

Preface

The Lisbon Agenda is Europe's attempt to address the challenges posed by an evolving global economy. An ambitious choice was made in 2000 to promote a highly competitive knowledge and innovation-based economy to ensure sustainable growth, more and better jobs, social cohesion and respect for the environment. What is specific to the path adopted by Europe is not the prioritization of a knowledge-intensive economy – which is now found in many other regions of the world; it is, rather, the ambition to combine that pursuit with other features, to encourage balanced and sustainable development in accordance with European values. It is this particular combination of goals that is Europe's contribution to bringing about a richer experience of prosperity.

The Lisbon Agenda, however, involves deep transformations of Europe's economies and societies. What is at stake is not just the shift towards a high-knowledge and low-carbon economy, but the reform of a broad range of institutions, from universities, social protection and employment services, to public administration, financial systems and businesses as well. Since its inception, the Lisbon Agenda has redirected priorities in a wide range of policies, including information society, research, innovation, education, employment, social protection, environmental, single market, competition and fiscal policies. New initiatives have been launched at the European level, and several reforms are under way at the national level, albeit with great variations across Member States. More recently, the implications of the Lisbon Agenda for the financial and institutional instruments of the Union and for European Union (EU) external action have been recognized. Furthermore, the recently adopted Lisbon Treaty can provide a new framework for the implementation of the Lisbon Agenda. However, at the time of writing its ratification was still not completed.

A permanent interaction between the European agenda and the research agenda underpins these policy developments. This book is designed to illustrate how that interaction works. It presents the outcome of a dialogue between policy-making and academic perspectives, which was organized around four thematic workshops held between 2006 and 2008, in Brussels and in Lisbon. The book is organized according to the four major themes and the structure of discussions at these workshops. Thus, each section begins with a key issues chapter which adopts a policy-making perspective,

is followed by 'reply' chapters prepared by renowned academics, and concludes with a chapter building on the debates held at each workshop. The four themes focus on strategic issues for the design and implementation of the Lisbon Agenda. They are: the development of the Lisbon Agenda at the European level; the Lisbon Agenda and national diversity; the external dimension of the Lisbon Agenda; and the Lisbon Agenda and European governance.

The Introduction (and Conclusion) to the book offer a narrative history of and examine the future prospects of the Lisbon Agenda. Relevant official documents are provided in the Appendices. These choices reflect my personal experience as a policy advisor for the Lisbon Agenda throughout its existence, in the European Commission and, more particularly, during the three presidencies of the European Union charged with defining the Lisbon Agenda (2000), undertaking its mid-term review (2005), and preparing the new cycle for 2008–10 (2007). Between 2002 and 2006, when I chaired the advisory group for the social sciences of the European Commission, there was also a broad exchange of views with the European academic community about the Lisbon Agenda.

The authors of this book have been major sources of inspiration for the Lisbon Agenda and have been very active in providing new contributions for its development, most of them since the launch of the Agenda. This 'Lisbon Agenda group', then, is one of the manifestations of the broader intellectual movement that extends throughout Europe and beyond, that has searched for new development models and explored paradigm shifts, maintaining an interdisciplinary, global and long-term approach in the analysis of the institutional framework of economies, combining new key concepts such as growth regime, knowledge economy, learning and innovation, welfare regime, sustainable development, multilevel governance and global order.

This book is also the outcome of many debates and conferences held across Europe and beyond, and of institutional meetings held within governments, the European Commission, the EU Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of Regions and the European Council. As I was involved in this process from the start, it is impossible to acknowledge here the thousands of people I have met to discuss different aspects of this Agenda. Policy-makers, scholars and different civil society actors have contributed to implement and develop this Agenda in what was a very creative process. It is to them that I want to express all my gratitude, even if the views expressed here can only be attributed to the authors of these chapters.

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