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## **EUROPEAN SOCIAL MODEL IN THE 21 CENTURY: REVISITED AND TOWARDS SOCIAL INVESTMENT**

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### **Abstract**

*Discussing future of the European Union largely depends on understanding the key principles on which the Union was built. Strong welfare was one among its corner stones and has been ever since. However, numerous crises have affected the way European welfare state is structured and there is a need of modernising it through the European Social Model. It is the model of regulating social policy across the member states, despite the differences among them and it can serve as a good starting point for making sustainable, just and equal union. The new social model needs to be based on the social investment state, as a way of uniting political and economic affairs in order to create competent citizens. On the other hand, the state should be organised in a way to be service oriented with carefully planned ways of investing and spending, so the potential future crises can be overcome with greater ease.*

### **Keywords**

Welfare State, European Social Model, Investment, Sustainability, Equality, Education, Modernization

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## **1. Introduction**

Europe is changing often in many ways, socially, politically, economically etc. but since the foundation of the European Union it has been united or has at least looked like that. Democracy has been coupled but other mechanisms of integration there were aimed at creating stronger Union in which member states can act jointly but also protect their sovereignty where it is possible. Social politics have always been in the middle, having EU institutions set the milestones and member states to choose ways how to implement these. The economic crisis has brought further problems and this paper argues that it is exactly the field of social politics that can be the base of the new and future Europe. However, there has to be new model that will be implemented and accepted by citizens, member states and EU institutions.

The paper is divided into several sections. The first part is looking into social changes that have been going on in Europe lately, in relationship with the welfare state. The second part emphasises the need of transcending current divisions in welfare state principles, while the third and fourth section define the European Social Model and the ways it is being changed. Last two sections discuss possibilities for the future that can result from the lifestyle changes and new ways of defining the way we live today.

## **2. New Social Environment in Europe**

Political and economic position of the EU today is insecure, shifting and uncertain. Lisbon Treaty and all of the changes that followed, especially after the crisis, influenced the way Union functions but also the way member states act one towards the other and to the EU institutions as well. This paper is looking how social politics have changed as a result of political, economic, social and demographic changes that have been going on for already decades now. The EU has to develop differently and look for different ways of sustaining its current status. Bureaucratisation and distancing of the institutions from the everyday life do not contribute to stability and strengthening of European continent but rather opposite, produce instability and divisions among member states.

Social and demographic changes have altered the outlook of the European society as we are now witnessing demographic and family revolution (Epping Andersen, Gallie, Hemerijck & Myles, 2002), but also rising individuality which is making personal biographies and narratives be the primary choice of the person (Giddens 1991). Families are becoming less stable and as a

result, single parent families' numbers are rising and new types of families are becoming numerous. This alteration has two effects which have been present in Europe for a long time: lowered birth rate and ageing society. Europe and with it, European Union, is becoming the continent of old people and the key institutional effects will be on creating successful social politics, mainly health and pension policies (Homeric 2012; Natali 2011).

Among the changing structure of the citizenry of the European Union, its institutional character is changing as well. After the Lisbon Treaty there have been numerous alterations in the way the EU is organized which were supposed to prevent further negative effects, either in economy or politics (Beck, 2013). However, internal affairs have not been dealt as successfully, mainly due to divisions that have rampaged the way the EU functions. Dividing member's states on numerous accounts has brought into effect the actual disintegrating politics that came as effect of the economic and political disparities between them. It appears that decision making procedure is the outcome of the informal agreements, rather than fully defined procedures (Giddens, 2013; Beck, 2013; Streak, 2015). The result of this is that making stable union becomes rather difficult and mechanisms of protection of member states on different accounts have to be made constantly. The key result is inability of the EU to function as a Union of equal member states and citizens who are solidary with one another. To put it another way, there have to be new way of searching for better union that will be more functional. Social politics and European Social Model can be a good starting point (Boskovic, 2015).

### **3. Need of Advancing from the Traditional Social Democracy and Neoliberalism**

Classic social democracy proved to be effective in the golden years after the Second World War and decades that followed. Stable growth with numerous labour force guaranteed strong welfare state that was able to provide means for all parts of the society that needed it. Giddens (1999) emphasises domination of the state on the civil society, collectivism, full employment, egalitarianism, one-way modernization, internationalism and attachment to the bipolar world as the main characteristics of classic social-democracy. As the time has passed however, the model became unsustainable and it is the case especially now, after the economic crisis. The major failure of the classic welfare state is that it acts as provider after the "bad" has already happened so it stimulates spending but ineffectively. Therefore, it creates passive citizens

who are not willing to activate and participate in the labour market, especially if the means provided are significant (Giddens, 2007). It is not argued here that the classic welfare state should be abandoned but only that specific principles of its functioning should be changed and based on different principles. Vandenbroucke and Vleminckxxx (2011) clearly show that it is important to keep some of the functions of the classic welfare state, so its key aims, equality and inclusion, can be sustained. But sustainability is very much dependent on the austerity measures, which became the principle during and after the crisis. Generosity had to be replaced by effectiveness so the measures of the social protection result in positive outcomes for those who are aimed by them (Homerich, 2012).

On the other hand, neoliberal polity does not prove to be as successful in creating society based on equal opportunity and chances for all, as have for long been principles of European integration and community. Neoliberal polity defines reality on rather opposite arguments from the social democracy but the economic crisis has proved that unsustainability remains its key problem as well (Jenson, 2009). Deregulation does not make positive effect neither on equality nor on quality employment (Ibid.). Any employment makes no great effect on the quality of lifestyle, depending on other circumstances as well, but more is needed. Leaving the field to individual choice makes the race for positions available on the market too harsh and unstimulating measures from the state make no contribution to more positive outcomes. Competitiveness plays the key role and institutions tend to play marginal role, therefore putting all of the responsibility on citizens (Lundvall & Lorenz, 2009).

The major problem of both models is that they do not provide solutions on the long run. They provide measures that do not make contributions effective on longer periods of time, so that both citizens and the state contribute to the positive outcomes. Redistribution vs. freedom is the outdated reference today, due to several reasons: unsustainability, inflexibility, irresponsibility, with mixed relationship in each of these of both the state and citizens (Boskovic, 2015).

#### **4. What is the Social Model in Europe and how is it Conceptualised?**

European Social Model is based on economic growth and social cohesion. Coupling the two appears to be difficult during and after the crisis and the EU needs to improve its social model significantly. But speaking of what the European Social Model is and how it is

conceptualised, there are differences which point to the fact that it has several meanings. Historically, it has been conceptualised in different ways. Hay, Watson and Wincott say that “there is, as yet, no commonly agreed definition. Indeed, a number of different senses have been used interchangeably and, as such, frequently conflated” (Hay, Watson & Wincott, 1999, p. 14). One of the first definitions of the European Social Model (ESM) was presented in the Commission’s White Paper on social policy and it was defined as: “a set of common values, namely the commitment to democracy, personal freedom, social dialogue, equal opportunities for all, adequate social security and solidarity towards the weaker individuals in the society” (Jepson & Serrano Pascual, 2006, p.26). In 2000, it was emphasised that the ESM must be redefined and its modernisation included: the need for education and training, lifelong learning, reforms of the social security systems and promotion of social inclusion (Jepson & Serrano Pascal, 2006). Therefore, risk became more individualised and it is the individual that now has to bear the risk and deal with it (Ibid.). Accordingly, the social model of the specific state is based on specific policies and aims which are based in the welfare and social policy and it is often shaped by historical and cultural surrounding.

Conceptually speaking, Hay, Watson & Wincott (1999) made a four-fold division of the European social models. Firstly, the ESM comprised common institutional architecture in Europe. Secondly, it means a complex of different national models which are identified in Europe. In the third sense the transnational aspect of the ESM is emphasized, meaning that national social policies are no longer tenable but it is rather the transnational level that dominates in formulating the social system. The fourth type comprehends the social model into wider political processes and integrations as the most productive means of developing the social policies (Hay, Watson & Wincott, 1999). It is inevitable to have a certain overlapping in previous definitions but these are the conceptual meanings of what ESM actually embraces and how much it is linked to already mention wider social circumstances.

Epping Andersen made a three-fold division of welfare models, on the basis of “degree of de-commodification and modes of stratification, or if you wish, solidarities” (Epping-Andersen, 1999, p. 74). The first are liberal welfare regime, commonly connected with the United Kingdom and the USA and are characterized by the minimal state, individualized risks and market solutions (Ibid.). Distinctive for this type of a welfare state are: social guarantees mostly restricted to “bad risks”, narrowly defined “social risks”, encouragement of market (Ibid.). The

second clusters of regimes are social-democratic. These are Nordic states. “Here, the historical corporatist-statist legacy was upgraded to cater to the new ‘post-industrial’ class structure” (Epping-Andersen, 1990, p. 27). Crucial characteristics of this welfare type are extensive social coverage, state domination, and egalitarianism, de-commodification of the state, national health care and full employment. Finally, the Continental Europe is dominated by the Conservative welfare regime. “The essence of a conservative regime lies in its blend of status segmentation and familiarise” (Epping-Andersen, 1999, p.81). Epping-Andersen finds family relations one of the key aspects of these regimes and it is “the security of the chief (male) breadwinner [that] assumes fundamental importance. The familiarise bias is additionally reinforced by the dominance of social insurance” (Epping-Andersen, 2002, p. 16). Due to the number of systems that fall under this regime, there are many differences but these are mostly characterized by corporatism, compulsory social insurance and wide health insurance, strong influence of family and family relations on the welfare.

Giddens adds the fourth type to Esping-Andersen cluster and it is “the Mediterranean one (Spain, Portugal, Greece), which also has a fairly low tax base and depends heavily upon provision from the family” (Giddens, 1999, p.15). Besides, he adds, even fifth model could be included today and these would be the post-Communist states which are trying to develop the Western European welfare model (Giddens, 2007). Adnett and Hardy (2005) also recognize the four models but label them differently, still defining each by the similar patterns as in the previous passages: traditional-rudimentary model (present in Southern Europe), liberal-individualist (Anglo-Irish), Romano-Germanic (conservative-corporatist) and Social democratic (Nordic states).

## **5. How is European Social Model changing?**

The new European social democracy should be based on different principles so the ESM gains on strength and effectiveness so Giddiness adds that “[a] healthy economy needs well-functioning markets, but it also needs a well-developed public domain, in which the state retains its essential role” (Giddiness, 2003, p. 7). Relationship between the state and market is being altered, but what is more important, it is the relationship between the state and citizens that is changing as well. The new welfare state can come into effect only if both are aware of its responsibility so they can act. Defining relationship between family, community, state and

market has to be not only solid but more stable as well, so the responsibility and importance of all the segments is adequately defined, especially concerning the role of individual in all of those (Jenson, 2009). Uncareful positioning of any of these may result in worsening living conditions on the sort but as well on the long run.

Also, Epping-Andersen (2000) stresses the need of coming to common grounds, especially in accounting and measuring of incomes and expenditures, so the statistics can have a full effect. The Commission's Social Policy Agenda "seeks to ensure the positive and dynamic interaction economic, employment and social policy, and ... [a]t the heart of the agenda is the modernisation of European social model" (European Commission, 2000, p. 2).

The new social model for Europe must combine the three strategic components: the state, market and family. The interaction of each of them will result in specific social model. But the key outcome of the new social model has to be the politics that creates sustainable and effective welfare state, which means having social policy that prepares citizens for the future, rather than helping them in the situation that has already happened. Therefore, it is the social investment state that should be the model upon which the future social policy should be based. Social investment state is an activating or enabling state (Giddiness, 2007) which provides services to its citizens but on the other hand put more responsibility on them. It is based on the turn in social politics which implies changing directions and relationships between the labour market, family structures, needs and risks and all of this through modernising public and social politics (Palme, 2009). New welfare means modernisation of the model of classic politics and should be more business oriented. Therefore, as Jenson and Saint-Martin (2003) emphasise, it is not only more business oriented but also market friendly and more dynamic in character.

## **6. Social Investment State as a model for the future**

Classic welfare state was more organized to remedy the risk which would imply that is was formed to act after the risk or the "bad" has already happened. This was the concept of the static welfare which does not act in advance but rather provide means for curing the problem. The consequence of such an approach was the passive citizenry, not willing to invest in themselves in their human capital. Also, responsibility is in this manner transferred to the state and citizens do not feel the need to improve their position because it is the state that will provide and satisfy their vital needs. Moreover, citizens can sometimes be better off living this way

(Giddens, 2007), due to certainty of financial inflows and possibility of being inactive and still having secure financial means, not considering its amount and contingency of using it. The main principles, among others, of the social investment state are: activism and responsibility, investment in education, knowledge economy and creating sustainable social environment (Giddens, 1999).

The new welfare state must be activating and generate active and responsible citizenry. Creating more equal and just society is possible only if the state has the means to act in advance and prepare its citizens for life transitions. The two key transitions are from education system to work and from work to retirement (Jacobsson, 2009; Lindth, 2009) and it is these moments that prove to be the most dramatic. Giddens (2007) distinguishes two types of activism. The first meaning is that “welfare services should be designed to help people help themselves” (Giddens, 2007, p. 100) and the second, being more community oriented and comprising social activism so citizens turn more to local and civil society organizations which can help in delivering certain welfare provisions (Ibid. p. 102). Social and human capital become the prime goal, so obtaining good knowledge and skills that can be used in transitional phases especially represents the key aim for each of the citizens. The state acts as provider of services, therefore encouraging citizens to be active in search of workplace, thus stabilising their living conditions and escaping social poverty traps. Giddens (2007) discusses the enabling state, but believes that it is the ensuring state that is more encompassing and more acceptable term. Schuppert uses the term *the ensuring state* to refer to the redefined welfare and for him “the ‘ensuring state’ emphasises the responsibility of the state in areas where non-state agents play a dominant role in the provision of public services” (Schuppert, 2003, 57). It is more encompassing model, aiming at further obligations of the state and care for its citizens.

Education becomes one of the major objectives of the new welfare model. It is the case because the early investment in children becomes the greatest capital in future. Cognitive skills of children are most developed in early years and if it is not the case it cannot be amended as strongly in the latter period of life (Giddens, 1991). Field (2003) discusses different opinions and implications of the social capital and its necessity for the citizens today adding that social capital often contributes to greater performance of citizens in both their private and working life. In the context of the new welfare state, it means that schools with quality services should be available to children, on one hand, but on the other, that quality care by their parents should be one the



prime cores of social politics. It will provide good care for children but also enough time for parents to spend time with their children, which in a way is investment of time. Longer parental leaves are already the case in some parts of the EU, especially in Scandinavia (Lindth, 2009) and children from these regions show the greatest potential in human and social capital (Lundvall & Lorenz, 2009).

Epping-Andersen notes that young cohorts often do not have the smooth transition from the school or faculty to work, especially in the Southern Europe (Esping-Andersen, 2000). Young families as well tend to be worse off as they do not have stable jobs and can easily fall into the trap of poverty and social exclusion. The EU feels strong about fighting social exclusion (European Commission, 2000) because it is specifically related to the new social environment, especially because it depicts the wider social environment of the person. “Social exclusion is ... defined as the state in which certain poor people feel obliged to live outside accepted social norms in order to cope with poverty and to survive financially” (Walker, 2005, p. 79). It is the result of exclusion from the wider society and inability to have successful inclusion and acceptance either into the workplace but even more, into normal social life.

Certain social groups are more vulnerable than the others. Statistics (Eurostat, 2015) show it is young and females that have suffered most during the years of the previous crisis. Therefore, special attention must be paid to these groups and the new social model must be especially friendly towards female employment and support conditions which are favourable to women. Creating policies in this way contributes to future as “revised social model requires a future-oriented perspective, and must therefore focus on those who will become tomorrow’s adults” (Esping-Andersen, 2000, p. 31).

The new social environment must be job-friendly and make opportunities for adequate jobs. Acquiring knowledge and skills enables a person to be more flexible in situations that are transitory. The state acts here as provider of necessary reskilling or trainings that are needed if the person is to be active on the labour market. Deregulation of labour market often implies changing of jobs and security must be acquired by worker him/herself. One of the goals of the EU is knowledge-based economy and the Commission’s Social Policy Agenda sets development of human resources, upgrading skills, life-long learning, and access to quality education to be “of utmost importance in providing people with real opportunities to prepare for rapidly changing working conditions and the requirements of the knowledge-based economy” (European

Commission, 2000, p. 31). Living longer, together with lower fertility rates significantly alters the concept of retirement. Younger generations now will probably find it easier to adapt to different circumstances because of several reasons: due to higher education and skills they will be more adaptive and able to retrain, they will be more healthier and will live longer and women's employment will be more frequent and stable which will result in steady earnings and higher earnings, inevitably leading to advantages after the retirement (Esping Andersen, 2000). Different options for retirees will have to be developed due to flexibility of work and personal life, resulting in different options that will be available for those who want to continue work even after the age limit and those do not. On the other hand, private pension funds are already becoming irreplaceable part of funding schemes that need to support sustainability of pension systems (Natali, 2011).

## **7. Changing Lifestyles and Future Welfare State**

Contemporary family is changing, as has already been mentioned, this way altering functioning of the welfare state and making the pressure towards the need for improvement and creating new possibilities. Traditional family with the male breadwinner has been the model on which the social politics was formed (Giddiness, 2007). As Epping Andersen notes (2002), one of the most important alterations is changing social position and relevance of women, as part not only of family and society but now of work force and decision making bodies. Women are independent financially and able to choose their own lifestyles and way of creating their lives. It is their independence that provides them with opportunities and enables them to be active citizens. All of this results in shifting accepted and long dominating traditions of creating lifestyles as regimen rather than chosen and created. Consequently, new ways of responding to the new social relations are created and these differ among member states, but having not only legal but also cultural traditions that define new social politics (Taylor-Gooby, 2001).

Another significant change in altering lifestyles is different family structuring which results in more non-standard households and need of adapting social politics to the new circumstances (Jenson, 2009). Whether it is non-working or one-income household, there is serious threat here of the child poverty and one of the key aims of the EU is extermination of child poverty (European Commission, 2000). The social investment state is especially focused to the children and their well-being and it is social politics towards children and child care that will

play especially important role in the future of the new model. Depending on the household type and size, new measures will be necessary in this case as well, if we are to overcome all the possibilities of negative outcomes for children. On the other hand, children today will be elders soon and investment in them means brighter future and easier transitions in specific life phases.

The key concerns for the EU member states in the field of social policy comprise several important concerns. First of all, there will have to be better planning so the sustainability can be achieved at low costs, in the sense of cutting welfare programmes, what is happening now in many of the member states. The state will have to provide quality services and look for improving of living conditions of its citizens. The goals are set by the EU but are often escaped and changed, so it becomes hard for member states to act jointly (Beck, 2013). Due to this, there will have to be greater coordination among the states, but also between the states and the EU institutions. Setting the agenda will have to be done with greater transparency and coordination among the member states, due to high differences among them, economically, politically, culturally etc. The crisis has shown that current divisions lower capacities of member states to act quickly and jointly and that further cooperation is necessary. European Union will have to undertake better coordination, either through further federalisation, as suggested by Giddens (2013) or to expand current state of the art in specific ways to improve ability of the Union to act in more unitary manner. All of this leads to the conclusion that the new European social model will have to be reconsidered, not because it is not good or unacceptable, but rather because it has to be adjusted to new conditions.

## **8. Conclusion**

Thinking about the future of the European Union will largely depend on the ways it responds to major social trends. Immigration issues have not been discussed due to the space here, but together with all else that has been implied, the European states will have to act quickly and effectively. If it is not the case, disintegration might become the future principle with unforeseeable consequences. The welfare state can be a good starting point due to the fact that citizens of different member states can find themselves closer to each other depending on their similar social problems rather than by their nationality. Therefore, creating sustainable social model, on the basis of the social investment state can be the principle of creating equal and just societies under the roof of the European Union. Adapting social policy to social changes is supposed to have positive effects in the future, consequently meaning that current affairs are

being redeveloped in order that future generations can live in better living conditions and in more equal society. In order to have this happen there will have to be closer cooperation of citizens, member states and the EU institutions as well.

The European Social Model should be based on principles of the social investment state as the mode that should create sustainable development and equal opportunities for all. It has to be planned carefully and in advance, taking into consideration all the above mentioned social changes that have been taking place in the recent decades. Changing patterns of living and new lifestyles, as well as different conceptions of family and individual statuses must be rethought as the mould of new social relations that will shape the future of the citizenry. The European Union has to take responsibility for its citizens and through investing in them, make them resistant to possible crises that might occur, especially in the periods of life transitions. Welfare state must be an active state which provides quality services to its citizens who need to be responsible, for themselves and for the others as well. This way opens possibilities for new solidarities and new ways of strengthening of social relations between citizens but above all, between citizens and state and the European institutions, which are in need of stronger legitimacy and support.

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