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By Ann Mettler

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President Barroso's "Political Guidelines for the Next Commission" are a testament to how his thinking and actions have evolved over the past five years, paving the way for a politically sawy second term in office. While he continues to be a pragmatic centrist at heart who has staved true to his beliefs and convictions, he has clearly developed a new. more successful modus operandi for tackling his priorities -- from building broad, reputable coalitions for progress and devising a compelling and inclusive rhetoric for change to positioning issues institutionally in ways that increase the chances for success. See also Ann Mettler, From Why to How: Reflections on the Lisbon Agenda Post-2010 (Brussels: Lisbon Council, 2008).

'He that will not apply new remedies must expect new evils; for time is the greatest innovator.'

Sir Francis Bacon

With the Lisbon Treaty finally in the end game after the Irish Yes vote on 02 October, and José Manuel Barroso embarking on a second term as European Commission president, it will be more important than ever before to position the EU's executive arm as an agent of change, a driver of innovation, and a catalyst for a more successful, sustainable and entrepreneurial future. In an effort to contend with the office of President of the European Council, due to be established as soon as the Lisbon Treaty will be ratified in Poland and the Czech Republic, it will be crucial to give more identity to the European Commission, and embed it firmly as a body that works at the leading-edge of economic and social developments and in the interest of the larger European common good. Against this backdrop – and in view of mastering the deepest recession in decades - this moment is ripe with opportunity to break with "business as usual" and muster the courage to bring about promising modernisation and stimulating innovation. While on occasion these must be comprehensive, bold reforms, other areas may only need minor changes of nuance, of positioning, of communicating or of internal organisation. One of the lessons learned from Barroso I is that how something is done is as important as what is being done or why something is being done. That is why President Barroso and the new European Commission should consider the following 10 priorities and issue areas:

I. Position the Internal Market Firmly in Citizen-Centric, Consumer-Oriented Policies and Politics

In the wake of the economic crisis and deep recession, the internal market is bound to come under severe strain as governments seek to shield some domestic companies from competition and prop up national champions. Traditionally, moves of this type have been attacked from the position that closing markets

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'A better way of making the case for the internal market is to point out that violations harm consumers first and foremost.'

William W. Lewis and Ann Mettler, Consumers and Competition: Unlocking Europe's Drivers of Productivity (Brussels: Lisbon Council, 2007).

An overwhelming majority (70%) of respondents to a special Eurobarometer survey supported the need for EU intervention to lower roaming costs across the EU to the benefit of ordinary citizens. See European Commission, "Roaming," Special Eurobarometer 269 (March 2007).

and subsidising national champions harm Europe's overall competitiveness and are generally "bad for business," which is certainly true. But this way of arguing rings hollow in the current environment of deep distrust vis-à-vis the private sector and managers, where defending the internal market for businesses' sake could easily backfire. A better, more fruitful and more valid way of making the case for the internal market is to point out that violations harm consumers first and foremost. Protectionism and distortion of competition drive up prices, lead to lower-quality products and services and reduce choice.² In the current European Commission (2004-2009), Commissioners Viviane Reding (information society and media) and Neelie Kroes (competition) arguably did more to defend the internal market than the internal market commissioner himself. And they did so wisely, arguing forcibly and with much moral command on the behalf of Europe's consumers – to much popular acclaim.³ Against this backdrop, the internal market portfolio needs to be reevaluated and re-thought because neither the traditional arguments in its defense nor the organisational positioning within the Commission have worked terribly well of late. President Barroso should draw lessons from this shortcoming and think of smart ways to relate the inherent benefits of the internal market to society and the media, and position this important dossier institutionally so that it is set up for success and occupies firmly the moral high ground.

II. Ignore at Your Peril: Service Sector Key Driver of Growth, High-Quality Jobs and Innovation

The service sector, which accounts for more than 70% of the economy and virtually all new jobs in the EU, can at best be described as an "orphan" of the current Commission, with no one feeling entirely responsible or in charge. Nominally under the stewardship of DG Internal Market and Services, that directorate and the commissioner have interpreted their mandate extremely narrowly, i.e. focusing primarily on the completion of the internal market in services or devising cross-border regulations for financial services. That is not a bad place



Ten Recommendations for the Next European Commission

- I. Position internal market in citizen-centric policies
- II. Focus more on service sector
- III. Broaden the concept and understanding of innovation
- IV. Restore fiscal sustainability
- V. Close gap between substance and communication
- VI. Increase surveys and use Web 2.0
- VII. Master horizontal issues in an institution built on silos
- VIII. Create new institutions to overcome bureaucratic inertia
- IX. Choose benchmarks wisely and develop European indicators
- X. Reform the EU budget

'Stuck in a corporatist paradigm and the incremental innovation model of the last century, we have fallen short of our potential.'

The Competitiveness Council on 24 September 2009 emphasised that services warrant greater attention in a future European innovation plan. According to Maud Olofsson, Swedish minister for enterprise and energy, "The services sector is one of the leading growth sectors and has great potential for innovation. Learning more about how innovation comes about in the services sector also gives us tools to increase the capacity for innovation throughout the economy."

See also Ann Mettler, "An Agenda Worthy of the Name: A Broader, More Inclusive Understanding of Innovation is Vital if the Lisbon Agenda is to Successfully Tackle Future Economic and Social Challenges," *The Parliament* Magazine, Issue 291, 22 June 2009.

See forthcoming conclusions by Business Panel on Future EU Innovation Policy, which will call for more social innovation.

In order to expose his staff to new thinking and innovative ideas, US President Obama's Office of Personnel Management has been visiting companies like IDEO, a global design consultancy, Facebook and Google to learn about inventive ways of promoting creative thinking.

to start but it is hardly enough to provide a holistic policy environment that will allow new, innovative, high value-added services to flourish and thrive. Of course, bits and pieces of the service sector are handled by other DGs, such as Research, which has commissioned reports on innovation in services, or DG Enterprise. But overall, the set-up of the current Commission is like a bulwark for manufacturing and agriculture, with services the unloved child that no one feels responsible for – and that despite the fact that many top manufacturing companies themselves rely more and more on advanced services to compete in European and global markets. Clever combinations of services and manufacturing are part of what makes the successful ones flourish. Many, if not most, of the well-paid, high value-added green and white jobs that policy makers say they want to create in coming years will be in the service sector. It's time that these realities are sufficiently reflected in EU policies, and that we pay the service sector the attention – and political space – it deserves.

III. A Process as Much as an Outcome: Broaden the Concept and Understanding of Innovation

A lot has been achieved in the first Barroso term with regards to innovation. It has now been put squarely on the policy map as a top priority and political necessity. But despite the rhetoric, Europe falls short of being truly an innovative society, a place that pushes the boundaries of what's possible, a global hub for the most creative and entrepreneurial people, or a place where new ideas can fly and are not only accepted but actively welcome. Stuck in a corporatist paradigm and the incremental innovation model of the last century, we have fallen short of our potential. Too squarely focused on research, scientists and the development of new products in the private sector, we have failed to build the larger infrastructure and innovation eco-system that are necessary to turn Europe into a "dynamic, knowledge-based society," as we once set out to do. So what needs to be done? For starters, there should be a dedicated innovation commissioner whose job it would be to raise the profile of innovation and lend a face and a name to the cause.⁵ This person should not only focus on the private sector, research and products, but also on the public and the so-called "third sector," where NGOs and civil society work, not because the Commission has competencies in these areas but because it can serve as a bully pulpit for raising key issues, for facilitating an exchange of best practices and becoming a driving force for positive change. Last but not least, this person should hold the Commission accountable to its own standards, i.e. ensure that innovation can thrive within the Commission and that bureaucratic hurdles and institutional structures which stifle incentives to put forward new ideas or be more creative are tackled. Imagine if you had someone within the Commission or College whose job it was to shake things up, challenge the common wisdom or question the status quo.⁷

'The Commission's role should be not only that of a watchdog but also one of facilitator, educator and collaborator.'

Simon Tilford, "How to Avoid a Eurozone Debt Crisis," The Wall Street Journal Europe, 24 February 2009.

For a good overview of the need for fostering economic and financial literacy, see Alan S. Blinder and Alan B. Krueger, "What Does the Public Know about Economic Policy, and How Does it Know it?" (National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper, 2004).

See Michael Harris and David Albury, "The Innovation Imperative: Why Radical Innovation is Needed to Reinvent Public Services for the Recession and Beyond," NESTA The Lab Discussion Paper (March 2009) or Geoff Mulgan, "Ready or not? Taking Innovation in the Public Sector Seriously," NESTA Provocation 03 (April 2007).



IV. Entering the Age of Austerity: State of Public Finances Take Centre Stage

In principle, the Commission can press legal charges if member states violate the Stability and Growth Pact. In practice, nothing prevented the softening of the Stability and Growth Pact rules in 2005, or the recent dramatic deterioration of public finances in the wake of the financial and economic crisis. Going forward, the issue of sustainability of public finances will, also due to the increased costs associated with ageing societies, be significantly more important than ever before; so much so that it can threaten the viability of individual countries or even the integrity of the eurozone. While there will undoubtedly be a lot of academic conferences and papers on this issue, signaling increased activity, the key question for the Commission is how well it is positioned to actually bring about desired change in the member states – which is the ultimate and only measure of success. Just issuing more reports with dramatic forecasts and pointing the blame unilaterally on the member states will not do the trick.

So while a vigilant stewardship of the Stability and Growth Pact will be more necessary than ever, it will also be important to actively accompany member states in their quest to restore order to their public finances. As such, the Commission's role should be not only that of a watchdog but also one of facilitator, educator and collaborator. For instance, educating stakeholders outside of its traditional remit of finance ministries and economic think tanks, could go a long way. Interacting with people and organisations from all walks of life who could benefit from a greater awareness of how the state of public finances will impact their future prospects, would be beneficial. Think of public health associations (who would care about financing being in place for the future delivery of services), youth groups (who should naturally be interested as their generation will have to shoulder the burden of the debt) or social innovators (who might be able to provide better, more cost-effective solutions to social problems than traditional stakeholders). In addition to raising awareness, DG Economic and Financial Affairs should champion innovation in the public sector, as it will be a key way to sustain a high level of public services while keeping costs in check and thereby assisting with fiscal discipline.¹⁰

V. Close the Gap Between Substance and Communication

With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that the bold decision of President Barroso to appoint a Vice-President for Communication Strategy has been a modest success. This is not necessarily because the idea per se was bad but without the right person at the helm of such an important portfolio, success and impact were inevitably limited. To be more precise, the person appointed to communicate on behalf of the Commission should reflect – and be able to relate – the values, priorities and organisational work programme of the institution

'Good communication and information services about all of the Commission's activities are a sign of respect for citizens and stakeholders.'

European Commission, "Attitudes on Issues Related to EU Energy Policy," Flash Eurobarometer 206a – The Gallup Organisation (April 2007).

> 12. See footnote three.

he or she serves. A communications commissioner who has nothing to say about key Commission competencies, from competition and the internal market to Lisbon Agenda and trade, is at best of limited value and at worse, downright harmful. It leaves the impression that the communications unit is used to produce feel-good, flowery deliverables for "citizens," while the rest of the Commission gets on with the real work. This approach is not only overly paternalistic and almost demeaning to citizens as it would appear not to treat them as mature and intelligent adults, it is also not working. Plan D, which was enacted to bring the EU closer to its citizens after the failed constitutional referenda in France and the Netherlands, certainly did not prevent the subsequent "no-vote" in Ireland or the historically low turnout in the European Parliament elections. One of the lessons learned from the Barroso I Commission is that it must never happen again that flagship Commission programmes, such as the Lisbon Agenda, are literally ignored by the Communicator-in-Chief. Good communication and information services about all of the Commission's activities are a sign of respect for citizens and stakeholders. A person who communicates the Commission à la carte is not suitable for this job, and can do more damage than good to the institution he or she serves.

VI. Get to the Bottom of It: Increase Use of Surveys and Polls, Encourage Outreach via Web 2.0 and Pay Attention to Election Results

Inside the Brussels beltway, policy making is often caught between lobbying and advocacy, and a stakeholder dialogue that can never be 100% representative of the diversity and complexity of society at large. While the official stakeholder dialogue is of course an important feature of the EU arena, ensuring that a variety of views are heard, there are opportunities to complement this institutional structure by bringing in the voice of citizens in a more direct and audible manner. For one, that can occur through the use of surveys, which can give the European Commission an important mandate for action. For instance, surveys have demonstrated that citizens want strong EU leadership on climate change and the environment. 11 And when telecommunications companies were up in arms over the Commission's plans to reign in roaming charges, it helped to prove that it had the support of 70% of the population. ¹² A second, obvious way to gauge what citizens want is to pay greater attention to how they vote. It is often the only way that a citizen can make him- or herself heard in the policy process, and it can be very discerning when a strong public mandate for a given set of policies is subsequently made impossible by politicking and lobbying. Irrespective of whether one agrees with the trend or not, the current mood in most countries in Europe tends towards centre-right sentiments. As such, it is only natural that this be reflected to some extent at the European level. And when the pendulum swings back in the other direction, as it undoubtedly will some day, citizens would of course rightly expect that to be reflected as

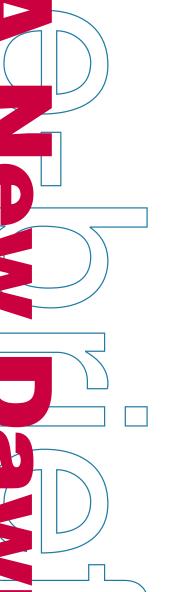
'New technologies have given unprecedented tools to policy makers that allow them to connect, interact and relate to individual citizens.'

Don Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital:*How the Net Generation
is Changing Your World,
(New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008).

well. For now, it will be important to remind persistent nay-sayers of electoral outcomes, and appeal to their democratic sense. A third promising way to connect with citizens is through Web 2.0 and social networking. These new technologies have given unprecedented tools to policy makers that allow them to connect, interact and relate to individual citizens. No one has used these tactics more effectively than Barack Obama in last year's presidential campaign in the United States. And while it would be difficult to replicate such an endeavour at the European level, it is at least worth a try. And needless to say, it should not be an exercise in bureaucracy and innuendo, but a sincere and honest effort to make governance more transparent, more understandable and more accountable. To be sure: a Web 2.0 outreach should not be confused with an Internet consultation. There is a world of difference between putting out a questionnaire on a given policy issue and truly engaging with citizens, using the latest, modern technologies to reach out and bring people closer to Brussels.

VII. Overcome the Divides: Mastering Horizontal Issues in an Institution Built on Silos

There are key issues that are of paramount importance but that do not have an institutional home in the form of a dedicated directorate general (DG), such as innovation, skills or the Lisbon Agenda. To date, they have been handled by a myriad of DGs, such as enterprise, employment, economic and financial affairs, education, etc. While there is nothing in itself wrong with this approach because it disperses ownership, one of the definite downsides has been that no single person is ultimately responsible or feels completely in charge. There are two solutions to this dilemma. One is a stronger, more visible coordination and facilitation between the responsible DGs, with initiatives that can culminate in projects that involve two or more DGs, with shared ownership and governance structure. A good case in point is the Commission's New Skills for New Jobs programme, which is a joint initiative with shared ownership between DG Employment and Social Affairs and DG Education, Training and Culture. The responsible commissioners, Vladimir Spidla and Ján Figel' respectively, got on well personally and jointly moved the initiative forward, both committed to making it a success. A second option is to create a new, dedicated dossier for a given policy issue, ideally one that is rising in importance and needs urgent, consolidated policy attention. A case in point is the consumer dossier, which for the first time received a dedicated commissioner in January 2007, when Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU. Previously, the consumer commissioner also served as the point person for health. The Bulgarian national Meglena Kuneva, who received the mandate to be the first European commissioner solely in charge of consumer affairs, has had tremendous impact on the dossier in the less than three years of her tenure. Not only has the sole focus on the issue raised its profile and importance, but having a charismatic, dedicated and capable point



'For a policy agenda to be all that it can be, the institutional set-up can determine success or failure.'

For an overview of new management needs and styles, see Gary Hamel, "Moon Shoots for Management," Harvard Business Review (February 2009).

15. For more information, see http://eit.europa.eu.

person for the dossier, has made a huge difference. In addition, Commissioner Kuneva actively sought to liaise with other key departments, such as competition, information society and internal market, facilitating an interdisciplinary approach to her dossier and spreading ownership. As previously mentioned, a dedicated innovation commissioner could have a similar effect – from visibly raising the importance of the issue to giving it a "face" and "voice" in the form of a dedicated point person. This is one of the options that should definitely be considered by the new Commission. But one of the two – either more aggressive interdepartmental coordination on key issues, or the establishment of a dedicated unit and commissioner – should be applied. In its absence, the Commission runs the danger of what can be described as the "Lisbon Agenda syndrome" where everyone is nominally working on a policy but the overall impact is limited because the substance too often gets lost in the process or is hampered by too many isolated actions that somehow don't add up not to mention the fact that there is no one ultimately to hold responsible because there isn't a dedicated commissioner. For a policy agenda to be all that it can be, the institutional set-up can determine success or failure – a key point to keep in mind. And as the world becomes more and more complex and new issues emerge or gain in importance, it is likely that there will be more cross-cutting policy agendas on the horizon, requiring specific managements skills¹⁴ and organisational positioning. A case in point is that going forward we need much deeper integration between the climate change and innovation agenda, if we hope to produce the societal and technological solutions for tackling global warming. It was presumably with that in mind that President Barroso recently announced that there will be a dedicated, new portfolio for a climate change commissioner in his next team – a person who can overcome the current divides between environment and energy, innovation and enterprise; a person who can lend a voice and face to the cause and a person who will undoubtedly be one of the key players of the new Commission. One of the positive externalities of facilitating cross-cutting issues is that innovation is more likely to occur at the intersection of different disciplines than in the traditional silo approach to policy agendas.

VIII. Create New Institutions to Overcome Bureaucratic Legacies and Kick-Start Innovation

Given Europe's persistent difficulties of coping with change or coming to grips with new economic and social realities, a promising way to overcome resistance and focus attention on the issue at hand is to create new institutions. The key example of the first Barroso tenure is the creation of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). While it initially met with some resistance from existing stakeholders, such as universities, in the end there was a lot of momentum for the creation of such an institution. There was not only a fierce

'Areas that need urgent tackling are skills, human capital, entrepreneurship and innovation.'

The emission cut target has recently been thrown into doubt following a court ruling on 23 September 2009 that overturned European Commission caps on the amount of carbon Poland and Estonia are permitted to emit between 2008 and 2012.

For more, see Ann Mettler, "Indicators for Success: Charting Progress, Capturing Innovation," Lisbon Council (to be published in October 2009).

competition among cities to house the EIT but also a lot of genuine interest and curiosity about the endeavour itself. Institutionally, the EIT has no legacies - it has no existing bureaucracy, it cannot not do things because they have never been done, and it has an explicit mandate to be ambitious, experimental and new. 15 It is certainly not a coincidence that in most member states bodies that have a mandate to drive forward innovation are set up outside of existing institutional structures. That is done to overcome the bureaucratic legacies, the institutional inertia and political infighting over key portfolios – all of which are anathema to the pursuit of innovation and creativity. Examples of such new institutions charged with fostering innovation are Innova (Sweden), Sitra and Tekes (Finland), NESTA (United Kingdom) and the Innovation Platform (Netherlands). These bodies have the benefit of being on the one hand embedded in the countries they serve, while being sufficiently independent to act as a knowledgeable, honest and trustworthy broker. Going forward, not only the European level but also member states should contemplate either supporting or creating new institutions to deal with burning issues that are not efficiently tackled due to not fitting neatly in existing organisational structures or bureaucratic responsibilities. Areas that need urgent tackling are skills, human capital, entrepreneurship and innovation, which are all currently caught somewhere between the competing responsibilities of education, employment, enterprise, finance, research and economic affairs.

IX. Measures for Success: Choose Benchmarks Wisely and Develop European Indicators

Targets are important tools for measuring progress and success. One of the EU's most known, ambitious and popular goals is the 20-20-20 target by 2020: cutting greenhouse gases by 20%; reducing energy consumption by 20% through increased energy efficiency; and meeting 20% of energy needs from renewable sources. 16 Two things have worked about this goalpost: firstly, it is very popular; the targets are clearly understandable to a broad number of people, and they are patriotic and bold, demonstrating first-mover advantage vis-à-vis other parts of the world. Secondly, they are European targets, meaning that there is not a uniform indicator that applies to all 27 member states, but rather a Europe-wide commitment of 20% in total, with individual member states contributing according to their state of development and ability. For instance, the renewables target for the UK is 15% by 2020, but 30% in Denmark, where already 20% of the electricity needs are met by wind power, and reaches a high of 49% in Sweden, a country that is a global leader in renewables. One can envision a huge amount of peer pressure in delivering on these goals as a country would not want to fall foul of causing failure for the entire EU because it falls short of meeting its target. This new approach to EU-wide targets with individualised commitments perhaps presents the holy grail to compliance, without having to resort to the use of the "naming and shaming" to which many member states object. In general, if one compares the 20-20-20 goals by 2020 with two other key



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Only 3.5% of the EU-15 workforce are employed in agriculture; for the OECD as a whole, the figure is 5.1%. See OECD, OECD in Figures 2009.

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See Indhira Santos and Susanne Neheider, "A Better Process for a Better Budget," Bruegel policy brief (July 2009).

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For a good overview of effective spending at regional level, see Fabrizio Barca, *An Agenda* for a Reformed Cohesion Policy, (April 2009).

EU indicators, the 70% employment rate and 3% R&D target contained in the Lisbon Agenda, one immediately sees a difference. While few people would dispute the merit of spending more on research, the 3% goal seems abstract. Most observers would see no inherent benefit of spending 3% over, say, 4%. It's quite meaningless, because the figure that matters most is the private-sector R&D component, which is not separated from this overall target. Secondly, these targets have been applied uniformly to all EU member states, not taking account of their state of development. While a 3% R&D target is overly ambitious and not reachable (or perhaps even desirable) for a country like Malta or Bulgaria, it is not sufficiently challenging to a country like Sweden, which already spends over 4% of GDP on R&D. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of countries have not met their Lisbon Agenda goals, which in turn has led most observers, particularly the media, to conclude that the entire process has been a stunning failure. In order to avoid such shortcomings in the future, targets not only need to be carefully chosen but they must also be realistic enough to ultimately be reached, otherwise countries can feel overwhelmed and lack the incentive to set everything in motion to deliver on a given goal.¹⁷

X. Put your Money where Your Mouth Is: Modernising the EU Budget Is a Matter of Credibility and Generational Justice

One issue that has certainly helped to undermine the credibility of the Barroso I Commission is the way the institution he leads is forced to spend its budget. While on the surface, his team is aligned behind the priority issues of innovation, employment, skills, human capital, the pursuit of new, emerging technologies, and investing in the future, the sad reality is that the lion's share of the annual €110 billion budget is spent on agricultural subsidies and a sector that employs some 5% of Europe's workforce. 18 Going forward, there is no argument that could justify or possibly help to overcome this discrepancy. It is the root cause of a perennial and deep division between rhetoric and budgetary priorities that cannot be reconciled intellectually.¹⁹ If member states do not agree to a radical re-adjustment of budget priorities, we should not expect the Commission to be a driver of change, a beacon of innovation and a transformative agent, able to strategically invest in the future rather than subsidising the past. As long as the Commission does not have the financial firepower that is necessary, a lot of the good rhetoric will remain exactly that – rhetoric. Europe needs a thorough, honest and frank discussion about what the role of the European Commission is. Is it to subsidise agriculture – a goal that more than once has run counter to our environmental and climate change ambitions – or does it want to embody and empower the innovation it so routinely preaches? To be sure, the Commission is not the problem. To the extent that it has been possible, the Barroso I Commission has tried to use money differently, which inter alia, has led to the "Lisbonisation" of the structural and cohesion funds.²⁰ But more must be done. Even if the Commission itself does not have the authority to change the current regime, it must use the publication of the white paper on financial reform

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to be launched in December 2009 to give its best shot at convincing member states to change the EU's budgetary priorities. It must seize the moral high ground, enter eclectic and broad alliances, and really fight its corner. The opportunity presented by the launch of the white paper and subsequent policy processes to introduce a better, more future-oriented budget for the period 2014-2020 cannot, must not, be missed.

President Barroso has even more on his plate in 2009 than back in 2004, when he first entered office. The current crisis, and the great expectations vis-à-vis the organisation he leads, call for strategic changes. Also, as soon as the Lisbon Treaty comes into force, he will have to contend with another big player in the form of the president of the European Council. In order to secure a lasting legacy and make his next tenure the success it deserves to be, it will be vital to think out of the box, to take new approaches and use persuasion and clever tactics to convince or, if necessary, outsmart member states and other forces that stand in the way of Europe becoming all that it can be – a beacon of sustainability, innovation and entrepreneurship, built on leadership that lays the foundation for the next generation to reap the fruits of actions taken today.



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