



## Journal of Geography, Politics and Society

2023, 13(2), 1–12

<https://doi.org/10.26881/jpgs.2023.2.01>



# THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AS POLITICAL ENTREPRENEUR – THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

Daniel Silander

Department of Political Science, Linnaeus University, SE-35105 Vaxjo, Sweden, ORCID: 0000-0001-7518-0067  
e-mail: [daniel.silander@lnu.se](mailto:daniel.silander@lnu.se)

### Citation

Silander D., 2023, The European Commission as Political Entrepreneur – The Europe 2020 Strategy, *Journal of Geography, Politics and Society*, 13(2), 1–10.

### Abstract

This study deals with the European Commission Communication Europe 2020, which was a direct result of the global economic crisis that began in 2007–2008. The focus is to explore how the Commission gained an extended role as political entrepreneur by launching the Europe 2020 Strategy and turning crisis into a window of opportunity. Europe 2020 was a Commission initiative to deal with the crisis by promoting smart, sustainable and socially inclusive development beyond the narrow scope of economic growth. The Commission addressed the economic crisis as an existential threat to European economy, but also to wealth, health integration and stability. It is argued that the crisis management of the Commission, was, in times of weakened member-state capacities, a result of political entrepreneurship.

### Key words

European Commission, Economic Crisis, Europe 2020, Smart and Sustainable Growth, Political Entrepreneur.

**Received:** 13 March 2023

**Accepted:** 20 April 2023

**Published:** 29 September 2023

## 1. Introduction

In 2010, the European Commission presented the communication Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It followed the European Single Market programme (1986–92) and the Lisbon Strategy (2000–10). The Commission called upon EU institutions, member states, regional and local authorities and the private sector to come together and deal with the devastating global economic crisis (Wandel, 2016, p. 10; Zeitlin, Vanhercke, 2014, p. 8–9). The Commission launched a broad range of measurements on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It referred to smart growth as promoting an economy based on knowledge and innovation, sustainable growth as

economic growth based on resource efficiency and a greener economy and inclusive growth as growth that provides for social integration. The Commission stressed the urgent importance of taking extreme measures, beyond day-to-day economic activities, to protect and promote Europe and Europeans from further political, social, economic and environmental hardship (Silander, 2018; Barbier, 2011).

It is argued that the European Commission showed political entrepreneurship by approaching the European crisis as a window of opportunity, when individual member-states saw European disintegration (Cross, 2017; Kudrna, Wasserfallen, 2020) by launching multidimensional mitigation in smart, sustainable and inclusive development, beyond a pure focus on economy and by extending

its political role from the traditional technocratic day-to-day driving engine (Silander, 2020).

This study adds insights to studies on entrepreneurship by focusing on the role of political institutions as a forgotten dimension to work on economic entrepreneurship and growth. In addition, it brings attention to the European Commission as political institution and political entrepreneur to economic, social and sustainable growth (Crespy, Menz, 2015). It is often argued that the state holds the authority, power and fiscal and monetary capacities to launch decisive and effective reforms (Beardsworth, 2020, p. 380–384). This study stresses that political entrepreneurship from the European Commission may play an important role beyond individual member-states' national interests and capacities and especially so in times of crises. Studies have shown how the European Commission could be a day-to-day driving engine within the EU (Bauer, Becker, 2014; Wonka, 2008; Petersson, 1999), but limited number of studies have explored its potential role as political entrepreneur (van Voorst, Mastenbroek, 2017; Egeberg, 2012).

The methodological approach embeds conceptualizing entrepreneurship and political entrepreneurship followed by a discussion on the role of the European Commission within the EU and in times of crisis where member-states are weakened (Kudrna, Wasserfallen, 2020).

## 2. Perspectives on Entrepreneurship: Political Entrepreneurship

Previous studies in economics have for numerous of decades stated how entrepreneurship is essential in a growing economy (Schumpeter, 1934; Carroll, 2017). Studies stress how entrepreneurs are crucial as the important risk-takers, innovators and responders to market disequilibria. Based on a long tradition of research on entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship within economics, the last decades have come with a growing body of studies on entrepreneurial activities in the public sector. Such studies have acknowledged core aspects of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in economics such as the notions of knowledge, innovation, risk-taking, opportunity and implementation (Carroll, 2017, p. 115–119; see also Jones, 1978).

Today, the bulk of studies on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs have included new types within the business and public sector. Studies have explored public entrepreneurs as (Osborne, Plastrik, 1993; Baumol, 1990) innovative and creative actors within municipalities and public corporations who seek implementation of innovations in the public sector practice (Ostrom, 1965; Roberts, King, 1991). Studies have also identified social entrepreneurs as innovative and goal-oriented people with the aim to

promoting the common good in social goals within cooperative associations, interest organizations and movements (Gawell et al., 2009; Borzaga et al. (Eds.), 2008; Brickerhoff, 2000). In addition, policy entrepreneurs have referred to actors outside the formal positions of government who aim to initiate and implement new ideas into the public institutions (Roberts, King, 1991; Naldi et al., 2020) or individual politicians who seek to reform and improve official policies by presenting and institutionalizing new, alternative policy solutions (Kingdon, 1995). Finally, previous studies have also stressed the role of bureaucratic entrepreneurs in public servants who have power and authority from policymakers to shape the policy process by initiating a political process, identifying objectives to be met and overseeing the implementation phase (Carroll, 2017; Roberts, King, 1991). These types of entrepreneurs are summarised in Table 1.

An additional type of entrepreneur is political entrepreneurs and political entrepreneurship (Silander, 2018, 2020; Scheingate, 2003). The concept of political entrepreneur was initiated by Robert Dahl (1974, p. 25, p. 223–237, p. 282), who stressed resourceful and masterful politicians and where the political entrepreneur was 'the self-made man'. The political entrepreneur is striving for the societal and common good, but could also be interested in individual political gains by seeking political legitimacy, support and votes, financial campaign contributions and endorsements and/or improved political positions (Dahl, 1974; McCaffrey, Salerno, 2011).

This study focuses on political entrepreneurs by exploring the role of the European Commission in tackling the global and European economic crisis of 2007/2008 and forward by launching the Europe 2020 strategy. The adopted conceptualization of political entrepreneurs and political entrepreneurship departs from criticism in previous research on different types of entrepreneurship in general and on political entrepreneurs in specific. First, the limited body of scholarly studies on political entrepreneurship have foremost focused on political entrepreneurs from an actor-oriented perspective by analysing individual perceptions, motives and methods used missing institutions as potential political entrepreneurs. It is widely known within political science that institutions play an important role in setting rules and regulations for the society (Grief, 2005; Weingast, 1995; North, 1990). Institutions represents the aggregated interests and capacities held by individual leaders, politicians and public servants. Despite such acknowledgment, there are limited studies on the role played by political institutions in the field of economic entrepreneurship and on how and when such political institutions may become political entrepreneurial.

Tab. 1. Types of Entrepreneurs.

Term	Common Definitions
Economic/Business Entrepreneurs	Actors within the business sector acting as risk-takers, innovators and responders to market disequilibria to seek economic gains for their companies/organisations
Social Entrepreneurs	Actors within the civil society who seek societal changes within cooperative associations, interest organizations, aid branches and rights and liberties movements
Policy Entrepreneurs	Actors inside or outside the formal positions of government/politics who seek to introduce and implement new ideas into the public sector for development of the public good rather than for individual profits
Bureaucratic Entrepreneurs	Actors who gain power from policymakers to influence the policy process and/or the public sector by initiating a political process, setting priorities and interpreting the implementation phase
Political Entrepreneurs – traditionally used	Actors (politicians) within the political arena, driven by the common good or individual profit from the political system, acting to receive political support, votes, campaign contributions or improved political status
Political Entrepreneurs – applied in this study	Actors and institutions (politicians, bureaucrats, officers and institutions) within the publicly funded sector that with innovative approaches encourage entrepreneurship/business and where the goal is growth and employment for the common good

Source: Silander, 2020, p. 8.

Second, studies have assumed that political entrepreneurship is about pursued profit-seeking strategies within the political/public domain, rather than about the societal and common good. Again, this is due to the domination of economics in studying entrepreneurship. However, political entrepreneurship may be about promoting and protecting profit as well as other goals in for instance wealth, health, social integration and equality; i.e. sustainable development (European Commission, 2010, 2016).

Third, previous studies have also pointed out scholarly fuzziness regarding what actually defines political entrepreneurship; when and where political entrepreneurship differs from ordinary day-to-day activities in the public sector (Ribeiro-Soriano, Galindo-Martín, 2012; Salerno, 2008; Holcombe, 2002). Based on studies on political entrepreneurs and political entrepreneurship (Karlsson et al., 2018, Karlsson, Silander, 2020) this study focuses on political entrepreneurs in individual politicians, public servants, bureaucrats and institutions (such as the European Commission) that promotes new, innovative and favourable formal and informal institutional conditions (North, 1990; Kingdon, 1995) for societal growth. Political entrepreneurship is about forcefully and fundamentally challenging traditional formal institutions, in objectives and steering, leadership, strategies, policies, rules, regulations, laws and budgets and/or traditional informal institutions' of ideas, attitudes, values, perceptions, images and symbols in ways that structure public day-to-day activities (North, 1990; Morgan, 1986; Putnam, 1993). Political entrepreneurship has had implications when traditional formal and/or informal institutions have been challenged and changed and

new institutions, formal and/or informal, are initiated and established to promote economic growth and societal development.

Based on Article 17 of the Treaty, the European Commission "shall promote the general interest of the Union and take appropriate initiatives to that end" (Lisbon Treaty, 2009). The European Commission proposes European laws, guards EU treaties by ensuring that member-states follow EU legislation, acts as an executive body to handle policies and the annual budget and represents the EU in external relations to third party states. Its role is to pursue such functions without taking any instructions from any member-state. The Commission is expected to be an agenda setter (Bauer, Becker, 2014), set out shared European ideas, strive for collective solutions and "propose packages that will carry the majority of the member-states" (Laffan, 1997, p. 424).

The European Commission also pursues an institutional relation to a large group of EU member-states that together provides for great authority and high level of capabilities. Due to the Treaty of Lisbon of 2009, a division of competences (Lisbon Treaty, 2009; Christiansen, 2002) guides the EU with member states. First, exclusive competences are set out in Article 3 on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which provides areas where the EU has supreme authority to legislate and adopt binding acts. The 27 member-states have transferred sovereignty to the collective will of the EU leading the Commission to initiating and implementing laws and regulations with exclusive competence. Second, shared competences, institutionalized in Article 4, sets out the areas where the EU and member states share authority to legislate and adopt legally binding acts. Member states are in

these policy-areas sovereign to decide and legislate when the EU has not previously exercised authority or addressed intention to exercise authority. In addition, when individual member states already have laws and regulations, the EU cannot to decide that could challenge member-states' regulations. Third, supporting competences are embedded in Article 6 and identifies the supreme authority to the individual member states with only a supporting role of the EU. The EU may only act upon the role of assisting member states through coordination (Arnulf, Chalmers (Eds.), 2015; EUR-Lex: Distribution of competences, 2018).

The function of the EU in policy areas guided by exclusive competence has, however, led to policymaking by the use of 'soft' governance methods, in terms of benchmarking, recommendations on best practices and guidelines through the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) process (Barcevičius et al. (Eds.), 2014). The OMC was initiated at the Lisbon meeting in 2000 as a tool for the EU to have an impact in policy areas where individual member states showed national differences and/or where the EU only had limited competences. The OMC was a negotiated compromise between the idea of ensuring member states the main responsibility in a policy area and at the same time allowing the EU to influence such areas through the coordination of policies. The OMC process has come to leave the Commission with increased influence through the monitoring and agenda-setting role and especially so in areas where the national situations differs substantially or where only limited competences exist at the EU level (Barcevičius et al. (Eds.), 2014; Radaelli, 2003; EUR-Lex: OMC, 2018).

### 3. Theoretical basis and methodology

In day-to-day activities, the role of the European Commission is foremost to propose, monitor and implement new EU laws. However, in times of crises and when member-states seeks national solutions based on national interests, the role of the European Commission becomes even more important in acting for the EU common good. The European Commission must, provide for unity among member-states and launch ideas that go beyond traditional policies in order to handle crises that requires fast, fundamental and forceful actions. Jean Monnet once stated that Europe was to evolve based on crisis management and argued that "Europe would be built through crises" (Monnet, 1978, p. 417) and how "people only accept change when they are faced with necessity, and only recognize necessity when a crisis is upon them" (Monnet, 1978, p. 109). Many decades later, the former President of the European Commission,

Jean Claude Juncker, announced how the EU had developed due to crisis and crisis management (Juncker, 2017). Both politicians echoed what John Kingdon in the academic literature conceptualized as windows of opportunities (Kingdon, 1995). Research has addressed how historical European crises been approached as possible windows of opportunities for change. Studies have shown how these European crises often resulted in negotiations and new policies and law-making providing for further European integration (Cross, 2017; Ioannou et al., 2015). There are obvious signs in European politics how shared crisis have resulted in deepened collaboration due to political entrepreneurship by the European Commission. It is therefore important to acknowledge and study the role of governance institutions, such as the European Commission, in promoting European reforms (Beardsworth, 2020, p. 380–384).

After years of deep and developing economic recession, the European Commission presented Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in 2010. It was a strategy to promote and protect European prosperity in times of severe societal challenges (Stec, Grzebyk, 2018, p. 119–120; Liobikienė, Butkus, 2017, p. 299). The Europe 2020 covered 2010–2020 and the Commission pushed for a decade of reforms to tackle the recession-. More importantly, the Commission addressed the economic crisis not only as a major challenge to European economic growth, but to wealth, health and social and political integration (Silander, 2020). The Europe 2020 Strategy highlighted the necessity to promote a green, sustainable and social-market economy model beyond a traditional and narrow economic focus on industrial productivity and small- and medium-sized companies (Gros, Roth, 2012, p. 1–2; Wandel, 2016, p. 10). It demanded bold and fundamental politically initiated reforms in addressing smart, sustainable and socially inclusive growth. Only then could the EU with member-states develop a new platform for European prosperity.

The European Commission countermeasure to the economic crisis was multidimensional going beyond pure economic objectives. The strategy embedded economic, environmental and social pillars, providing for a vision of a transformed sustainable European society. First, smart growth aimed to promote knowledge and innovation. Smart growth included improved education, research and innovations to ensure a skilled workforce, new innovative products and services, but also entrepreneurship and investments to pinpoint new needs, demands and markets (Klikocka, 2019; Capello, Lenzi, 2016). In addition, the Commission called upon Europe to improve its regional and global competitiveness in a digital era by meeting

new escalating demands for communication technologies (European Commission, 2010, p. 9–10). The Europe 2020 on smart growth set out heading targets: to increase public and private investments in R&D to 3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP); to reduce school drop-out rates to less than 10 percent; and to increase the share of the population in the 30–34 age group having completed tertiary education to 40 percent (Eurostat, 2018; Hudrliková, 2013).

Second, Europe 2020 on sustainable growth embedded a transformation into a greener economy by developing an economy of improved resource efficiency and greener technologies. The Commission wanted to see improved competitive entrepreneurship, new businesses and networks and a consumer culture that demanded resource efficiency and a greener low-carbon economy. The transformation to green technologies would eventually result in accomplished climate change targets, with lower levels of emissions, a new environmental friendly economic foundation of innovations, products and services and an expanding national and European economy (Širá et al., 2021; Brok, Langen, 2012). The heading targets on sustainable growth included the so-called 20-20-20 targets in: reducing greenhouse gas emission by 20 per cent; increasing renewable energy in gross final energy consumption by 20 percent; and increasing energy efficiency by 20 per cent (Eurostat, 2017, p. 15; European Commission, 2010, p. 12–13).

Tab. 2. Europe 2020 Flagships.

Flagship 1: Innovation Union - to improve framework conditions and access to finance for research and innovation;
Flagship 2: Youth on the move - to enhance the performance of education systems and to facilitate the entry of young people to the labour market;
Flagship 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;
Flagship 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, modernize our transport sector and promote energy efficiency;
Flagship 5: An industrial policy for the globalization 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;
Flagship 6: An agenda for new skills and jobs - to modernize the labour market and empower people by developing their skills throughout the lifecycle;
Flagship 7: European platform against poverty - to ensure social and territorial cohesion such that the benefits of growth and jobs are widely shared.

Source: European Commission, 2010.

The overall objectives were to: i) reach 75 per cent employment among people aged 20–64; ii) secure 3 per cent of the overall EU GDP invested in research and development; iii) lower emission levels by 20 per cent compared to the overall European greenhouse gas emissions in the 1990s; iv) provide renewable energy sources that account for 20 per cent of all

Third, Europe 2020 on inclusive growth emphasized the importance of higher employment rates and improved socioeconomic welfare leading to economic, social and territorial cohesion and integration. New innovative job opportunities, a transformed greener labour market, higher levels of education and lifelong training would promote social protection from economic poverty and social marginalization (Dumitrescu, 2016; Marlier, Natali (Eds.), 2010). The Commission set out how approximately 80 million Europeans had low or basic skills and faced serious risk of poverty, social exclusion and health inequalities. The heading targets on inclusive growth were: to increase the employment rate to 75 per cent in the 20–64 age group and to prevent at least 20 million people from living under the threat of poverty and/or social exclusion (European Commission, 2010, p. 16; Eurostat, 2017, p. 15).

As part of the Europe 2020 strategy, the Commission identified flagships to be implemented to (Hudrliková, 2013, p. 450–460; Bongardt, Torres, 2010, p. 137). The flagships indicated how the European Commission launched a wide range of measures, as set out in Table 2, beyond economic growth and financial support for entrepreneurship by targeting improved technology and digitalization, educational reforms and empowerment, green reforms for sustainability and finally social cohesion (European Commission, 2010, p. 3–4; Stec, Grzebyk, 2018, p. 123).

energy supply; v) increase energy efficiency by 20 per cent by focusing on climate change and energy reforms for a greener economy; improve education standards by pushing down early school leavers to below 10 per cent; vi) support enrolment in higher education by aiming for 40 per cent of people aged 30–34 to have finished higher education, and vii)

reduce the number of European facing poverty and social exclusion by at least 20 million people (European Commission, 2010, p. 3).

Research, however, pointed out numerous possible hindrances to Europe 2020 to succeed (Tusińska, 2016; Makarovič et al., 2014; Gros, Roth, 2012; Borghetto, Franchino, 2010). One such hindrance to the implementation of Europe 2020 was the economic recession itself. The European economic crisis soon challenged Europe and the EU with individual member states, regions and communities. The fragility of the financial system and the banking sector imposed serious restraints on business sectors, companies and family households to access money. The economic crisis required immediate political and financial assistance to EU member-states from other EU member states, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Another hindrance was Europe's economic structural weakness. The Commission identified a low average growth rate, low levels of investments in research and development, limited implementation of information and communications technologies in a digital era and a weakened business environment with obstacles finding risk capital. Europe's economic structural weaknesses were especially alarming when comparing to the fast-developing global competitiveness from the G-20. A third hindrance was the complex system of EU governance. The Communication called for stronger cohesiveness within the Union to act as a global and regional actor. Such call for coordination between actors and functions referred to the complexity of European governance as a hybrid organization of political steering. A fourth hindrance for Europe 2020 was the important role of the EU member states to implement policies to reach the heading targets (Becker et al., 2016, p. 1011–1012) and to overcome member-states' differences in political cultures and disparities regarding socioeconomic resources, know-how, productivity and levels of growth. This raised scepticism over the capacity of the EU to launch coherent actions on Europe 2020 and to avoid individual member states' safeguarding their own national policies (Zaucha et al., 2014; Pagliacci, 2017, p. 601–604, p. 615).

Scholarly studies have shown how the Commission has continued to be a powerful institution within the EU governance, but how such role has been changing over time depending on how the Commission has acted (Bauer, Becker, 2014). The role of the Commission at the time was significantly strengthened by member-states' being highly occupied by the economic recession. The Commission stepped up as the provider for the

European common good by addressing common objectives and solutions to common challenges. With the new Commission under President José Manuel Barroso, the Europe 2020 was pushed for by the Commission and within the Commission by a few Directorate Generals (DG) that acted coherent and goal-oriented in promoting the new strategy. The DG for Growth became very important in the strategic work, but due to the complexity of the new Strategy, embedding climate and social objectives beyond economic ones, there were strong collaboration among a few DG:s under a firm leadership by the President with Commissioners (Copeland, James, 2014; Nugent, Rhinard, 2016, 2019). From about 2014 and forward, the European Commission also reorganized its internal structure promoted by the Jean-Claude Juncker's Presidency. Juncker argued for a strengthened political Commission, rather than technocratic, with ambition to engage more policy-making and acquiring increased policy power making use of formal competences as set out in the Treaty (Peterson, 2017; Nugent, Rhinard, 2016, 2019; Barbier, 2011). The Commission became more hierarchical in structure of the College of Commissioners and with a more defined and stronger leadership (Dinan, 2016). The Commission stressed the importance of protecting and promoting European integration based on its normative function as provider for the European common good (Peterson, 2017).

Within the Commission, the drafting of Europe 2020 objectives and flagships was therefore based on a stricter and more political-oriented internal hierarchy. The Commission set out how the European Council had to play the role of guiding the EU member states towards the heading targets and how the European Council was steering necessary actions. The Commission also set out the responsibility of the Council of Ministers to ensure the implementation of Europe 2020 and how the European Parliament would be co-legislator with the Council of Ministers, but also mobilizer of European citizens and civil societies. Meanwhile, the Commission would guide all EU actors, monitor reforms taken as well as officially provide recommendations, warnings and proposals to individual member states on how they could be successful on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in their specific national contexts (European Commission, 2010, p. 26–27).

In addition, the European Commission developed an ex ante surveillance system in the annual European Semester strengthening the European governance structure and empowering the European Commission (Zeilinger, 2021; Begg, 2007). The European Semester gave the Commission a tool to assess member-states' budgetary plan, macroeconomic challenges and structural reforms

and provided the Commission the chance to set out member-states proposals on reforms to be taken. The European Semester also embedded surveillance and coordination of budgetary, fiscal, economic and social policies and has come to function as a platform for discussions between the Commission, other EU institutions and individual member-states. The European Semester included a broader range of policy-areas with social, economic, environmental and employment objectives with the Commission purpose to improve coordination and convergence between EU member-states' fiscal and economic policies. As a result, the Commission was able to step up its authority and activities on providing recommendations to the Council with member-states (Stevenson, 2019).

In a time of economic crisis, the Commission took the role of European leadership in launching the Europe 2020 Strategy for safeguarding European integration, but did so with a normative function in addressing not only the economic challenges, but also the social and environmental ones that had concerned the European public for some time. Over recent years, the European Commission has come to promote sustainable development as the formal for a future prosperous Europe. Beginning with the Treaty of Amsterdam, the European Commission set out the goal to provide for a green European social-economic model of economic growth, full employment, social inclusiveness, along with protection of the environment. Since the Treaty, sustainable development has been mainstreamed into EU policies, legislations, norms and values with the European Commission stressing its role as frontrunner for sustainable development (European Commission, 2016, p. 3).

In 2016, the European Commission launched the Communication *Next steps for a sustainable European future - European action for sustainability*. The Communication set out the objective to transform the EU into a sustainable actor in international relations (European Commission, 2016). The European Commission acknowledged that Europe, compared to many other places in the world, had a beneficial starting position to implement sustainable reforms (European Commission, 2016, p. 2). In addition, in January of 2019, the European Commission presented a reflection paper *Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030* (European Commission, 2019), again acknowledging the importance of sustainable development and how Europe had to become the leading actor on sustainable development in the world. The Communication linked the previous economic crisis to new emerging crisis by highlighted the alarming challenges of growing nationalism, populism and isolation in Europe as well as climate change and the necessity

to transform the European economy to become greener and more inclusive (European Commission, 2019, p. 8). The Commission urged the EU member-states to step up its work towards a sustainable Europe as well as a normative power, for global sustainable development (European Commission, 2019, p. 9).

More lately, the European Commission Communication *A Clean Planet for all – A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy* was endorsed by the European Council in 2019. Agenda 2050 is a bold and ambitious vision by the European Commission for a climate neutral Europe. First, Agenda 2050 addresses the nexus between climate change and socioeconomic growth by highlighting the strategic importance of innovations and technological solutions to become a dynamic and greener economy (European Commission Press Release, April 28 2018, p. 16–19). Second, Agenda 2050 also set out how a greener economy will bring new jobs and employment opportunities on a new transformed labor-market. Third and finally, Agenda 2050 also shed lights on the importance of including and empowering European citizens in the transformation into a greener economy. The European Commission stressed that citizens are consumers and therefore powerful actors in the process of sustainable development into a net-zero greenhouse gas economy.

Over the last two decades, a growing number of scholarly studies have acknowledged how the European Commission pushed the EU to become the global frontrunner on sustainable development both targeting the economic crisis and climate change crisis. Scholars have argued that the EU is an "idea force" and "normative power" (Manners, 2002, 2006) including norms and values such as peace, democracy and the rule of law as well as sustainability.

On September 13, 2017, about a decade after the recession hit Europe, the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, announced his State of the Union and how Europe 2020 had resulted in necessary countermeasures to the economic crisis. He argued how determined actions through political entrepreneurship had led to a united and stronger Europe in a time when the EU had faced a crossroad of returning to isolation and nationalism or promoting a future-looking European agenda (Juncker, 2017).

First, focusing on employment and increasing the employment rate in the 20–64 age group, serious improvements had been made. In 2015, the employment rate had increased to about 70 percent and in 2019, there had been an increase in employment going from 73.2 percent in 2018 to

73.9 percent of the population aged 20 to 64. The figure of 2019 was the highest since 2002. There had been a steady progress in increased employment rate soon closing the remaining gap to the target of 75 percent (Eurostat, 2020, 2019). Second, in 2008, R&D expenditure was 1.85 percent of GDP and had increased to 2.03 percent in 2014 (Eurostat 2017, p. 57; Gros, Roth, 2012, p. 9–10, p. 14–16; Eurostat, 2017, p. 59–61). In 2019, measuring the year of 2018, the R&D expenditure had increased slightly from 2017 going from 2.08 to 2.11 percent. Such limited growth remained, however, a concern within the EU with a percentage of expenditure stagnating around 2 per cent of GDP. The target of 3 percent of GDP remained in distance (Eurostat, 2020, 2019).

Third, on climate change and energy, estimations in 2008–2009, showed how the emission level dropped sharply by 7.2 percent, indicating a decline in the overall economic growth due to economic recession, but also due to the transformation into a greener European economy (Eurostat, 2017, p. 85). In 2015, 16 out of 28 member states had reached their national objectives (Eurostat, 2017, p. 89–90; Liobikienė, Butkus, 2017, p. 299–305). In addition, the share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption increased between 2008 and 2014 from 11 to 16 percent due to biofuels and renewable waste, hydropower and wind and solar energy. All EU member states had increased their levels of renewable energy and ten member states had met their national objectives (Eurostat, 2017, p. 96). Another target was declining primary energy consumption with a fallen consumption level between 2008 and 2014 by 11 percent, leaving the oil consumption level in the EU lower than in 1990 (Eurostat, 2017). By 2018, emissions of greenhouse gases within the EU had dropped by 23.2 percent compared to 1990 symbolizing mission accomplished on the Europe 2020 target of reducing greenhouse emissions by 20 percent. Concerning

the share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption, the EU reached 18 percent in 2018 leaving Europe 2 percent below the renewable energy target of 20 percent (Eurostat, 2020, 2019).

Fourth, on education and early leavers from education and training in the 18–24 age range, Eurostat indicated in 2008 a level of 14.7 percent and in 2015 11 percent, consistently closing in on the objective of 10 percent. On tertiary education attainment in the 30–34 age group, there were an increase from 2008 to 2015 from 31.1 to 38.7 percent, almost reaching the objective of 40 percent (Eurostat, 2017, p. 109). In 2016, 15 EU member states had reached their national objectives and 17 states had reached the EU objective of 10 percent (Eurostat, 2017, p. 112; Istvan et al., 2016). In 2019, progress continued with falling figures on the share of early leavers from education and training coming very close to the final target of below 10 percent. Progressed were also seen on the share of 30- to 34-year-olds completing tertiary education reaching 41.6 percent of 2019 compared to the Europe 2020 objective of 40 percent (Eurostat, 2020, 2019).

Fifth and finally, focusing on people at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion, the economic crisis, left an increased number of people in jeopardy (Gros, Roth, 2012, p. 56–62); from 118 million people in 2010 to 124 million in 2012. After a few years of crisis, a decline existed, leaving about 122 million Europeans at risk in 2014 (Eurostat, 2018b). In 2017, about 118.8 million people were at risk, showing a decline (Eurostat, 2017, p. 133). The risk of social exclusion embedded several related challenges in monetary poverty, material deprivation and low work intensity (Eurostat, 2017, p. 143; Chung et al., 2012, p. 301–306, p. 314). In 2018, about 109.9 million people were at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion; a decline of 6.2 million compared to in 2008. This is 13.8 million people more than the target set out in Europe 2020.

Tab. 3. presents the overall figures on Europe 2020 heading targets.

Topic	Indicator	2008	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
Employment	Employment rate, age group 20–64	70.2	68.4	70.1	71.1	72.2	73.2	73.9	72.3	75.0
R&D	GDP on R&D (%/GDP)	1.83	2.02	2.03	2.04	2.08	2.11	2.20		3.0
Climate change & energy	Greenhouse gas emissions (Index 1990: 100)	91.0	82.4	78.3	77.9	78.4	76.8			80.0
Education	Early leavers from education /training (% of population aged 18–24)	14.7	11.9	11.0	10.7	10.5	10.5	10.3	10.1	<10.0
Poverty & social exclusion	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, EU-27 (million people)	116.1	121.6	117.9	116.9	111.9	108.9	91.4		96.2

Note: a Total emission, including international aviation, but excluding emissions from land use, land use change and forestry (Eurostat 2018a).

Source: Eurostat, 2020, 2019; European Commission, 2010.



#### **4. Concluding Remarks**

On March 1, 2017, the European Commission published its White Paper on the Future of Europe, addressing European changes and challenges over time and the celebration of 60 years of unity since the Treaty of Rome in Italy. It was stated how Europe had over time met many crossroads (European Commission, 2017, p. 5–6). The Europe 2020 Strategy pointed at the crossroad of integration through collective multidimensional responses to the economic crisis or disintegration with member-states turning into nationalism and protectionism.

This study has explored the major crisis to European integration, the EU and member-states in the European economic crisis of 2007/2008 and forward. Despite EU actions to protect Europe from the global crisis, it hit hard economically, politically and socially on member-states. Economically, Europe saw a major decline in gross domestic product (GDP), employment and business activities; politically, it led to nationalism, populism, protectionism and citizen distrust of European institutions and socially, it curtailed welfare benefits, increased poverty and social despair.

The Europe 2020 strategy was based on years of intensive discussions on how to handle the economic crisis. First, the Commission firmly stressed the need for a new strategy that moved away from the narrow focus on growth and jobs that had existed by addressing rising public concerns over energy, the environment and climate change as well as social issues. The European Commission acted as political entrepreneur by immediately in times of economic recession, extending its role within the EU-system from being a technocratic institution to a political and normative one and with a more hierarchical political role among relevant DG:s, addressing the European common good through a multidimensional strategy far beyond economic aspects.

Second, the previous Lisbon Strategy had been criticised for poor coordination and conflicting priorities and based on such legacy, the Commission initiated a new ex ante surveillance system in the annual European Semester symbolizing a stronger governance structure (Begg, 2007). The European Semester provided the Commission the role of annually assessing member-states' budgetary plan, macroeconomic challenges and structural reforms. The European Semester also embedded the Commission the role to provide member-states with suggestions on country-specific recommendations within the framework of Europe 2020 heading targets (Stevenson, 2019).

This study brings added value to the broader literature in two ways. First, there is a large and growing bulk of studies on entrepreneurship, but the dominant focus has continued to be on economic actors and where political institutions been a forgotten dimension. Due to the dominant bulk of studies on entrepreneurship within the economics, often leaving political institutions behind, the focus on political entrepreneurship provides insights on how political institutions may facilitate for social and economic development. By exploring the Europe 2020 Strategy as counter-actions to the economic and financial crisis of 2007–2008 and forward, we may understand the importance of the Commission to guide European political, economic and social development forward through political entrepreneurship.

Second, EU studies have focused on the role of EU member-states in shaping European politics. The role of the Commission has, however, too often been an overlooked institution and especially so in times of crisis. There is widespread literature on the role of the European Commission within the EU-system as driving engine, but much less has been written on the European Commission in times of crisis where individual EU member-states are paralyzed by domestic challenges and the EU at large faces disintegration. This study on political entrepreneurship and the role of the Commission in times of European crisis is therefore an interesting take to understand how Europe faced and handled the economic crisis of 2007/08 and forward.

Europe 2020 was a Commission initiative to promote smart, sustainable and socially inclusive growth, addressing the economic crisis as an existential threat to European wealth and health, but also an opportunity to build a future prosperous Europe. Such opportunity required major reforms from a European leadership of new, bold, innovative and ambitious ideas (political entrepreneurship) focusing on a wide range of areas for growth; smart, sustainable and inclusive. In 2020, almost every objective set out in the Europe 2020 strategy was fulfilled after serious transformative reforms within EU member-states. Although the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy was beyond the scope of the European Commission, the Commission initiated and monitored a strategy that met the economic recession with mitigation far beyond the notions on economic growth; the scope of the Europe 2020 Strategy was multidimensional to build a new solid sustainable social-economic and green model.

## References

- Arnall A., Chalmers D. (Eds.), 2015, *The Oxford Handbook of European Union Law*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Barbier J.C., 2011, *Changes in Political Discourse from the Lisbon Strategy to Europe 2020: Tracing the Fate of 'Social Policy'*, European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), Brussels.
- Barcevicus E., Weishaupt T., Zeitlin J. (Eds.), 2014, *Assessing the Open Method of Coordination. Institutional Design and National Influence of EU Social Policy Coordination*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Bauer M.W., Becker S., 2014, The unexpected winner of the crisis: The European Commission's strengthened role in economic governance, *Journal of European Integration*, 36(3), 213–229. doi: 10.1080/07036337.2014.885750
- Baumol W.J., 1990, Entrepreneurship: productive, unproductive and destructive, *Journal of Political Economy*, 98(5), 893–921.
- Beardsworth R., 2020, Climate science, the politics of climate change and futures of IR, *International Relations*, 34(3), 374–390. doi: 10.1177/0047117820946365
- Becker S., Bauer M.W., Connolly S., Kassim H., 2016, The Commission: boxed in and constrained, but still an engine of integration, *West European Politics*, 39(5), 1011–1031. doi: 1177/0047117820946365
- Begg I., 2007, *Lisbon II, Two Years on: An Assessment of the Partnership for Growth and Jobs*, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels.
- Bongardt A., Torres F., 2010, Europe 2020 – a promising strategy?, *Intereconomics*, 45(3), 136–141.
- Borghetto E., Franchino F., 2010, The role of subnational authorities in the implementation of EU directives, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 17(6), 759–780. doi: 10.1080/13501763.2010.486972
- Borzaga C., Galera G., Nogales R. (Eds.), 2008, *Social Enterprise: A New Model for Poverty Reduction and Employment Generation – An Examination of the Concept and Practice in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States*, UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Bratislava.
- Brickerhoff P.C., 2000, *Social Entrepreneurship – The Art of Mission-Based Venture Development*, John Wiley and Sons, New York.
- Brok E., Langen W., 2012, Sustainable growth for Europe: the four crises and a call for reform, *European View*, 11, 189–199. doi: 10.1007/s12290-012-0240-4
- Capello R., Lenzi C., 2016, Relevance and utility of European Union research, technological development and innovation policies for a smart growth, *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 34(1), 52–72. doi: 10.1177/0263774X15614655
- Carroll J.J., 2017, Failure is an option: the entrepreneurial governance framework, *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Public Policy*, 6(1), 108–126. doi: 10.1108/JEPP-04-2016-0013
- Christiansen T., 2002, A maturing bureaucracy? The role of the Commission in the policy process, [in:] J. Richardson (Ed.), *European Union – Power and Policy-Making*, Routledge, London & New York, 76–95.
- Chung H., Bekker S., Houwing H., 2012, Young people and the post-recession labour market in the context of Europe 2020, *Transfer*, 18(3), 301–317. doi: 10.1177/1024258912448590
- Copeland P., James S., 2014, Policy windows, ambiguity and Commission entrepreneurship: explaining the relaunch of the European Union's economic reform agenda, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 21(1), 1–19. doi: 10.1080/13501763.2013.800789
- Crespy A., Menz G., 2015, Commission entrepreneurship and the debasing of Social Europe before and after the Eurocrisis, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 53(4), 753–768. doi: 10.1111/jcms.12241
- Cross D.M.K., 2017, *The Politics of Crisis in Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Dahl R.A., 1974, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*, Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Dinan D., 2016, Governance and Institutions: A More Political Commission, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54(Annual Review), 101–116. doi: 10.1111/jcms.12427
- Dumitrescu A.L., 2016, *The Social Dimension of "Europe 2020" Strategy: The Inclusive Growth*, Knowledge Horizons – Economics, 8(1), 68–72.
- Egeberg M., 2012, Experiments In Supranational institution-building: The European Commission as a Laboratory, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 19(6), 939–950. doi: 10.1080/13501763.2012.681456
- EUR-Lex: *Distribution of Competences*, 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/competences.html?locale=en> (accessed 8 May 2018).
- EUR-Lex: *OMC (Open Method of Coordination)*, 2018, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/open\\_method\\_coordination.html](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/open_method_coordination.html) (accessed 8 May 2018).
- European Commission, 2010, *Communication from the Commission: Europe 2020: A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*. Brussels, 3.3.2010, European Commission, Brussels.
- European Commission, 2016, *Next Steps for a Sustainable European Future: European Action for Sustainability*, [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/commission-communication-next-steps-sustainable-european-future\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/commission-communication-next-steps-sustainable-european-future_en) (accessed 12 October 2018).
- European Commission, 2017, *White Paper on the Future of Europe – Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025*, European Commission, Brussels.
- European Commission, Press Release, November 28, 2018, *The Commission calls for a climate neutral Europe by 2050*, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_18\\_6543](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_18_6543) (accessed 5 January 2019).
- Eurostat, 2017, *Smarter, Greener, More Inclusive? Indicators to Support the Europe 2020 Strategy: 2017 edn.*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- Eurostat, 2018a, *Smarter, Greener, More Inclusive? Indicators to Support the Europe 2020 Strategy: 2018 edn.*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

- Eurostat, 2018b, *Europe 2020 Indicators: Poverty and social exclusion*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- Eurostat, 2019, *Smarter, greener, more inclusive? Indicators to support the Europe 2020 strategy: 2019 edn.*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- Eurostat, 2020, *Eurostat regional yearbook: 2020 edn.*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- European Commission, 2019, *Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- Gawell M., Johannisson B., Lundqvist M., 2009, *Samhällets Entreprenörer – En Forskarantologi om Samhällsentreprenörskap* (Eng. Social Entrepreneurs – A Research Anthology on Social Entrepreneurship), KK-stiftelsen, Stockholm.
- Grief A., 2005, Commitment, Coercion and Markets: The Nature and Dynamics of Institutions Supporting Exchange, [in:] C. Ménard, M.M. Shirley (Eds.), *Handbook of New Institutional Economics*, Springer, New York, 727–788.
- Gros D. Roth E., 2012, *The Europe 2020 Strategy – Can it Maintain the EU's Competitiveness in the World?*, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Brussels.
- Holcombe R.G., 2002, Political entrepreneurship and the democratic allocation of economic resources, *The Review of Austrian Economics*, 15(2/3), 143–159. doi: 10.1023/A:1015758419984
- Hudrliková L., 2013, Composite indicators as a useful tool for international comparison: the Europe 2020 example, *Prague Economic Papers*, 4, 459–473. doi: 10.18267/j.pap.462
- Ioannou D., Leblond P., Niemann A., 2015, European integration and the crisis: practice and theory, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 22(2), 155–176. doi: 10.1080/13501763.2014.994979
- Istvan, L., Orsolya, E., Orsolya, N.T., 2016, Competitiveness – higher education, *Studia Universitatis Economics Series*, 26(1), 11–25.
- Jones P., 1978, The appeal of the political entrepreneur, *British Journal of Political Science*, 8(4), 498–504.
- Juncker J.C., 2017, *President Jean-Claude Juncker's State of the Union Address 2017*, European Commission, Brussels.
- Karlsson, C., Silander D. (Eds.) 2020. *Implementing Sustainable Development Goals in Europe – The Role of Political Entrepreneurship*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham – Northampton.
- Karlsson C., Silander C., Silander E. (Eds.), 2018, *Governance and Political Entrepreneurship in Europe: Promoting Growth and Welfare in Times of Crisis*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham – Northampton.
- Kingdon J., 1995, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, HarperCollins, New York.
- Klikocka H. 2019, Assumptions and implementation of smart growth and inclusive growth targets under the Europe 2020 strategy, *European Research Studies Journal*, 22(2), 199–217. doi: 10.35808/ersj/1433
- Kudrna Z., Wasserfallen F., 2020, Conflict among member states and the influence of the Commission in EMU politics, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 28(6), 902–913. doi: 10.1080/13501763.2020.1751681
- Laffan B., 2016, Forging a Union for the 21st Century: From Crisis to Opportunity, *EU Studies in Japan*, 2018(38), 1–20.
- Laffan, B. 1997, From policy entrepreneur to policy manager; the challenge facing the European Commission, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 4(3), 422–438.
- Liobikienė G., Butkus M., 2017, The European Union possibilities to achieve targets of Europe 2020 and Paris agreement climate policy, *Renewable Energy*, 106(C), 298–309. doi: 10.1016/j.renene.2017.01.036
- Lisbon Treaty, 2009, <http://www.lisbon-treaty.org/wcm/the-lisbon-treaty.html> (accessed 8 May 2018).
- Makarovič M., Šušteršič J., Rončević B., 2014, Is Europe 2020 set to fail? The cultural political economy of the EU grand strategies, *European Planning Studies*, 22(3), 610–626. doi: 10.1080/09654313.2013.782387
- Manners I., 2002, Normative power Europe: a contradiction in terms?, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(2), 235–258.
- Manners I., 2006, Normative power Europe reconsidered: beyond the crossroads, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(2), 182–199.
- Marlier E., Natali D. (Eds.), 2010, *Europe 2020 – Towards a More Social EU?*, Peter Lang SA, Brussels.
- McCaffrey M., Salerno J.T., 2011, A theory of political entrepreneurship, *Modern Economy*, 2(4), 552–560. doi: 10.4236/me.2011.24061
- Monnet J., 1978, *Memoirs*, William Collins, London.
- Morgan G., 1986, *Images of Organizations*, Sage Publications, Los Angeles.
- Naldi L., Larsson J.P., Westlund H., 2020, Policy entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial orientation in vulnerable Swedish municipalities, *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 32(7–8), 1–19. doi: 10.1080/08985626.2020.1798557
- North D.C., 1990, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Nugent N., Rhinard M., 2016, Is the European Commission Really in Decline?, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54(5), 1199–1215. doi: 10.1111/jcms.12358
- Nugent N., Rhinard M., 2019, The 'political' roles of the European Commission, *Journal of European Integration*, 41(2), 203–220. doi: 10.1080/07036337.2019.1572135
- Osborne D., Plastrik P., 1993, *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit Is Transforming the Public Sector*, Penguin Books, New York.
- Ostrom E., 1965, *Public Entrepreneurship: A Case Study in Ground Water Basin Management*, University of California, Los Angeles.
- Pagliacci F., 2017, Regional paths towards Europe 2020 targets: a spatial approach, *European Planning Studies*, 25(4): 601–619. doi: 10.1080/09654313.2017.1280002
- Peterson J., 1999, The Santer era: the European Commission in normative, historical and theoretical perspective, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 6(1), 46–65.

- Peterson J., 2017, Juncker's Political European Commission and an EU in Crisis, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 55(2), 349–367. doi: 10.1111/jcms.12435
- Putnam R., 1993, *Making Democracy Work – Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Radaelli C.M., 2003, *The Open Method of Coordination: A new governance architecture for the European Union?*, Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, Stockholm.
- Ribeiro-Soriano D., Galindo-Martin M.A., 2012, Government policies to support entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 24(9–10), 861–864. doi: 10.1080/08985626.2012.742322
- Roberts N.C., King P.J., 1991, Policy entrepreneurs: their activity structure and function in the policy process, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 1(2), 147–175.
- Salerno J.T., 2008, The entrepreneur: real and imagined, *Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics*, 11(3), 188–207. doi: 10.1007/s12113-008-9043-5
- Scheingate A.D., 2003, Political entrepreneurship, institutional change and American political development, *Studies in American Political Development*, 17(2), 185–203. doi: 10.1017/S0898588X03000129
- Schumpeter J.A., 1934, *The Theory of Economic Development: An Inquiry into Profits, Capital, Credit, Interest, and the Business Cycle*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Silander D., 2018, European governance and political entrepreneurship in times of economic crisis, [in:] C. Karlsson, C. Silander, D. Silander (Eds.), *Governance and Political Entrepreneurship in Europe: Promoting Growth and Welfare in Times of Crisis*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham – Northampton, 13–24.
- Silander D., 2020, The EU and Agenda 2030, [in:] C. Karlsson, D. Silander (Eds.), *Implementing Sustainable Development Goals in Europe – The Role of Political Entrepreneurship*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham –Northampton, 1–13.
- Širá E., Kotulič R., Vozárová I.K., Daňová M., 2021, Sustainable Development in EU Countries in the Framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy, *Processes*, 9(3), 1–17. doi: 10.3390/pr9030443
- Stec M., Grzebyk M., 2018, The implementation of the Strategy Europe 2020 objectives in European Union countries: the concept analysis and statistical evaluation, *Quality & Quantity*, 52(1), 119–133. doi: 10.1007/s11135-016-0454-7
- Stevenson H., 2019, *The European Semester: A literature review*. University of Nottingham, Nottingham.
- Tusińska M., 2016, Competitiveness of the European Union – expectations, reality and challenges towards 2020, *Horizons of Politics*, 7(21), 185–204. doi: 10.17399/HP.2016.072107
- van Voorst S., Mastenbroek E., 2017, Enforcement tool or strategic instrument? The initiation of ex-post legislative evaluations by the European Commission, *European Union Politics*, 18(4), 640–657.
- Wandel J., 2016, The role of government and markets in the strategy “Europe 2020” of the European Union: a robust political economy analysis, *International Journal of Management and Economics*, 49, 7–33. doi: 10.1515/ijme-2016-0002
- Weingast B., 1995, The Economic Role of Political Institutions: Market-Preserving Federalism and Economic Development, *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*, 11(1), 1–31.
- Wonka A., 2008, Decision-making dynamics in the European Commission: partisan, national or sectoral?, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15(8), 1145–1163. doi: 10.1080/13501760802407656
- Zaucha J., Komornicki T., Böhme K., Swiątek D., Zuber P., 2014, Territorial keys for bringing closer the territorial agenda of the EU and Europe 2020, *European Planning Studies*, 22(2), 246–267. doi: 10.1080/09654313.2012.722976
- Zeilinger B., 2021, The Role of the European Commission as a Policy Entrepreneur under the European Semester, *Journal Politics and Governance*, 9(3), 63–73. doi: 10.17645/pag.v9i3.4102
- Zeitlin J., Vanhercke B., 2014, *Socializing the European semester? Economic governance and social policy coordination in Europe 2020*, Brown University, The Watson Institute for International Studies Research Paper No. 2014–17.