and services.

In order to improve competitiveness we should deliver tangible benefits for consumers. The EU 2020 vision should aim at upgrading and inter-connecting infrastructures and ensuring effective competition of network industries in the single market. Also, the development of smart, upgraded transport and energy infrastructures will contribute to multiple objectives including decarbonisation, transport safety, energy security, and the competitiveness of our network economy. Furthermore, improving energy efficiency will also be vital as it is the cheapest way to reduce emissions and, at the same time, to increase the energy independence of Europe.

Apart from promoting a successful exit from the crisis, the EU has to inspire its citizens to act decisively and make sure it has the support of national governments. For a better future of Europe and its economy we should all seek together new opportunities, have strong desire for innovation and willingness to create new beginnings.

*The "Europe 2020 - Civic Visions" international conference is part of [the "Interacting with the European Parliament" initiative](#). This project's [implementing organizations](#) are the European Institute, the Center for Policy Modernization and Europe Gateway and it is a fact due to the the financial support of the European Parliament's DG "Communication".*