

Synthesis

Improving governance of the Lisbon Agenda

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The development and the implementation of the Lisbon agenda has been strongly influenced by the very governance of the process. The problems of coherence between policies, of consistency between the European and national levels or simply insufficient implementation unveil problems of governance which should be addressed. This Part is examining how:

- can this governance be improved particularly in the perspective of a comprehensive strategy for knowledge economy with sustainable development;
- how should be the approach to improve the role of public administration;
- how can the potential of the Lisbon Treaty be used with this purpose ?

1. Improving governance

First of all, governance can be improved by a general framework for a knowledge economy with sustainable development, combining the current strategies for growth and jobs, for sustainable development and for social policies. The European Council and the General Affairs Council should perform as a guardian of an increasing policy coherence. A first step in this direction is the synchronisation of calendars and of the reporting procedures, with a particular role to be played by the Spring meeting of the European Council.

The tool-box of each policy should take into account the diversity of the mechanisms for coordination of the national policies between those which aim at ensuring a common discipline and those which are more focused on fostering mutual learning about reforms. An appropriate mix should be defined for each policy.

The implementation of the guidelines at national level requires to focus on more accurate country specific recommendations, to strengthen the role of the Lisbon coordinators and to involve more systematically all the relevant stakeholders.

At the stage of involvement already reached, a higher level of politicisation of the process can be useful by increasing the accountability regarding the commitments already made and by providing a clearer identification of the choices to be made under the constraint of limited resources.

The parliamentary bodies can have a central role with this purpose. More particularly, the European Parliament can influence the general strategic priorities at European level as well as the content of the Lisbon Community Programme; the

national parliaments can influence the strategic priorities at national level, to discuss the country specific recommendations and to shape some of the concrete measures.

This can also lead to a more active debate in the public opinion with a better involvement of the relevant media. So far, a lack of public communication keeps the process of adapting European commitments to national policies in the technocratic mode.

2. A new approach on the role of public administration

The specific role of public administration in the implementation of the Lisbon agenda has been underestimated and under-analysed. Nevertheless, public administration plays a central role not only in the policy-making process, but also in the creation of a general context for citizens and companies as well as in the provision of services of general interest and finally, as a major employer. Many of the measures covered by the Lisbon agenda have been translated by changes in the legal rules and standards as well as in the content of public services and of public procurement. This has been the case in the policies for information society, research, innovation, environment, single market, education, employment, social protection and social inclusion.

The theme of the public administration was finally introduced in the Lisbon agenda during 2007, but with a limited approach connected with the efficiency and effectiveness of the public finances. The implementation of the Lisbon agenda requires a broader approach which should be based on a new synthesis overcoming the traditional debate between the Weberian and the new public management schools of thought. This means:

- to reaffirm the role of the state as the main facilitator of new solutions regarding globalization, technological change, demographic trends or environmental threats; but to shift from inward-looking orientation based on bureaucratic rules towards outward looking orientation towards users needs;
- to reaffirm the role of representative democracy but to complement it by new ways of participatory democracy;
- to reaffirm the rule of law and of the equality of citizens regarding law, but to focus the public action on achieving results;
- to preserve the idea of public service with a distinct status, culture and conditions, but to professionalize public servants not only as law experts but also as project managers able to meet citizens needs.

3. Using the potential of the Lisbon Treaty

The potential of the Lisbon Treaty to improve the governance of the Lisbon Agenda can be used with several purposes:

- enhancing the leadership of the process;
- strengthening the European instruments;
- improving the coordination of national policies;

- developing the external policies of the Union;
- exploring differentiation.

Leadership depends first of all on the capacity to develop a common vision and building a coalition of actors able to redirect the system. This requires a permanent combination of expertise and networks. In the framework of the Lisbon Treaty, leadership will depend on a complex interplay between the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Council and the rotating EU Presidencies which will remain regarding the internal policies of the Union. This is still difficult to foresee the outcome of this interplay, which will strongly depend on the concrete personalities involved. Nevertheless, it is important to take into account that the Lisbon Treaty provides some role to the rotating EU Presidency's creativity and to the consensus building by the European Council President as well as it enhances the role of the European Commission by extending the qualified majority voting and by codifying the use of the open method of coordination. Last, but not least, the influence of the European Parliament in making the strategic choices will also be widened by the extension of the co-decision process. All in all, this also means that leadership will increasingly depend not only on policies but also on politics.

Strengthening the European instruments is important not only to ensure a level playing field and better implementation at national level, but also to provide a stronger European action regarding globalisation. The Lisbon Treaty reinforces the level playing field by extending the qualified majority voting to many new areas, by restating the overall European commitment with a highly competitive social market economy, by adopting a Charter of Fundamental Rights and by setting the general clauses on the social dimension and the services of public interest. Implementation can also be fostered by the extension of qualified majority voting and the co-decision procedure and by strengthening the mechanism of the country specific recommendations in the broad economic policy guidelines.

The instrument-mix of each European policy covered by the Lisbon agenda can also be improved in the framework of the Lisbon Treaty. For instance:

- in research policy, by developing an European Research Area and combining the co-decision with the open method of coordination;
- in industrial, innovation and environmental policies also by combining the co-decision with the open method of coordination;
- in immigration policy, by moving it from the previous second pillar of the Treaties to the community method.

The European instruments can also be strengthened by a better coordination of the existing ones. This can be the case of the instruments for research such as the research platforms, the instruments for innovation such as the lead markets and the instruments for education such as the skills needs expert panels which, so far, are not coordinated enough.

Nevertheless, there are important limits for the strength of the European policies: the available financial resources, notably in the Community budget, and the political limits to European regulation and coordination of national policies.

In fact, the possibility of coordinating national policies is different according to the policy. This coordination is easier to justify where there is more visible spill over effects such as in macroeconomic, energy or immigration policies, which require a common discipline; conversely, it is more difficult to develop in sensitive areas very often considered of national sovereignty, such as social protection or education. Moreover, national diversity can also be an asset of Europe as it is in the USA, provided that equal opportunities for a knowledge economy are enhanced, according to what can be called a “New New Deal”. Cohesion policies, or even better, the cohesion dimension of the European policies should be designed with this purpose.

The external policies of the European Union should be developed to encourage an international convergence for better standards which is crucial to support the Lisbon agenda. This concerns one of the most important added values of the Lisbon Treaty, when it creates conditions for more coherence between the external policies by defining the new post of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security and the European diplomatic service. When considering this High Representative a Vice-President of the Commission, the Lisbon Treaty also encourages a stronger coherence between the external and the internal policies of the Union. Concerning the relationship with the international partners, the overall effect of these institutional innovations is reinforced by according a legal personality to the Union.

Last, but not least, new possibilities are open to move forward by differentiation. First of all, building on the clearer organisation for the Euro-zone defined by the Lisbon Treaty. The possibility to hold meetings of various Council formations in the euro-zone can be considered. Moreover, regarding the external policies, the chances to organise enhanced co-operations were also increased.

In any case, even if the Lisbon Treaty will indeed create more possibilities for a better implementation of the Lisbon agenda, futures should always be considered as remaining very open.