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The Lisbon Strategy – Revision of the European Social Market Model?

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Abstract:

The Lisbon Strategy depicts how the EU plans to facilitate economic growth and to draw level with the USA, especially in GDP growth and labour productivity. The objective of the Lisbon Strategy is to transform the EU into the most competitive and dynamic world economy based on knowledge as well as to achieve sustainable growth in the EU, creating a greater number of quality jobs and more social cohesion by 2010. The unsatisfactory evaluation of the fulfilment of the Lisbon strategy's objectives led to its revision in 2004. This revision could raise the assumption that, for further economic growth in the European Union such previous priorities as social cohesion, high labour standards, a well-developed social system and social dialogue are somewhat superfluous. But regarding the evaluation of the fulfilment of the Lisbon objectives (World Economic Forum), in comparison with the USA, the Northern countries – Finland, Denmark, Sweden, countries with very high social standards and levels of worker protection, fared best.

A developed social system does not diminish the competitiveness of a country as long as the country can realize technological development and has a high-quality institutional framework for entrepreneurial activity. Cultivation of social capital is a key theme in this process. Rather than giving up the priority of sustainable development and social cohesion, the EU should try to simplify its functionary mechanism.

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Content:

1. Raison d’être and objectives of the Lisbon Strategy

The Lisbon Strategy was drawn up during the Council of Europe in March 2000 as the EU’s reaction to the need to encourage economic growth[1], to level out with the growing globalisation trend and at the same time, to maintain the European model of a social market economy with its emphasis on quality of life and social cohesion. The object of the Lisbon Strategy was to transform the EU into the most competitive and dynamic world economy based on knowledge, able to achieve constant sustainable growth, creating a greater number of quality jobs and more social cohesion by 2010.

The Lisbon Strategy aims to achieve the following goals by 2010:

- Increase the average annual rate of economic growth to 3%;
- Due to the creation of new jobs, to increase the employment rate to 70%;
- Increase the employment rate of women to 60%;
- Increase the employment rate of older people (55 - 64 years old) to 50%.

At this point it is necessary to emphasize that in the Lisbon Strategy the economic, social and environmental objectives are viewed as equally important, in the interest of a constant sustainable development of the EU within the framework of the global world economy.

„For the purpose of achieving the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy, the EU decided to aim for the completion of these tasks:

- Prepare the transformation to an economy and society based on knowledge; and this with the help of better policies regarding the information society, research and technological development of the means for speeding up the process of structural reforms aimed at competitiveness, innovation and perfecting the internal market.
- Modernizing the European social model, investing in people and fighting against exclusion from society.
- Maintaining a healthy economic perspective and a positive view regarding growth and the application of a suitable combination of macroeconomic policies.”[2]

The Lisbon Strategy was designed to follow the American liberal economic model, thus driven by supply economics, innovation, the union of private and public resources, a flexible entrepreneurial environment linked to a functional capital market. This was combined with the European tradition of emphasis on social cohesion, quality of life, high standards of labor force protection, the environment, equalizing regional differences in living standards. The instruments used to achieve these objectives are, on the one hand, legislative[3], and on the other hand the coordinating policies of the EU[4]**,** financed from the EU budget, and in certain cases, from the European Social Fund. Naturally, another important instrument for realising the Strategy is monitoring the progress of its compliance, and if need be, correction and adjustment of its further action plans.

2. Evaluation of the fulfilment of the Lisbon Strategy's objectives

Already before even half the time period set for the realization of the Lisbon Strategy's ambitious objectives had expired, it was apparent that the target date of 2010 was unrealistic, and that the gap between the performance of the USA's and the EU's economies was rather increasing than decreasing. In 2004, the World Economic Forum (WEF) dealt with the progress of meeting the Strategy's objectives in detail (The Lisbon Review 2004: An Assessment of Policies and Reforms in Europe). The evaluation of the already achieved progress was carried out using the methods and data of the Global Competitiveness Report of the WEF. Eight indicators were used for the evaluation:

1. Information society for all;
2. Development of European space for innovation, research and development;
3. Liberalization:
   a. Increasing the unity of the internal market;
   b. State aid and competition policy.
4. Development of network branches in:
   a. Telecommunication;
   b. Public service and transport.
5. Effective and integrated financial services;
6. Improvement of the entrepreneurial environment in:

   a. Conditions for starting new businesses;
   b. Burdensome regulations.
7. Social cohesion:
   a. Integration of the labor market, increasing qualifications;
   b. Modernizing social protection.
8. Sustainable development;
   a. Environmental protection;
   b. Climate change.

The evaluation of the EU Member States, according to set criteria, was carried out on the basis of published, ‘hard’, statistical data and ‘soft’ data coming from market research executed by the WEF. The total Lisbon score for each country is calculated as an unconnected average of eight smaller results of the above mentioned criteria. The value scale moves from 1 to 7; the higher the number, the better the result achieved. The WEF in its study included, in the context of the Lisbon objectives, also the new EU Member States and their ability to contribute to the growth of competitiveness in the newly enlarged Europe.

Table 1 – WEF evaluation 2004: Meeting the Lisbon objectives in the EU

Country / Group of countries	**Total Score**	Information Society	Innovation, R & D	Liberalisation	Network Branches	Financial Services	Business Environment	Social Cohesion	Sustainable Development
US	**5.55**	5.86	6.08	5.11	5.85	5.82	5.71	5.04	4.96
EU-15	**4.97**	4.61	4.41	4.69	5.81	5.52	4.74	4.81	5.16
Czech Republic	**4.16**	3.62	3.34	4.01	5.19	4.03	4.18	4.40	4.48

Source: WEF, The Lisbon Review 2004, An Assessment of Polices and Reforms in Europe, http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Gcr/LisbonReview/Lisbon_Review_2004.pdf.

The EU-15, on average, scored lower than the USA on nearly all indicators, with the exception of sustainable development. The greatest gap was detected in the development of the information society, innovation, research and development and the flexible entrepreneurial climate. An almost equal score was achieved for the development of the network branches, financial services and the rate of liberalization of the market.

Table 2 – Evaluation WEF 2004: Meeting the Lisbon objectives in the EU

Country	Rank	Total Score
Finland	1	5.80
Denmark	2	5.63
Sweden	3	5.62
United States		**5.55**
United Kingdom	4	5.30
Netherlands	5	5.21
Germany	6	5.18
Luxembourg	7	5.14
France	8	5.03
EU-15		**4.97**
Austria	9	4.94
Belgium	10	4.88
Ireland	11	4.69
EU-24		**4.67**
Estonia	12	4.64
Spain	13	4.47
Italy	14	4.38
Slovenia	15	4.36
Latvia	16	4.34
Portugal	17	4.25
Malta	18	4.20
Czech Republic	19	4.16
EU-9		**4.16**
Hungary	20	4.12
Lithuania	21	4.05
Greece	22	4.00
Slovak Republic	23	3.89
Poland	24	3.68

Source: WEF, The Lisbon Review 2004, An Assessment of Polices and Reforms in Europe, http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Gcr/LisbonReview/Lisbon_Review_2004.pdf.
Note: The data on Cyprus was not available.

The Northern countries, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, fared best in the comparison to the USA. The new EU Member States, on the whole, came off worse than the EU-15 states. Estonia did best of all the new Member States, having scored well on having a well developed entrepreneurial environment, information society and financial services. The Czech Republic was placed fifth amongst the new member states, and overall, when compared to the EU-25, 19th position. As can be seen in Table 1, the CR's strong points were sustainable development, social cohesion and, also, well developed network branches. On the other hand, it lagged behind most, compared to the USA, in the areas of development of the information society, innovation, science and research, whilst in comparison with the EU-15, it fell short due to its level of financial services.

In view of the influence that the new Member States have on achieving of the Lisbon objectives, one should be concerned about Poland, because the largest economy of the new Member States has poor results in all the evaluation criteria, especially in the areas of information society, social cohesion and entrepreneurial environment.

The WEF's evaluation, in conclusion, states that for growth it is more important for a country to have a good score in the dimension of the entrepreneurial climate. Other dimensions are less important. The Lisbon Strategy, according to this evaluation, is apparently missing growth oriented public expenditure, tax systems and a more flexible labour market.

3. Revision of the Lisbon Strategy

The unsatisfactory evaluation of the fulfilment of the Lisbon Strategy's objectives led, in 2004, to the establishment of the Expert Group. This Group, under Wim Kok, had the purpose of working out the Strategy's revision, and in November 2004, the 'Kok Report' was published. It served as the basis for the European Commission to work out a mid-term evaluation of the Lisbon Strategy for the spring session of the European Council in 2005. The Kok Report incorporates the concept of the Lisbon agenda and suggests abandoning unrealistic targets and, instead, giving priority to economic growth, productivity and employment. At the same time, it proposes institutional changes for the management of the whole process. The foundation of the new structures of the Lisbon Strategy are national level action programmes, National Programme of Reforms (NPR), EU level action programmes, and the Community Lisbon Programme, which should simplify and make the established practices used in coordinating economic policy at EU and Member State level more efficient. Also, greater identification of the Member States with the priorities of the Lisbon Process should be ensured.[5]

The methodological guide, "integrated direction for growth and jobs 2005-2008," reflects efforts for increasing growth potential and employment in the EU whilst maintaining a healthy macroeconomic framework. Based on this, each Member State adopted its own NPR and submitted it in October 2005 for the approval of the European Commission. The NPR is a brief binding political document concerning the priorities and measures of the Member State in macro- and microeconomic areas and employment policies. It is based on specific national economic needs and on the factual economic development situation in the country, and it has as its objective to stimulate economic growth and employment in the ensuing three-year period.[6]

At the end of January 2006, the European Commission officially published the document „Time to shift into higher gear – New partnership for growth and jobs", which served as the basis for the spring meeting of the European Council.[7] In the conclusion of this document the European Commission evaluates NPRs of individual Member States and identifies the areas which each Member State should pay greater attention to. The Czech Republic received the following recommendation: Concerning the macroeconomic area, the Czech Republic should take care of „ensuring long-term sustainability of public finances, especially in view of the prepared reforms of the pension and healthcare systems." Furthermore, the CR should place greater emphasis on „the development of human capital by means of life-long learning" and it should "look at groups of persons rendered unemployable and regional differences in unemployment."[8] It is also essential for the CR „to pay attention to policies for improving development, research and innovation."[9]

4. European social market model

A revision of the Lisbon Strategy could lead to the assumption that for further economic growth of the European Community such priorities as social cohesion, high standards of work, a well-developed social system and social dialogue are somewhat superfluous. These pillars of the social market economic model are often labelled as sources of rigidity in the labour market. However, regarding the evaluation of the fulfilment of the Lisbon objectives WEF (viz. table 2), in comparison with the USA, the Northern countries – Finland, Denmark, Sweden, countries with very high social standards and levels of worker protection, fared best.

To support this conclusion we can utilize evaluations of the Growth Competitiveness Index (GCI), which, since 2001, the WEF has presented in its Report on Global Competitiveness. The GCI is made up of three single indices: the technological level of the economy, the level of the public institutions and the macroeconomic level. These are indicators mainly for the evaluation of competitiveness.[10] All EU Member States, including the ten new Members were on the Index of growth of competitiveness placed 51st in 2005 (out of 117 evaluated countries). The Northern countries scored highest: Finland (1), Sweden (3) and Denmark (4). From the evaluation it is apparent that a developed social system does not hold back the competitiveness of a country, as long as the country can realise the knowledge of technological development and as it has a quality institutional framework for entrepreneurial activity.

In order to understand and appreciate the Lisbon Strategy's priorities, it is necessary to bear in mind just how the European social economic model came into existence. It was a reaction to the Second World War, an attempt to prevent further armed conflict, to form a democratic and free society whose fundamental values are peace, quality of life, harmony and sustainability. The objective was to create a sustainable economy for which the expression „growth“ meant more than just growth of GDP. It endeavoured to equalise production and consumption with the ability to renew and supplement resources. Cultivation of social capital was a key theme in this process.

Table 3 – Growth Competitiveness Index rankings comparing 2004 to 2005

2005 Rank	Country	2005 Score	2004 Rank
1.	Finland	5.94	→ 1.
2.	United States	5.81	→ 2.
3.	Sweden	5.65	→ 3.
4.	Denmark	6.65	↗ 5.
5.	Taiwan	5.58	↘ 4.
6.	Singapore	5.48	↗ 7.
7.	Iceland	5.48	↗ 10.
8.	Switzerland	5.46	→ 8.
9.	Norway	5.40	↘ 6.
10.	Australia	5.21	↗ 14.
11.	Netherlands	5.21	↗ 12.
12.	Japan	5.18	↘ 9.
13.	United Kingdom	5.11	↘ 11.
14.	Canada	5.10	↗ 15.
15.	Germany	5.10	↘ 13.
16.	New Zealand	5.09	↗ 18.
17.	Korea, Rep.	5.07	↗ 29.
18.	United Arab Emirates	4.99	↘ 16.
19.	Qatar	4.97	-
20.	Estonia	4.95	→ 20.
21.	Austria	4.95	↘ 17.
22.	Portugal	4.91	↗ 24.
23.	Chile	4.91	↘ 22.
24.	Malaysia	4.90	↗ 31.
25.	Luxembourg	4.90	↗ 26.
26.	Ireland	4.86	↗ 30.
27.	Israel	4.84	↘ 19.
28.	Hong Kong SAR	4.83	↘ 21.
29.	Spain	4.80	↘ 23.
30.	France	4.78	↘ 27.
31.	Belgium	4.63	↘ 25.
32.	Slovenia	4.59	↗ 33.
33.	Kuwait	4.58	-
34.	Cyprus	4.54	↗ 38.
35.	Malta	4.54	↘ 32.
36.	Thailand	4.50	↘ 34.
37.	Bahrajn	4.48	↘ 28.
38.	Czech Republic	4.42	↗ 40.
39.	Hungary	4.38	→ 39.
40.	Tunisia	4.32	↗ 42.
41.	Slovak Republic	4.31	↗ 43.
42.	South Africa	4.31	↘ 41.
43.	Lithunia	4.30	↘ 36.
44.	Latvia	4.29	→ 44.
45.	Jordan	4.28	↘ 35.
46.	Greece	4.26	↘ 37.
47.	Italy	4.21	→ 47.
48.	Botswana	4.21	↘ 45.
49.	China	4.07	↘ 46.
50.	India	4.04	↗ 55.
51.	Poland	4.00	↗ 60.

Source: WEF, Global Competitiveness Report 2005-2006, http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Global_Competitiveness_Reports/Reports/GCR_05_06/Executive_Summary.

5. Conclusion

The Lisbon Strategy, in its first formulation in 2000, and even more so in its reformulation in 2005, concentrates on competition with the economic growth of the USA. While the core of the European social market model is made up of values such as sustainable development, quality of life and a feeling of belonging, the American liberal model on the other hand prioritizes economic growth followed by private property and independence. In other words, the two economic models have deep roots in the counterparts' own cultural traditions. Jeremy Rifkin in his book „European Dream“[11] says: „The American model is founded on a different concept of freedom and social certainty. For Americans freedom is linked to independence. If one is autonomous, he or she is not dependent on others and helpless in a situation over which he or she has no control. In order to be autonomous, one must own property. The more property he or she owns, the more he or she is independent in the world...With riches comes exclusivity and with exclusivity, social certainty“.

For Europeans, to be free means much more than just having the right to vote and the choice of a fulfilled and purposeful life.

Europe also significantly differs from the USA in its approach to cultural differences. The American model is founded on assimilation and the creation of a unified American nation. Europe, on the other hand, maintains cultural identity and is constructed as a multicultural society, it is more cosmopolitan and puts less emphasis on patriotism. That leads to growing ethnic conflicts, as well as conflicts between large and small nations, the richer and poorer ones, and to disputes about justice in break-up processes. This tension has increased also due to the expansion of the EU to 25 Member States.

The EU is developing an ever greater bureaucracy which, in turn, breeds incomprehensible and costly national systems, especially the tax system. Also, it creates room for possible abuse; at the very least it increases transaction costs. The complicated system of obtaining resources from the European structural funds is, again, a hotbed for extensive lobbying, which possibly results in adjusting the drawing process to one's own favor, not to mention possible corruption.

A certain feeling of disappointment arising from the non-fulfilment of the ambitious Lisbon objectives led to considering other directions for the EU, and, finally to the reformulation of the Lisbon Strategy and its priorities. Rather than giving up its priorities of sustainable development and social cohesion, the EU should try to simplify its functionary mechanism and to unify today's heterogeneous system, at least the tax system. For this, naturally, political consensus is necessary, however, the achievement thereof is now more difficult than ever, due to the EU's expansion to include a further ten states.

Notes

1) Since the end of World War Two, Europe has been trying to catch up to the USA's level of development. During the second half of the 1970s, Europe's efforts in this respect slowed down; the gap has, in the interim time period, stabilized. Comparative studies carried out since the second half of the 1990s showed a gradually opening divide of the observed macroeconomic aggregates, especially growth of GDP and productivity of labour.

2) The Representation of the European Commission in the CR, Lisbon Strategy.
http://www.evropska-unie.cz/cz/article.asp?id=2377

3) Within the framework of the EU, the institutions that have jurisdiction, make legislation, which has complete priority over national legislation in the Member States. In the "aquis communaitare" the EC/EU Treaties are primary sources of EC/EU law. The secondary sources are the following: Regulations – like Treaty Articles, they are automatically binding in the Member States, without the need for any domestic implementation legislation, unless a Member State has agreed on a derogation before the Regulation was adopted. Directives – they only dictate the result to be achieved – unlike Regulations or Treaty Articles, they need domestic implementation legislation to become part of national law. Their applicability may be expressly limited to a selected group of Member States. Resolutions – (of the European Court of Justice) – are only binding for the parties of the particular dispute which the ECJ adjudicated, (applies in the same way as the decision of any ordinary domestic court only concerns the parties whose case it has decided.) Recommendations – which are not legally binding; also, most of them are political recommendations.

At the same time, EU law recognizes the principle of subsidiarity; this means that certain matters are left in the competence of the Member States' legislatures (laws should be made at the lowest level possible). Furthermore, the principle of proportionality means that Member States should be burdened with EU law as little as possible, in order to have their own space to legislate in accordance with their own domestic conditions.

4) In support of growth and employment, the European Commission adopted the following basic measures: 1. Support of knowledge and innovation; 2. Reform of unemployment benefit policy; 3. Improving and simplifying the laws relating to business; 4. The creation of an internal market for services; 5. Concluding ambitious agreements in the framework of the Doha round of negotiations; 6. Eliminating obstacles to the freedom of movement of persons, workers and graduates; 7. Developing a joint approach to economic migration; 8. Support for efforts that seek to remove the social consequences of economic restructuralization.

These steps are to be realized in the time period 2001-2009.

5) National Lisbon Programme 2005-2008 (National Programme of Reforms, Czech Republic), taken from: http://wtd.vlada.cz/files/eu/narodni_program_reforem_cz.pdf,str.3

6) Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic, Lisbon Strategy,
http://www.mpo.cz/dokument2860.html.

7) Office of the Government of the Czech Republic; Annual Report on Progress in 2006 for Spring, European Council, http://wtd.vláda.cz/vrk/eu.htm.

8) Employment part – priority measures:

Education: Realize curricular reforms; Expand access to higher and university education; Support cooperation with employers, employees and educational and professional training institutions; Improve connections to computer and other educational systems; Support mutual recognition of individual degrees of tertiary education; Support further education in companies; Increase information education.

Integration on the labor market: Reduce unemployment amongst the under 25 year olds; Assert sexual equality on the labor market; Increase the amount of senior citizens in the labor market; Increase professional mobility with an efficient system of retraining; Simplify access to the labor market for foreign nationals.

Flexibility of the labor market: Expand contractual freedom in labor relations; Reduce legal non-wage labor expenses; Improve the stimulating effect of direct taxation and benefits with the aim of reducing unemployment and increase motivation to work amongst low-income groups; Increase mobility; Modernize employment policy.

Source: Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Lisbon Strategy and the CR http://wtd.vláda.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=4575, [cit.2006-04-11].

National Lisbon Programme 2005-2008 [NPR, Czech Republic], can be obtained from: http://wtd.vláda.cz/files/eu/narodni_program_reforem_cz.pdf.

9) Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Framework position of the CR in the Annual Report on Progress 2006 for the Spring European Council, http://wtd.vláda.cz/vrk/eu.htm.

10) Single Index of the technological level consists of three sub indices: innovation (6 criteria), information and communications technology (10 criteria), transfer of technology (2 criteria).

The Single Index of the level of public institutions includes 2 sub indices: legal environment (4 criteria) and corruption (3 criteria).

The Single Index of the macroeconomic level consists of two sub indices: macroeconomic stability (8 criteria) and the efficiency of public expenditure (1 criterion), the investment rating of the given country is also included in this Index. CSU (Czech Statistics Office), Statistical Yearbook: Science and Technology – time line. V.1 Multicriterial technological competitiveness, http://www.czso.cz/csu/edicniplan.nsf/t/C00044E8AD/$File/100525.pdf.

11) Rifkin, J. – European Dream. How the European vision of the future quietly overshadows the American Dream. 1st Edition, New York, 2004, Czech Edition ELK, Prague, 2005, ISBN 80-86316-62-9, page 22.

12) Country codes according to ISO norms: AT = Austria, BE = Belgium, CY = Cyprus, CZ = Czech Republic, DE = Germany, DK = Denmark, EE = Estonia, ES = Spain, FI = Finland, FR = France, GR = Greece, HU = Hungary, IE = Irish Republic, IT = Italy, JP = Japan, LT = Lithuania, LU = Luxembourg, LV = Latvia, MT = Malta, NL = Netherlands, PL = Poland, PT = Portugal, = Sweden, SI = Slovenia, SK = Slovakia, UK = Great Britain, US = United states of America. Czech Normalization Institute, Codes for names of countries,

http//domino.csni.cz/NP/NotesPortalCNI.nsf/key/technicka_normalizace~informace_o_normach-c_b_vznys~kody_pro_nazvy_zemi?Open

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[11] Národní Lisabonský program 2005-2008 (Národní program reforem Ceské republiky), http://wtd.vlada.cz/files/eu/narodni_program_reforem_cz.pdf.

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[15] Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Lisabonská strategie a Ceská republika, http://wtd.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=4575.

[16] Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Rámcová pozice CR k Rocní zpráve o pokroku 2006 pro jarní Evropskou radu, http://wtd.vlada.cz/vrk/eu.htm.

[17] Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Rocní zpráva o pokroku 2006 pro jarní Evropskou radu, http://wtd.vlada.cz/vrk/eu.htm.

[18] WEF, Appendix A: Composition of the Growth Competitiveness Index, http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Global_Competitiveness_Reports/Reports/GCR_05_06/Composition_of_the_Growth_Competitiveness_Index.

[19] WEF, Global Competitiveness Report 2005-2006, http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Global_Competitiveness_Reports/Reports/GCR_05_06/Executive_Summary.

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