



Mr Jean-Claude JUNCKER
Prime Minister of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
4, rue de la Congrégation
L-1352 Luxembourg

Brussels, 18 March 2005

The Mid-term Review of the Lisbon Strategy

Dear Mr Prime Minister,

Eurodiaconia and the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) welcome the efforts of the European Commission to provide a better implementation of the Lisbon Strategy and utilise the enlarged Union's potential in order to create prosperity and to increase opportunity and justice for all its citizens. We regret, however, that in the Communication of the Commission to the Spring Council social cohesion has been removed as a priority objective of the Lisbon Strategy. This Communication is reverting to one-dimensional policies, narrowing the Lisbon process down to a simplistic agenda of cost competitiveness and deregulation and, moreover, ignores the reality of the sixty-eight million people who face poverty and social exclusion within the EU.

While we recognise the importance of enhancing the EU efforts in the fields of economy and employment, we stress even more the importance of an overall *coherence* of EU policies. In order to achieve substantive progress with the Lisbon agenda, a renewed effort has to be made on the basis of the same values on which the agenda has been developed. The spirit of the Lisbon strategy for a sustainable development truly integrating economic, social and environmental dimensions must not be lost.

We will therefore support any effort of the Spring EU Council towards reaffirming the original goals of the Lisbon Strategy to integrate concerns related to sustainability into all policies and actions of the EU. With respect to the ongoing ratification process of the Constitutional Treaty, we believe that any revision of the Lisbon Strategy should reassert the balance of economic, social and environmental values, which are reflected in the Treaty.

In their daily work, European Churches and diaconal institutions are cooperating with many social services users who do not have a strong voice themselves. Experience over the last years shows that the assumption of economic growth being automatically good for everyone is not valid. Economic growth should not be an end in itself but should serve wider interests. Modernised social protection, fighting poverty and social exclusion as well as promoting sustainable development all contribute to creating a social framework of stability, which is a decisive factor for sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs in Europe.

In order to achieve the goal of a European knowledge-based and competitive economy, it is indispensable to invest more in people: in education, professional training, life-long-learning, innovation and research. The fact that certain problems linked to the competitiveness of the EU require more attention should not result in other important levels being neglected. A high-quality education begins in early childhood and needs support from a well operating social system.

We hope that the Spring EU Council will take concrete steps in view of retaining a balanced and mutually supportive interaction between the economic, employment, social and environmental policies of the Lisbon Strategy.

We thank you for your consideration.

Albert Brandstätter
Secretary General

Rüdiger Noll
Director

***Eurodiaconia** is a federation of 43 members - churches, non-statutory welfare organisations and NGOs in Europe - operating at national and international level. Our members are rooted in Christian faith within the traditions of the Reformation as well as in the Anglican and Orthodox traditions. We network diaconal and social work of institutions and church communities and co-operate with civil society partners.*

Our Mission: We link our members to serve for solidarity and justice. Our strategic aims are to ensure quality of life for all in a social Europe, to link institutions of diaconia, social initiatives and churches in Europe, to be and to enhance a network of competence.

*The **Church and Society Commission (CSC)** is one of the commissions of the Conference of European Churches (CEC). The CSC links CEC's some 125 member churches from all over Europe and its associated organisations with the European Union's institutions, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, NATO and the UN (on European matters).*

Its task is to help the churches study church and society questions from a theological social-ethical perspective, especially those with a European dimension, and to represent the member churches of CEC in their relations with political institutions working in Europe.

Eurodiaconia and the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) have a joint Social Policy working group dealing with this issue.

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