

Daniela Vincenti-Mitchener
Managing Editor, Euractiv

Opening plenary – Chair

A lot has happened since last year's employment week. Europe and the world have gone through an unprecedented financial and economic turmoil. The illusions, prompted in 2007 by the economic upswing after a few years of relative growth and low unemployment rate—the lowest since the early 80s—have disappeared.

The financial crisis has spread across the Atlantic, with devastating repercussions on the real economy. Credit has dried up. Industrial output has collapsed. Economies are contracting at an alarming rate... and unemployment rates for both skilled and unskilled workers are climbing fast.

While finding ways to repair Europe's labour markets and manage the impact of the global economic slowdown in the short term will be discussed at the end of the day with Commissioner Vladimir Spidla, this opening session will try to address the long-term vision for restructuring the economy.

Picking through the wreckage of the past year it is legitimate to ask what remains of the EU's Lisbon agenda, designed in 2000 to transform Europe into "the world's most competitive knowledge-based economy" by 2010, and later revised in 2005 to focus on growth and jobs. A year before the deadline, most member states are still far from meeting their targets.

It is also legitimate to acknowledge that Europe and the rest of the world are facing an unprecedented critical convergence of the economic and climate crisis. Both are critically interconnected and solving both will massively impact on competitiveness and labour markets.

At the moment, the EU is busy rethinking its overarching strategy for growth and jobs and the Commission will launch a broad consultation in early autumn in view of final adoption in the first half of 2010. There is also the budget review which is supposed to deliver its first results by the end of the year.

There is no doubt that the crisis and the stimulus packages being agreed can be used as springboard to green the economy and make the long-term structural changes we need to move towards a low carbon, more sustainable growth future.

But are we taking the necessary steps and are we taking them rapidly enough?
Will cutting emission reduce growth and cost jobs?

What might a renewed Lisbon agenda look like after 2010? Will the new 10-year strategy be a green new deal?

How can we ensure green growth through investing in human capital?

Green jobs and growth: still a myth or a reality?