Business Groups and the Europe 2020 Strategy: 
Problem Analysis 

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The aim of the article is to analyze the impact of interest groups on the Europe 2020 Strategy. One of the basic assumptions of the author is to present its analysis of the public consultation on the Europe 2020 strategy and its impact on the development of the European Union. The European Union needs to stimulate the economic integration of its particular Member States and the assumed postulates will strengthen its global position. The goal is to create a strong economy, based on modern technologies and knowledge, which would be able to compete with the healthiest economies in the world. The main intention of the author of this article is to find answers to the following research questions: Did the interest groups have or do they still have any considerable influence on the strategies implemented in the European Union? To what extent do they contribute to the process of reforming the Europe 2020 strategy through consultations within the framework of the European Union? Are their lobbying activities efficient enough to allow for the perception of interest groups as significant players, capable of influencing the course of consultations on the Europe 2020 strategy? What kind of external factors make it possible for the interest groups to influence the consultations? To what extent are business groups capable of influencing particular institutions in the course of consultations on the Europe 2020 strategy? What does their activation in relation to these institutions depend on? 

Keywords: interest groups, lobbying, European Union, Europe 2020, European law 

Theoretical and Methodological Aspects 

The EU strategies can be perceived as agendas that guide the development of the European Union within the predestined perspective. Their main purpose is to create new jobs and to develop and strengthen the specific region (EU) by stimulating its economic growth. Before 2010, such assumptions served as a foundation for the Lisbon Strategy, also known as the Lisbon Agenda or the Lisbon Process. This 10-year programme was adopted by the Council of the European Union in March 2000 in Lisbon. As an economic plan, the Lisbon Agenda was supposed to promote the EU’s markets. Its main initiative included the creation of the most competitive and most dynamic economy in the world. However, the economic and financial crisis that arose at the beginning of 2008 in the United States (and hit Europe in the autumn of 2008) destabilized the financial market and, consequently, hampered the economic development of the EU. The Lisbon Agenda seemed to be an appropriate and ambitious programme established in order to bring the European economy to the highest level and to transform it into one of the most competitive economies in the world. Nevertheless, the extensive formula of its goals together with various exogenous factors made it impossible to implement it fully until 2010. 

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Most business groups, researchers and experts in the field of Lisbon Strategy are aware of this fact. Such groups as Confederation of European Business—BUSINESSEUROPE, Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry (EUROCHAMBRES), European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC), European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT), European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPI) and many others support changes that could lead to the creation of one of the strongest economies in the world. Such observations were made in numerous reports published by various interest groups. Moreover, the European Union developed its own reports, which took the progress in the implementation of the Lisbon Process into consideration. Such reports caused a reaction of numerous working groups operating within particular business groups and many researchers, such as André Sapir, who took notice of the matter of implementation of the entire Lisbon Strategy and Wim Kok (Kok review Lisbon Strategy, excellent diagnosis weak remedies)\(^1\). Like Sapir, Kok also criticized low efficiency in the fulfilment of the intended goals of the Lisbon Strategy.

The Europe 2020 is a programme that is supposed to be the continuation of the Lisbon Strategy, which could not be successfully implemented due to the aforementioned crisis of 2008 and its gradual aggravation in the following years, which also had a negative impact on the European Union (European Commission, 2010a).

In order to examine this matter in greater detail, I will use the theory of neo-functionalism (Rosamond, 2000, p. 50, Kurczewska, 2008, p. 8), which is crucial from the perspective of operations carried out by interest groups. Ernst Haas is the most renowned forerunner of this theory. According to him, the fundamental assumption of neo-functionalism is based on the rejection of integrity and unanimity of operations carried out by a subject perceived as an organized society (country or international organisation). He claims that the presuppositions that underlie the neo-functional concept are based on the assumption that the state exists as a collection of various interest groups (so-called business groups) that operate in order to achieve their goals (Haas, 1964a, p. 37). In other words, articulation of the business groups’ interests may also take place in the form of public consultations, which could be beneficial to the development of the European Union. In Ernst Haas’ opinion, the primary purpose of business elites is to articulate their interests and to pursue the accomplishment of their political operations. Moreover, the business groups act as “certain structures of social character”. Such a formula of cooperation between various interest groups is aimed at the fulfilment of diverse expectations and interests. As it is emphasized by Haas, the aim of such an approach is not to achieve the common good, but to protect the interests promoted by particular groups. He perceives such a method of cooperation as an accomplishment of the specific interest (of a group), which, in the terminological sense, could be seen as an interest characterized by a particular group—a business group (Haas, 1964b, p. 230). One of the priorities related to the development of the EU is to design periodic strategies aimed at the development of various economic and social areas. Articulation of interests in the form of consultations on the assumptions associated with the Europe 2020 strategy can be perceived as an attempt made to achieve the common good and to accomplish the structural concept assumptions.

Considering the theory and research hypothesis described above as well as conducting an analysis of the business groups as one of the subjects of the European integration, from the perspective of articulating their interests in the course of public consultations (Czub, 2012, pp. 45-46), the following research questions were phrased:

\(^1\) http://www.euractiv.com/en/innovation/kok-review-lisbon-strategy-excellent-diagnosis-weak-remedies/article-131812
Did the interest groups have or do they still have any considerable influence on the strategies implemented in the European Union? To what extent do they contribute to the process of reforming the Europe 2020 strategy through consultations within the framework of the European Union? Are their lobbying activities efficient enough to allow for the perception of interest groups as significant players, capable of influencing the course of consultations on the Europe 2020 strategy? What kind of external factors make it possible for the interest groups to influence the consultations? To what extent are business groups capable of influencing particular institutions in the course of consultations on the Europe 2020 strategy? What does their activation in relation to these institutions depend on?

Considering the abovementioned research problem related to the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy, I propose the following research hypothesis: It is possible to fully implement the entire programme of the Europe 2020 strategy through deep involvement of business groups and other stakeholders, reducing the number of objectives to achieve, improving efficient implementation of the strategy as well as introducing a control monitoring system at each stage of the implementation. Exogenous factors, such as economic, social or migration crises in the European Union, are independent variables that may prevent proper implementation of the strategy in full.

**New Dimension: Europe 2020 Strategy**

“2010 must mark a new beginning. I want Europe to emerge stronger from the economic and financial crisis” (European Commission, 2010a). The former President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, used these words to highlight the importance of the new European strategy—Europe 2020, which is supposed to guide the EU along the new, better and more efficient path towards development. Its goals can be classified into three primary, mutually reinforcing priorities: smart growth—developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation, sustainable growth—promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy, inclusive growth—fostering a high-employment economy delivering economic, social and territorial cohesion (European Commission, 2010a, pp. 2-3). Moreover, the Commission developed seven flagship initiatives, that will allow for further progress within each of the priority themes specified above (European Commission, 2010a, pp. 5-6):

1. “Innovation Union to improve framework conditions and access to finance for research and innovation so as to ensure that innovative ideas can be turned into products and services that create growth and jobs”;
2. “Youth on the move to enhance the performance of education systems and to facilitate the entry of young people to the labour market”;
3. “A digital agenda for Europe to speed up the roll-out of high-speed internet and reap the benefits of a digital single market for households and firms”;
4. “Resource efficient Europe to help decouple economic growth from the use of resources, support the shift towards a low carbon economy, increase the use of renewable energy sources, modernise our transport sector and promote energy efficiency”;
5. “An industrial policy for the globalisation era to improve the business environment, notably for SMEs, and to support the development of a strong and sustainable industrial base able to compete globally”;
6. “An agenda for new skills and jobs to modernise labour markets and empower people by developing their skills throughout the lifecycle with a view to increase labour participation and better match labour supply and demand, including through labour mobility”;

(7) “European platform against poverty to ensure social and territorial cohesion such that the benefits of
growth and jobs are widely shared and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion are enabled to live in
dignity and take an active part in society”.

In relation to the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy, these guidelines seem to be appropriate. The
European Union needs to stimulate the economic integration of its particular Member States and the assumed
postulates will strengthen its global position. The goal is to create a strong economy, based on modern
technologies and knowledge, which would be able to compete with the healthiest economies in the world.

Consultation Process Versus Interest Groups

Public consultations on the Europe 2020 strategy were officially initiated on 24 November 2009 and
concluded on 15 January 2010. As it was in the case of the previously implemented strategies, business groups
want to influence the priorities and progress of the strategy (European Commission, 2009a). One of their
primary goals is to implement a wide scope of supervision over the works on the application of the assumed
guidelines. The European Commission received over 1,400 consultations in relation to the new Europe 2020
strategy as a confirmation of such statement (European Commission, 2010b). These contributions came from
various social and economic subjects (interest groups) representing numerous sectors and interested in further
development and integration of the EU (European Commission, 2010b). Consultations came from all Member
States and by entities representing the American and Japanese markets, which proves that the development of
the EU is important not only to those business groups that operate within the EU itself. During the seven-week
period of consultation, the European Commission received opinions from the following parties: Member States’
governments, national parliaments (2), EU and national political parties (8), ministries or governmental
agencies (30), regional public authorities (148), trade union organisations from both the EU and national levels
(45), EU and national business and professional federations (232), individual companies (51), NGOs (190),
“think tanks” (54), representatives of the academic community (32), consumer organisations (10) and citizens
(500).

The most important business organisations that expressed their opinions at the EU level include:
Confederation of European Business—BUSINESSEUROPE, European Cement Association—CEMBUREAU,
Confédération Européenne des Associations de Petites et Moyennes Entreprises—CEA-PME, Confederation of
European Paper Industries—CEPI, Association of European Chambers of Commerce and
Industry—EUROCHAMBRES, Association of the Electricity Industry in Europe—EUROELECTRIC,
European Apparel and Textile Confederation—EURATEX, EuroCommerce, European Association for
Bioindustries—EuropaBio, European Automobile Manufacturers Association—ACEA, European Aluminium
Association—EAA, European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services—CEEP,
European Chemical Industry Council—CEFIC, European Steel Association—EUROFER, European Round
Table of Industrialists—ERT, European Trade Union Confederation—ETUC, European Wind Energy
Association—EWEA, European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises—UEAPME,
American Chamber of Commerce to the European Union—AmCham EU, Japan Business Council in
Europe—JBCE and many more. The primary purpose of consultations on the Europe 2020 strategy was to
revise the assumptions and to cooperate with the influential business group lobby in the implementation of new
postulates and solutions, which could contribute to the economic growth and integration of the EU, while
evaluating the possibilities of achieving the assumed goals. It should be noted that the European Commission very much welcomed all the opinions it received from the business groups and other parties taking an active part in the consultations. Such large aggregation of data on the Europe 2020 strategy proves that numerous parties are willing to influence the shape, integration and growth of the EU in the future. The Commission assured that all opinions will be taken into consideration during the upcoming works related to the Europe 2020 strategy (European Commission, 2010b). The Commission determined five headline targets that are supposed to be adjusted to the level of particular Member States. In regards to these targets, the EU will raise the employment rate of the population aged 20-64 from the current 69% to 75%, achieve the target of investing three percent of GDP in R&D, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% until 2020 (increase the share of renewable energy in the final energy consumption to 20%), reduce the share of early school leavers to 10% from the current 15% and increase the share of the population having completed tertiary education to 40%, reduce the number of Europeans living below national poverty lines by 25%, from current 80 million to 20 million in 2020 (Europe “EU 2020” Green, Growth and Jobs)\(^2\).

The business groups evaluated these postulates as substantially beneficial. They only emphasized the need to adjust the specified minimum threshold values to particular Member States. They also pointed out that in the case of the Lisbon Strategy there was no progressive synergy between the assumed goals and their implementation, both at the level of the EU and in the case of particular Member States. Such an opinion was expressed for instance by Wim Philipp (Former Secretary General at ERT). Passivity and lack of or delayed reactions, as well as the economic crisis were the primary reasons behind the failure of the Lisbon Strategy (12 million engineers needed make EU competitive industrialist claims)\(^3\). In order to avoid a similar situation, the Europe 2020 strategy (which is supposed to continue the unachieved goals of the Lisbon Strategy) requires immediate development of a legal framework and establishment of monitoring methods that could allow for appropriate implementation at the level of the European Commission (Wim Philipp claims that the Commission missed the opportunity to act during the first years of the 21st century). ERT claims that the proposed postulates of the new strategy should put much emphasis on innovativeness, sustainability and competitiveness.

The Europe 2020 strategy should manage and determine a number of real and attainable priority goals (European Commission, 2009b, pp. 1-22).

BUSINESSEUROPE expressed a similar opinion, claiming that the new strategy proposes appropriate postulates and that the direction towards the reinforcement of the European position at an international level is right. Simultaneously however, it highlights the fact that the development of specific guidelines needs to be followed by making appropriate steps towards the achievement of the assumed goals. Moreover, the interest groups claim that the verification of progress should take place soon after the commencement of the Commission’s activity (Europe “EU 2020” Green, Growth and Jobs)\(^4\). Due to such an approach, they would be able to verify whether the European Commission supervises the strategy in a proper manner much earlier than after 10 years (as it was in the case of Lisbon Strategy). The analysis performed by BUSINESSEUROPE proves that the evaluated postulates are adjustable. Moreover, numerous organisations (social partners and environmental organisations in particular) noticed the fact that the consultations on such an important strategy


\(^3\) Retrieved from http://www.euractiv.com/en/priorities/12-million-engineers-needed-make-eu-competitive-industrialist-claims

took place in the Christmas period and lasted for seven weeks only. According to them, it is impossible to
develop a reliable opinion about the further growth of the EU and goals related to the new Europe 2020 strategy
in such a short time (NGOs defy Commission on “EU 2020” agenda)⁵.

CEEP is another group that approves the Europe 2020 strategy. Ralf Resch, who at that time occupied the
position of the Secretary General at CEEP, raised another important issue and said that: “it is impossible” to
achieve smart and sustainable growth “without efficient and effective education systems, appropriate and
efficient energy infrastructure and stable health care and social services” (Europe “EU 2020” green, growth and
jobs)⁶. CEEP’s approach shows that presuppositions related to the guidelines of the Europe 2020 strategy are
correct, but there is a need for the system of their implementation and monitoring.

EUROCHAMBRES also voiced an opinion in a similar tone. It claimed that the Commission should
implement the strategy in a more efficient manner. Ben Butters, who during that time was the Director of
European Affairs in EUROCHAMBRES, perceived the assumptions of the Lisbon Strategy as “strong”, but
noticed the flaws in their implementation. He also emphasized the fact that the implementation of this “new
strategy” would require support in the form of reforms. In the case of the Lisbon Strategy, the lack of such
reforms turned the entire programme into postulates that could not be implemented in reality. EUROCHAMBRES
also claimed that the introduction of any efficient strategy requires the implementation of postulates, efficient monitoring and coordination of legislation. Apart from that, Butters criticizes the method of
open coordination. He considers it to be “heavily flawed” and demands its reinforcement in order to intensify
the actions aimed at the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy (Europe “EU 2020” Green, Growth and
Jobs)⁷.

EAA, an organisation that represents the producers of aluminium, processing and recycling companies,
also supports the Europe 2020 strategy. Nevertheless, we need to remember that its main goal is to ensure a
long-term stability of aluminium as the primary material used in the manufacturing of various products for
consumers in the whole world. The sector represented by the EAA is composed mainly of small and
medium-sized enterprises that operate in the European and international markets. In the opinion expressed by
the EAA, a “sustainable social market economy” cannot be based only on innovation, knowledge and services.
EAA supports the idea that “Europe needs reinforcement and creation and maintenance of a competitive and
integrated industrial base” (European Commission, consultations)⁸. Even in the digital age, in the time of
knowledge and services, the manufacturing industry remains an important element of the economy. Apart from
providing a considerable number of jobs and other economic aspects, it serves as a basis for the production of
infrastructure and equipment that can be used to generate and transfer the knowledge. Aluminium industry
provides the equipment necessary for the operation of the entire digital economy (computers, numbering
machines, control machinery, laboratory equipment). The European industry depends on raw materials, such as
aluminium. In order to exist, it needs to provide European producers with all necessary resources (materials,
energy etc.) and markets (national and foreign). Policies or means adopted by the EU and/or its Member States
influence the risk related to that matter and, consequently, the existence and integrity of the European industrial
base. This in turn poses a threat to the European capability of investing in growth, innovation and industry.

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EAA ponders also on the issue of ecology and environmental protection. In its opinion, careful management and exploitation of natural resources should be performed in such a way to ensure the safety of future generations. Taking ecology into consideration, EAA claims that the resources should be recycled more efficiently. Recycling makes it possible to reduce the extraction and exploitation of raw materials. In its contribution to the consultations on the Europe 2020 strategy, EAA expresses its approval for the ambition to strengthen the position of the EU in the global market.

Representing one of the most creative and innovative areas of the global textiles and clothing industry, EURATEX also actively supports the European Commission and its ideas for the creation of a stable system of education, research and innovation. EURATEX mentions the fact that the textiles and clothing industry welcomed the initiative of promoting cooperation between the EU and its Member States. Research fragmentation caused by the currently adopted system seems to be a weakness of Europe. EURATEX claims that the notion of the “creative industry” should also include “non-technological innovations”, which are crucial for numerous European sectors, especially those involved in the production of textiles and clothing.

Regardless of the fact that access to public funds allocated for R&D has been recently improved, the most difficult challenge that needs to be faced is the implementation of innovative manufacturing methods, as the entire process needs to be performed by the companies (small, medium-sized and large enterprises alike). EUROTEX also points out that the implementation process (research → production) involves a considerable risk and challenge, especially for the small and medium-sized enterprises, or for any kind of company that operates in rapidly growing sectors that are not sufficiently recognized by private financial institutions or public authorities (such as fashion) (European Commission, 2009c, p.2).

ACEA, an organization that represents the car manufacturing sector, also praises the initiative designed to develop new strategy for the economic growth and employment (Europe 2020), which needs to be implemented during an economic crisis. Europe needs an applicable industrial policy in order to compete in the global market in the future. Therefore, it requires a clear vision of its future industrial base and an integrated implementation policy. ACEA claims that the CARS 21 initiative (European Commission, 2010b) may and should make a major contribution to the industrial policy of the EU in the key sector of the automotive industry. ACEA also emphasizes the fact that the aspects related to environmental policies should ensure balance between the determined economic and social goals and the protection of natural environment. ACEA points out that industrial development should involve the improvement and innovation in all three sectors specified above. Another important matter raised by the ACEA is related to the reinforcement and improvement of legal regulations. Improved legislation is one of the elementary factors that influence the economic growth, job creation process and environmental protection. ACEA emphasizes the fact that the European automotive market is a global leader in the production of environmentally friendly vehicles and will strive to keep this position (European Commission, 2009d, pp. 1-2). As far as the integrated policy is concerned, ACEA approves the Commission’s intention to improve the integration of policies between various areas, EU institutions and

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10 “Non-technological innovations” in the textiles and clothing industry (depending on the product type) can constitute up to 20% of turnover invested in the product development.
11 Decyzja Komisji z dnia 14 października 2010 r. powołująca ponownie CARS 21 — grupę sokiegoszebelna ds. konkurencyjności i zrównoważonego rozwoju przemysłu motoryzacyjnego w Unii Europejskiej, KE 2010/C 280/08, Dz. Urz. UE C 280/32.
Member States (European Commission, 2009d). In order to fulfill its own ambitions and to meet its own challenges, the EU needs to develop an industrial policy, which could be more efficient in the areas of environment and climate protection and power industry. In particular, ACEA highlights the need for an integrated approach to the automotive industry and safety regulations. It also demands the improvement of infrastructure for the sake of sustainable mobility and transport. ACEA is pleased that the Commission recognizes the need for infrastructure modernization, which is a key factor in the process of reducing CO2 emissions. ACEA proves that infrastructural investments should be realized in places where they can substantially contribute to the improvement of transport efficiency (especially to the reduction of CO2 emission) and not in places determined on the basis of a specific means of transport, as it is postulated by the Commission. ACEA claims that the “transition” from road to other means of transport is not a wise choice. It is impermissible to base European transport on an assumption that some types of transport will be more environmentally friendly than others. Departure from road transport without careful evaluation of its efficiency is risky and the economic cost of such a transition can be very high. At the same time, it will not provide any environmental benefits and can even turn out to be harmful. For instance, in the case of freight transport, the environmental performance of the given means of transport depends on its maximum capacity. The capacity in turn depends on the volume and number of transported goods. ACEA emphasizes the fact that the investments related to the use of alternative fuels, including electrical power or hydrogen (e.g. Opel has been producing a German model of Zafira fuelled by natural gas since the first decade of the 21st century; Solaris has also introduced alternative power sources into its production processes) should be given serious consideration. As far as the trade policy is concerned, the opinion of ACEA is based on the assumption that the globalization and increase in the production capacity of emerging markets would improve the European trade performance. Car manufacturers are ready to face this challenge and support the principles of free trade and open markets. The EU needs to take firm actions against protectionism and should guarantee that the future bilateral and multilateral trade agreements will be well-balanced and based on the principles of mutual benefits, in accordance with the provisions of the CARS 21 program12.

Representing the interests of steel industry manufacturers, the European business group EUROFER also approves the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy. In its opinion, the strategy is particularly important for the steel industry sector (European Commission, 2009e, pp. 1-3). According to EUROFER, the EU is the second biggest steel producer in the world (200 million tons a year—right after China) and has twice as much manufacturing resources as the USA. Apart from oil, steel is one of the most important trade goods sold at the international level (European Commission, 2009e, p. 1). In its manifesto related to the European steel industry, EUROFER specified the elementary conditions necessary for the achievement of the EU’s goals in 2020. These conditions need to be taken into account in the Europe 2020 strategy (European Commission, 2009e, pp. 1-3). If the EU wants to keep the position of a global leader in innovation, remain environmentally friendly and create a sufficient number of jobs for its citizens, the chain of production relations should remain intact (it should be clearly specified in the strategy). It means that the EU should provide the main branches of its industry (such as steel industry) with broad perspectives for development in Europe. Economies that rely only or mainly on services are not capable of providing their citizens with long-lasting prosperity. Therefore, the fact

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that the European industry will remain the basic “source” of prosperity in Europe should be considered in the strategy. Elementary branches of the European industry are very innovative. For example, EUROFER proves that the European steel manufacturers develop and produce thousands of new solutions for the steel industry, providing a foundation for the European innovation and sustainability. Simultaneously, they reduce CO2 emissions and bring benefits related to energy consumption in such diverse and important areas as motorization, construction, machinery, electronics, household appliances and wind turbines. EUROFER also emphasizes the fact that steel is 100% recyclable and therefore contributes to the long-term protection of essential resources for the generations to come. All wind turbines in Europe were produced with the use of steel. Europe has already achieved the status of a global leader in the areas of wind power and stainless steel. The EU needs to aim at the healthy development and implementation of breakthrough technologies in Europe. Moreover, EUROFER points out that in order to achieve its climate-related goals, the EC needs to renounce its commitment to the reduction in production. We need to remember that the EU’s policies related to climate change cannot involve the transfer of European production to third countries. Europe needs to prove that it can achieve its goals related to greenhouse gas emission reduction without decreasing the production of the energy-consuming branches of industry. It is a condition necessary for the development of a green economy and simultaneous maintenance of the production capacity levels without “transferring” them to third countries.\(^\text{13}\)

As far as the matter of innovations is concerned, the contributions on the Europe 2020 strategy were submitted also by such business groups as the European Wind Energy Association. In the opinion of EWEA, the entire strategy should be perceived as a key element in getting the European Union out of the economic crisis. It also highlights the importance of modern technologies, including renewable energy sources. EWEA claims that when developing its strategies for the next few years, the European Commission needs to devise an effective method for maintaining and improving energy technologies based on renewable energy sources, wind power in particular (European Commission, 2009f, pp. 1-10). Through its contribution, EWEA wants to express its opinion on the future of the Europe 2020 strategy and to emphasize the role and importance of renewable energy sources (including wind power). Simultaneously, it postulates the creation of the European competitiveness, stimulation of technological innovations and export potential as well as the creation of new jobs.\(^\text{14}\)

The aforementioned guidelines related to targeting and proper implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy prove that business groups addressed this issue in a solid manner. Both the approvals and disapprovals of particular goals seem to be crucial for individual business groups that represent the interests of specific sectors. We need to remember that the opinions expressed by the business groups in the form of consultations submitted to the European Commission reflect their priorities. The fundamental assumptions, verified during the implementation of the strategy, are related to the scope of development and integration of the internal market of the EU. Moreover, the business groups put much emphasis on the fact that the implementation of particular assumptions should not neglect the issues related to small and medium-sized enterprises, as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have substantial influence on the development and integration of the EU. Business groups also pointed out that in order to achieve the goals of the strategy, the EU needs to introduce legal regulations that could be sufficiently transparent and helpful in regards to particular issues related to the Europe 2020


strategy. They also postulated the replacement of legal regulations that are not legible enough, or which are overly bureaucratic with more predictable, transparent and stable legal framework that could contribute to the development of the EU.

To conclude, the business groups focused mainly on the following areas:

(a) Single market:
   1. labor mobility policy;
   2. introduction of a unitary patent system and a judiciary system capable of resolving patent disputes;
   3. provision of equal and fair business environment (for entrepreneurs);
   4. harmonized law enforcement in relation to entrepreneurs in all Member States;
   5. introduction of a single financial market, improved legal regulations and financial supervision;
   6. improvement of access to corporate finance;
   7. introduction of low carbon technologies into power industry.

(b) Digital single market:
   1. creation of a uniform digital market;
   2. creation of a copyright management system (improvement of copyright protection).

(c) Information and communication technologies:
   1. support for innovation, growth and creativity;
   2. introduction of new, fast technological computer networks (maintenance of open competition);
   3. access to broadband network (e.g. Internet);

(d) Research, education and innovation:
   1. commercialisation of research and innovation projects;
   2. protection of intellectual property;
   3. emphasis on vocational training;
   4. the notion of innovation should also cover non-technical fields (social organisations);
   5. research coordination and standardization (introduction of a system);
   6. improvement of research environment;
   7. Intel’s proposal to allocate app. 1 billion Euros for a venture capital fund within the EFI → funds for innovative ideas provided in cooperation with the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT).

Conclusions

To conclude, the business groups influence the future shape and direction of the EU development. As it was mentioned earlier, the assumptions that the strategy is based on are appropriate and the program should be as transparent and applicable as possible. In the opinion of various business groups and numerous researchers, the Lisbon Strategy failed because its assumptions could not be implemented and its goals were too broad. An analysis of the issues referred to by particular business groups shows a certain analogy. First of all, the business groups, which represent particular interests, pay much attention to the postulates related to their general concerns. Such an attitude is understandable, as business groups represent various and specific areas of interest. Secondly, apart from the business groups, other subjects representing each branch of industry and economy from various sectors also took part in the consultations. Considering the postulates presented above, we may
notice that they are focused on the matters related to the sectors represented by particular business groups. It is especially visible in the case of such sectoral business groups as EWEA, EUROELECTRIC, EURATEX or EUROFER. As far as the consultations are concerned, the primary purpose of these organizations was to represent their members and to influence the future form of European integration and development. Their role was to present postulates, solutions and suggestions that could actually have an impact on the further development of the EU. Therefore, the consultations on the new Europe 2020 strategy may be seen as an element of the program that determines the direction of the European development (European Commission, 2011). By expressing their opinions and proposing their postulates, business groups attempt to influence the development of the EU, simultaneously trying to achieve goals established by their members. Predominantly, the groups were focused on development and progressing integration of the EU, especially in the field of the single market. They emphasized their postulates, simultaneously approving the main assumptions of the implemented strategy. The effect produced during the revision and implementation of particular parts of the program may constitute a major turning point in the case of these consultations. This thesis seems to be supported by the fact that the European Commission agreed to monitor the implementation of particular elements of the strategy, which was so strongly emphasized by numerous business groups. In January 2011, the EC produced the first report on the implementation progress (European Commission, 2011, pp. 1-4). This first monitoring report covers the matters related to the determination of goals that particular Member States want to achieve until 2020. These matters were specified in the spring and autumn of 2010. Currently, we need to closely observe whether the assumptions of the new Europe 2020 strategy introduced in March 2010 will be fully implemented and whether they can be perceived as the continuation of the Lisbon Strategy (e.g. issues related to the development of economy based on knowledge or employment growth). We also need to emphasize the fact that the actions performed by the experts and business groups have already achieved a partial success (introduction of monitoring and verification of the assumed goals). Therefore, due to the performance of effective lobbying activities in relation to the EC and consultations on the Europe 2020 strategy, the role of business groups is already visible. The program of the Europe 2020 strategy was developed and modified on the basis of the lobbying compromise principle. It proves that the business groups play an intermediary, advisory and consultative role in the institutional system of the EU and are capable of influencing the entire European Union.

References


