

## **Report on Brainstorming Meeting on Intergenerational Fairness, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2011**

I. After short welcoming and introductory remarks by Antonio Missiroli of BEPA, and a presentation of the civil society initiatives by Ms. Maja Göpel of the World Future Council, the first session was devoted to discussing **Education, Employment, Social protection and Health for the Future**. An introductory presentation by Mr. Xavier Prats Monne of DG EAC highlighted systemic changes brought about by globalisation, and the subsequent challenges faced by the European Union in terms of producing meaningful targets and reinvigorating workable policies in the fields of education and employment. A second presentation by Mrs. Maria Iglesia Gomez of DG SANCO identified ageing and health inequalities as major challenges, and explored future scenarios which could arise as a result of deteriorating health and an ageing health and care workforce, and strain the sustainability of healthcare. Alternatively the innovative use of technology with evidence-based assessments of benefits could improve the health and quality of life of citizens, and support the long-term sustainability of health and social care systems, affirming the importance of social innovation in order to achieve an inclusive Europe.

Following this introduction a number of views were exchanged echoing the introductory comments on the salience of intergenerational fairness and the need for ongoing dialogue on this topic. Attention was drawn to concrete strategies which have been formulated by the EU in the area of pension reforms, and suggestions were made as to areas where further work is needed to build more integrated policy-thinking and coordination, looking at, for example, how job-sharing, wage agreements, and tax structure reforms could stimulate employment and environment friendly solutions. Education and insurance regulation for an increase in preventative healthcare were also discussed, along with concerns regarding the increasingly influential role of business in the educational realm, potentially limiting independent, entrepreneurial skilling.

II. The second session entitled **Financial Flows for Smart, Inclusive and Sustainable Growth** was introduced by Mr. Antonio José Cabral of CAB Barroso. In light of ageing demographics, four key variables, the "*four mores*", (more people, more employment, more productivity, and more sustainable working time(s) throughout life) were identified as pivotal to the attainment of sustainable growth. This means that policies have to address: population growth (fertility rates and migration), bringing more people into work (women and older workers), more productivity (to get to the level of our competitors), and longer working time in the life course (ensuring that the age of retirement is linked to life expectancy). Dwelling on possible scenarios for the future, Mr Cabral evoked two tales; a radical scenario in which no debt is left to future generations but with the risk of no jobs, and the rise of populist policies, and a more realistic scenario, in which we prioritise job creation, but leave some financial burden on future generations.

Two main themes of debate stemmed from this introduction. Firstly, modifications of the four mores, such as the addition of people more connected to nature and a more responsible future were suggested. The desirability of more production in a material sense was questioned, and it was argued that perhaps more *non*-material production would be advisable. Secondly the practical implications of financial flows on which sectors and products "grow", and the danger of pursuing narrow and short-term visions of financial flows were raised, particularly in terms of quantity at the expense of quality. The pursuit of financial flows for smart

inclusive and sustainable growth should also account for normative results such as wellbeing. Long-term strategies are particularly important in the realm of migration; the benefits young migrants bring to public finances today will be short-lived unless accompanied by investment in social integration of migrants for the future. The idea of a social contract to involve citizens in the pursuit of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth was pitched as a means of re-establishing the trust of European citizens. The challenge even during the crisis is to break the cycle of unproductive financial flows and speculation, which do not create additional wealth or just distribution in the real economy, and to reconnect people who no longer share the dream of growth.

III. The working lunch with a presentation by Dr. Rama Mani of the World Future Council allowed participants an insight into the work of the World Future Council on the theme of **Efficient Governance of our Common Future**. Five policy proposals for the EU to achieve effective future just governance were presented, the first of which is the use of principles for Sustainable Development Law to enhance integrated policy-making. They cover the protection of natural resources, poverty eradication, concern for health and eco systems, public participation, good governance, and common but differentiated responsibilities. In addition, an Ombudsman for Future Generations was proposed to bring long-term interests into policy-making and tackle the short-termism in electoral democracies, as was the use of disincentives such as denouncing crimes against future generations in cases where long-term damages of actions today threaten the living conditions or health in the future. The European Commission's partnering with the already established "Future Policy Award" to celebrate visionary policies was suggested, as well as a strategic realignment of purpose, policy and practice in governance

The lunch ended on a note of optimism coupled with expectation, in terms of the EU's role in adapting policy-making to the new security agenda and demands of human security, and taking a leading role as a balancing force in an unbalanced world.

IV. The final session considered **Sustainability and Resource Efficiency**, and was lead by two presentations, the first of which was by Maria Angeles Benitez Salas of DG AGRI. The need to ensure future generation's right of access to resources in cases where finite resources are exploited to meet the needs of the current generation was underlined, and the need to support sustainability and intergenerational equity was pinpointed as a core value of both the CAP and the European Commission as a whole. A second presentation by Robin Miede of DG ENV casted focus towards the intimate links that exist between the economy and the environment, and the value of environmental resilience in today's pursuit of economic resilience. The challenge of presenting a positive outlook whilst under severe constraints is now at the top of the agenda, and a shift away from unsustainable trends, new business models and lifecycle analysis were given as examples of solutions.

The role of BEPA in promoting understanding of smart solutions by engaging different actors and initiating productive conversations was praised. Such initiatives may be enhanced through discussions on indicators and measurements; the Shanghai ranking system for universities and the Stiglitz report on wellbeing were cited as examples of useful tools which in many ways have contributed to define the standards we strive for. However it was noted that indicators are not a panacea and such debate is necessary and must continue with a view to provide cohesive guidance and avoid the confusion caused by too many different schemes. An example of this is the discussion surrounding organic farming; the assumption that organic

farming is more sustainable than traditional farming is yet to be proved, therefore the debate must continue.

Conclusion: In the concluding statements, the main threads of discussion were summarised, and the importance of the use of incentives and positive presentation of intergenerational issues to policy makers was deemed imperative. The use of different incentives in particular could work as an escape route from the outdated and damaging economic and financial habits of the current generation. There was general agreement that EU 2020 is an effective way to draw attention to the near future. Member states have committed to national targets for the first time, and there is a promise of meaningful dialogue on the future. In this respect there was a call for greater trust in European citizens by legislators, in order to move beyond short-termism and engage in more long-term policy-making to account for the needs of future generations.

In terms of concrete actions, there were converging views on the establishment of a European Ombudsman as an effective and relatively uncontroversial means of highlighting and increasing intergenerational fairness. BEPA will explore all contributions in an attempt to broaden understanding of all the intergenerational fairness components.