

THE CONVERGENT MOTIONS OF THE SOCIAL DIMENSION AND THE CULTURAL DIMENSION. NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN BLUEPRINTS.

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Abstract:

Globalisation, Europeanisation and the issues related to postmodernism have faced the Western European welfare states with a series of difficulties and challenges, but the social policy systems adapted to these challenges in various manners and confronted them. The socio-cultural diversity on the one hand, and the attempt to unify the national systems, on the other, are matters which have raised and continue to raise questions on the European level, both in what concerns the social and the cultural dimensions. Why are there social policies in the EU? How have the objectives of these policies developed and changed and how are they convergent with the cultural endeavors? What are the motions of the national, European and global prospects?

Starting from the path-dependency theory, we were trying to identify those distinctive marks which are challenges in the attempt to unify the systems from the New Member States with those from Western Europe. Later on these distinctive marks became cultural indicators. Concerning the New Institutionalism Theory and Neoclassical Sociology, the attempt was to analyze to what extent is the institutional framework organised by the cultural beliefs or by the common norms of the majority. Moreover, we shall attempt to discover the role played by the state in these exchanges of influence and how the European and global contexts affect the decision making process and that of national policy creation.

Keywords: social policies, cultural directions, national state, European Union

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Introduction

A catchword in the EU vocabulary of social policies is *mainstreaming*. There have been discussions about "mainstreaming disability within EU employment and social policy"¹, then "mainstreaming of employment policies"², used also for racism³ and "mainstreaming the social dimension of the information society"⁴. Geyer considers that "mainstreaming is a form of privilege"⁵. In order to understand the relevance of the cultural approach in the European Union, the European directives and that of policy making in the EU and on a national level, I suggest an insight in the social field. The relevance of the national dimension appeared more significantly in the social policies also as a result of the enlargement of the EU. My thesis is that this fact was the underlying element for the launching of the cultural dimension as an emerging domain of the EU.

Grounds:

In the 1970s, in Holland, cultural policies have become a part of the Government's welfare policies due to the recession. This emphasises that there can be a connection between social and cultural policies and that culture can indeed and must support social development. In the case of Ireland, according to the study made by the Economic and Research Institute (ESRI), there is a connection between the economic and social setting and the participation to culture.⁶ National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) in the report *The Arts, Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion*, published in 2007, defines cultural inclusion as "being a part of social

¹ In 1999, the title of a document prepared by European Commission Directorate-Generale V (*Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs*).

² Communication from the Commission on Community policies in support of employment (COM(1999) 774, 25th of January 1999, p 1, in Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 190 and p. 223.

³ Idem, p. 215 and p. 223.

⁴ Idem, p. 223 and p. 243.

⁵ Robert R. Geyer, *Exploring European Social Policy*, UK: Polity Press, 2000, p. 210.

⁶ *Compendium. Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe*. Ireland, 2009 – <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/ireland.php>, retrieved in September 2010.

inclusion”⁷. From the attempt to unify the Member States to the Open Method of Coordination there has been a process. A similar encounter will take place in the cultural domain regarding national identity versus European identity. The urge for the role of culture as a factor of social inclusion was initiated during the process of creating social policies.

The path of the social issues, the dilemmas regarding the European and national policies in this field are linked to culture, historical, geographic and religious determinations. These are the factors that shape the European social policies. The difficulties encountered in making efficient social policies were linked to the lack of a common perception of the core concepts and the social contexts in which the policies are created and implemented. The relevant directions of the social policies addressed by the EU and the analysis of the Member States with respect to these directives illustrates the distinctiveness of each country and the effects of “cultural *embedding*”⁸. The hypothesis demonstrated by Linda Hantrais is that national governments will have different reactions, different policies for common social issues.⁹ The differences are created by the different contexts, different cultures, different levels of government organisation, different priorities.

The need to tackle the social dimension appeared out of economic reasons, but gained a particular place on the European agenda. It is necessary to address the cultural approach through its indissoluble bond with the social area. The acknowledgement of the social dimension and of the diversity of the systems after establishing economic agreements and the need to include social policies depending on the cultural diversity lead to an increasing emphasis on the cultural dimension.

We propose an approach of the cultural dimension on the one hand as a cause¹⁰ – a framework for social policies, seen from the perspective of

⁷ “The Arts, Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion, 2007”, *Compendium. Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe*. Ireland - <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/ireland.php?aid=428>, 5 December 2010.

⁸ Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. viii.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ The coordination of social security systems, mutual recognition of qualifications, family policies, as well as measures taken at EU level to reduce poverty are all justified somehow as a means to reduce barriers and achieve freedom of movement for workers within the Union.

the issues in the social area, and on the other hand as an effect – the result of such issues that lead to the inclusion of the cultural dimension on the agenda and among the priorities of the EU. The differences between the EU Member States regarding the work conditions, health and security, but also the perspective of the work legislation, as well as the relation between the European law and the national policies triggered a series of inquiries on the socio-cultural premises of each country, the historical context and the specific influences or patterns of thought.¹¹ The EU Member States have different starting points: the state organisation after the war may have contained the same ingredients in different countries, but their combination was utterly different¹². Wolfgang Streeck talks about “the Europe with variable geometry”, emphasising the voluntary condition based on which some Member States align for specific common goals, but also “a multi-speed Europe” which suggests reaching the same final destination eventually.¹³

However, the information shows that mobility within the EU is low. Although there is equivalence and recognition within the EU and coordination of social security systems - all these removing certain obstacles to freedom of movement, there are other difficulties that were slowing this process: difficulties associated with cultural and linguistic traditions. (in Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. xiii.)

¹¹ Family policies, indirectly affected by labor rights were viewed with skepticism by the Member States in relation to an agreement based on a common policy, and the Commission, as well as the national governments preferred to monitor the situation, rather than to prescribe measures for family policy. (see Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. xii.) A research about family structures and the responses given by various governments could provide direction for future research.

¹² Catherine Finer Jones, “Trends and developments in welfare states”, in Jochen Clasen (ed.), *Comparative Social policy: concepts, theories and methods*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, pp. 15-33, in Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 29.

¹³ The European Union is trying to prepare certain arrangements that can coordinate different tendencies shown by Member States. That will refer to a Europe of different dimensions, where some Member States are grouped for certain common purposes on a voluntary basis, leaving out those that do not want to be part of the common purpose. (Wolfgang Streeck, “Neo-Voluntarism: A New European Social Policy Regime?”, in *Governance in the European Union*, Gary Marks, Fritz W. Scharpf, Philippe C. Schmitter and Wolfgang Streeck (eds.), London: Sage Publications, 1996, p. 70.); Another term used is that of „multi-speed Europe” a term which implies that eventually all countries will reach the same destination, where they will be subject to a single system of supranational authority”

The solutions found by the different Member States for common problems, as well as their results reflect not only the different socio-economic conditions, but also the different political ideologies and mindsets about the legitimacy of state intervention¹⁴. Democracy and cultural diversity are the two coordinates that had a decisive role in the opponency of the nation state to the supranational governing.¹⁵ The comparative analysis of social policies, the examination of various institutional agreements, policy choices and results leads to "the identification of the determinants of culture".¹⁶ My endeavour is to discover the interconnections between the development of cultural policies in the EU and the creation and implementation of national policies, starting from a similar undertaking of the social policies. Furthermore, I follow the actual process of making social policies, its dynamics and the way some of the issues related to their implementation on a national level have been resolved.

Starting from the path-dependency theory, we were trying to identify those distinctive marks which are challenges in the attempt to unify the systems from the New Member States with those from Western Europe. Later on these distinctive marks became cultural indicators.

Concerning the New Institutionalism Theory and Neoclassical Sociology, the attempt was to analyze to what extent is the institutional framework organised by the cultural beliefs or by the common norms of the majority. Moreover, we shall attempt to discover the role played by the state in these exchanges of influence and how the European and global

(Wolfgang Streeck, "Neo-Voluntarism: A New European Social Policy Regime?", in *Governance in the European Union*, Gary Marks, Fritz W. Scharpf, Philippe C. Schmitter and Wolfgang Streeck (eds.), London: Sage Publications, 1996, p. 157).

¹⁴ Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. ix.

¹⁵ Successful resistance of the nation-state to the supranational governance finds its legitimacy in historical association with democracy and <cultural diversity>. (Wolfgang Streeck, "Neo-Voluntarism: A New European Social Policy Regime?", in *Governance in the European Union*, Gary Marks, Fritz W. Scharpf, Philippe C. Schmitter and Wolfgang Streeck (eds.), London: Sage Publications, 1996, p. 66.)

¹⁶ Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. viii.

contexts affect the decision making process and that of national policy creation.

1.1. *The model of social policies*

According to Fritz W. Scharpf, the welfare states are constitutionally bound by the <supremacy> of all European rules of integration, liberalisation and the law of competition and they ought to operate under the fiscal rules of the *Monetary Union*.¹⁷ Furthermore, he highlights that the attempts to bring under the European influence the national welfare systems are politically bound by the diversity of the national welfare states, which differ not only on the level of economic development, but also, even more significantly, in the normative aspirations and the institutional structures.¹⁸

In Wolfgang Streeck's opinion, the Monetary Union is rather an alliance between nationalism and neo-liberalism, and does not impose as evident the commitment of Member States for a supranational restoration of the internal political sovereignty.¹⁹ From the attempt to unify the Member States to the Open Method of Coordination there has been a process. Philippe C. Schmitter²⁰ considers a new form of multi-layer governing without clear distinctions regarding jurisdiction and identity which could erase the distinction between <high> and <low politics>. He considers that we shall need a new vocabulary when facing such development. The same opinion is shared by Wolfgang Streeck regarding a new type of political organisation, an international order, controlled by the

¹⁷ Fritz W. Scharpf 2002§6, "The European Social Model: coping with the challenges of diversity", Max-Planck-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung Working Paper 02/8, Köln: Max-Planck-Institute für Gesellschaftsforschung. URL: <http://www.mpi-fg-koeln.mpg.de/pu/workpap/wp02-8/wp02-8.html>. , in Alfio Cerami, *Social Policy in Central and Eastern Europe. The Emergence of a New European Welfare Regime*, Berlin: Lit Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2006, p. 224.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ Wolfgang Streeck, "Neo-Voluntarism: A New European Social Policy Regime?", in *Governance in the European Union*, Gary Marks, Fritz W. Scharpf, Philippe C. Schmitter and Wolfgang Streeck (eds.), London: Sage Publications, 1996, p. 157.

²⁰ Philippe C. Schmitter, "Imagining the Future of the Euro-Polity with the Help of New Concepts", in *Governance in the European Union*, Gary Marks, Fritz W. Scharpf, Philippe C. Schmitter and Wolfgang Streeck (eds.), London: Sage Publications, 1996, p. 133.

intergovernmental relations between the sovereign nation states that serves as internal regulation for the transnational economy²¹. Streeck believes that on the long run the European social policies will be created on two levels – national and supranational, with complex interactions between them.²² The community will function as an “intergovernmental arrangement” and the sovereign nation states will appeal to the Community in a “mutual assurance commitment”.²³

Nation states play a key role in eliminating all obstacles for the alignment of the national economies to the European/global labor market.²⁴

Thus, as Geyer observes, the EU should not be considered a threat to the national welfare systems, but rather as a facilitator when facing challenges on a European or international level; rather than the harmonization, the European social policies could encourage the diversity of the national social policies.²⁵

The EU Two-Tier System: The Single Market Oriented²⁶

<i>First-Tier</i>	<i>Second-Tier</i>
Common to all countries: market oriented with a single universal	Differentiated according to specific national

²¹ The political and economic arrangements that develop in Western Europe, are entirely different from the developments of the national state, especially in relationship to the economy. It changes the discussion on how empty or full the glass is to what kind of glass are we talking about and how can it be used? (Wolfgang Streeck, “Neo-Voluntarism: A New European Social Policy Regime?”, in *Governance in the European Union*, Gary Marks, Fritz W. Scharpf, Philippe C. Shmitter and Wolfgang Streeck (eds.), London: Sage Publications, 1996, p. 65.)

²² Wolfgang Streeck, “Neo-Voluntarism: A New European Social Policy Regime?”, in *Governance in the European Union*, Gary Marks, Fritz W. Scharpf, Philippe C. Shmitter and Wolfgang Streeck (eds.), London: Sage Publications, 1996, p. 65.

²³ Wolfgang Streeck, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

²⁴ In order to line up with the global division of labor the national economies can be assisted by the national governments as they remove any “artificial barrier”. (Wolfgang Streeck, “Neo-Voluntarism: A New European Social Policy Regime?”, in *Governance in the European Union*, Gary Marks, Fritz W. Scharpf, Philippe C. Shmitter and Wolfgang Streeck (eds.), London: Sage Publications, 1996, p. 68.

²⁵ Robert R. Geyer, *Exploring European Social Policy*, UK: Polity Press, 2000, p. 212.

²⁶ URL: <http://www.mpi-fg-koeln.mpg.de/pu/workpap/wp02-8/wp02-8.html>, in Alfio Cerami, *Social Policy in Central and Eastern Europe. The Emergence of a New European Welfare Regime*, Berlin: Lit Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2006, p. 224.

aspirations	
Legal	Semi-legal, tolerated
Mandatory	Optional
The economic field	The political field
Decisions taken by the Commission based on criteria set by regulating the Single Market	Decisions taken by the national governments based on requests from electorates

Streck considers that the vertical intervention in the national systems will be less important in this *two-tier policy* system than the horizontal interaction between the national systems.²⁷

Further on it would be important to tackle on the progress of the social dimension in the EU, the various domains of social policy, the parameters of change in social policy; the relation between the economic and social dimension, between the Community and the Union, as well as the extent to which the Union has developed its competencies in social policies, in spite of the pressures made by various strong national interests, the threat to national sovereignty and the persistence of diversity in the welfare systems and practices, but also the perspectives of social policies' development in the 21st century, as the EU is being enlarged towards the East.²⁸

The major changes in the EU: the technology, the political and economical changes, the perspective of the enlargement towards the East, the socio-demographic currents emphasize the importance of social policies in the EU.²⁹

1.2. *From Harmonization to the Open Method of Coordination*

Since the foundation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome, the dominant political philosophy was the economic one.³⁰ The six initial Member States: Belgium, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Luxemburg and Holland had common terms

²⁷ Wolfgang Streeck, "Neo-Voluntarism: A New European Social Policy Regime?", in *Governance in the European Union*, Gary Marks, Fritz W. Scharpf, Philippe C. Schmitter and Wolfgang Streeck (eds.), London: Sage Publications, 1996, pp. 66-67.

²⁸ See also Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. xiv.

²⁹ Linda Hantrais, *op. cit.*, p. viii.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 1.

regarding initiatives and competition. Under such terms, an optimised distribution of resources was wished for, leading to an obstacle-free economic growth, which would have automatically led to social development.³¹ The issues tackled were similar: the qualification of the work force for the rapid modification of the labour market in the context of a wide-spread unemployment and social exclusion; raising the social and healthcare standards, especially for the elderly and retired population, the alteration of the inter-generation relations, and the need to adapt public expenditure to fulfill the EMU criteria.³²

Article 117 of the Treaty of Rome of 1957³³ introduces the principle of harmonisation of the social systems of the 6 initial Member States (although the article was ammended, rewritten, renumbered after the Treaty of Amsterdam, this principle was not ammended).³⁴ Each state had different social policies and different policy making processes. The necessity to tackle social reform increases. During the ensuing 20 years a more intense focus is laid on the social aspects.

In the 70s the undertakings in formation and education carried on, and also the attention continued to be cast on workers and women's rights or poverty-related issues, thus on a European level social progress monitoring networks were created. Until the middle of the 80s the pressure for more structured social policy increases. The attention to formation and education, minorities, the equality of opportunity, mobility will be absorbed by the cultural policies. Hereby, we can notice how issues raised by the process of social policy making determined both the acknowledgement of certain cultural implications, and the need to deal with the creation of cultural directives on the EU level.

Ramesh Mishra emphasizes the diversity in welfare patterns and the fact that there are numerous factors that influence social policies – for

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² *Ibidem*, p. ix.

³³ See *Governing the European Union*, Simon Bromley (ed.), London, California, New-Delhi: Sage Publications in association with The Open University, 2001, UK: The Bath Press, Apendix, pp. 304-310.

³⁴ Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 22.

example technology.³⁵ Along with the attention for social policies and the progress in various sectors, we can notice the perpetuum mobile character of the EU. The recurrent movement depends on the political colour of those leading the EU institution at the moment of a certain decision, but also depending on the political regime of the key Member States in the EU.

Wolfgang Streeck gives an example in this respect linked to the Social Action Programme of 1972, which was an initiative of the social-democratic governments then leading the key European countries together with the syndicates, that boosted the efforts of the international organisations. Moreover, Streeck identifies the link to the old federalist agenda of state construction, cherished especially by the European Community.³⁶ Geyer notes that in domains such as health and security, vocational training, gender policies and mobility – the impact of European social policies is substantial. In others – like worker participation, poverty reduction and anti-discriminative policies – the impact is inessential.³⁷ The question risen is linked to the way the agenda of priorities is built up for the policies on the EU level. Here we can notice the importance of such social policies for the subsequent directives on culture. In the case of directives on culture, the same sectors of education, gender policies and mobility are the coordinates of unity on a European level. Based on the hitherto research, we consider that these are the only domains where common European cultural policies can be traced, the other indicators being linked to the cultural diversity and uniqueness of the Member States, being more difficult to make common policies.

The idea of creating a social space (*espace social*), introduced in 1981 by François Mitterrand was taken over by Jacques Delors when he became the President of the Commission in 1985. In the period before the signing of the Single European Act (SEA) there have been numerous debates on social policies. Delors's compromise was that he rejected the idea that the social dimension implies unification or consolidation, rather he promoted the

³⁵ Mishra Ramesh, *Society and Social Policy: theoretical perspectives on welfare*, London/Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977, pp. 33-42.

³⁶ Wolfgang Streeck, "Neo-Voluntarism: A New European Social Policy Regime?", in *Governance in the European Union*, Gary Marks, Fritz W. Scharpf, Philippe C. Schmitter and Wolfgang Streeck (eds.), London: Sage Publications, 1996, pp. 74-75.

³⁷ Robert R. Geyer, *Exploring European Social Policy*, UK: Polity Press, 2000, p. 211.

idea of <coherence>.³⁸ At that moment it became clear that harmonisation was not possible and that new solutions were required. Delors's commitment to the social dimension was obvious. Any attempt to render a new depth to the Single Market, but which disregards this social dimension shall be foredoomed to failure.³⁹ The social dialogue is a core concept of his thinking. It was the syndicates and the employers that became the initiators of social policies, rather than the Commission. Geyer considers that the federalism elements are significant ingredients in Delors's vision of equable development.⁴⁰ In the second half of 1987, the Belgian presidency develops the idea of social policy on the "plinth" concept of social rights (*socle social*).

The Belgian Labour Minister carries on Delors's endeavours, and Jacques Delors continues to encourage the "social dialogue" platform.⁴¹

This desideratum perpetuates and is adopted by the cultural directives through the concept of cultural dialogue. In 8-9 December 1989 a meeting takes place in Strasbourg, where the leaders of the Member States, except for the UK, adopt on the 9th of December *the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers*. It is mentioned in the preamble that "the same importance must be given to both the social and the economic aspects"⁴². The difference between this document and *the European Social Charter* of the Council of Europe is that the references to medical care and social assistance, social services, etc. are made without a direct link to occupation. The similitudes between *the Community Charter* and *the European Social Charter* are that none has any force of law and thus is not

³⁸ J. Delors, "Preface" in *New Dimensions in European Social Policy*, J. Vandamme (ed.), London: Croom Helm, 1985, pp. ix-xx, p. xviii.

³⁹ J. Delors, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁴⁰ How could otherwise justify Delors his vision of a balanced economic and social development in EU without recognizing the elements of federalism? (Robert R. Geyer, *Exploring European Social Policy*, UK: Polity Press, 2000, p. 209) and Charter of Basic Social Rights for Weorkers (COM(89) 568 29th of November 1989) in Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK, MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 10, p. 20.

⁴¹ Delors considers economy to be the key factor in bringing progress in a society (Jacques Delors, *Conference on the Future of European Social Policy*, 1994, in Robert R. Geyer, *Exploring European Social Policy*, UK: Polity Press, 2000, p. 203).

⁴² Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 8.

binding for the signatories. We can still observe a rather clear direction from the economic towards the social.

Afterwards the Council invited the Community to prepare initiatives to adopt legal instruments as regards the social policies (which fall under the responsibility of the Community). There resulted an action programme with 47 initiatives for the development of the social dimension of the SEM.⁴³ The method of implementation was based on counselling, mediation through consultative boards and social dialogue. It can be noticed that this strategy shall also be adopted in the case of culture.

Stephen R. Thomas considers that social movements are provoked not only economically, socially, but also culturally and the *social question* is, in certain historical contexts, the development of a *cultural question*.⁴⁴ In the Commission of the European communities, *First report on the application of the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers* (COM (91) 511, 5th of December 1991), the discussions of the Luxemburg Council, assembled in June 1991, are resumed. The outcome of the implementation of the SEM programme has not registered any comparable progress as regards the public policies domain. In this and the following reports the three underlying principles of the initiatives of the Commission are emphasized: subsidiarity, the diversity of national systems, cultures and practices and the maintaining of the competitiveness of the assignments, confirming thus the secondary role of the social dimension.⁴⁵ The hardships in the national implementation of social policies are linked to the diversity of national systems, cultures and practices and this becomes the basis of new strategies of *hard law* and *soft law*. It becomes obvious that harmonisation is impossible.

1.3. *The social dimension and the cultural dimension*

The Social Policy Protocol, annexed to the Maastricht Treaty, mentions neither the harmonisation, nor the approximation; it rather

⁴³ Charter of Basic Social Rights for Workers (COM(89) 568, 29th of November 1989, in Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 10, p. 20.

⁴⁴ Stephen R. Thomas, "What are social movements today?", in *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, vol 9, no. 4, 1996, p. 580.

⁴⁵ Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK, MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 10, p. 20.

reaffirms the intention to respect national distinctiveness, recommending that these terms should not avert the Member States from maintaining or introducing their more extended own measures (article 2, 6). The role of the Commission is limited to encouraging the cooperation between Member States and facilitating the coordination of their undertakings in all the domains of social policy presented in the Protocol (article 5). Hereby, the endeavour of Delors is carried on: social dialogue and counselling. National distinctiveness plays a key role, laying emphasis once more on the need to approach the cultural dimension in the EU.

The Single European Market – SEM – was launched on 1 January 1993. The tension rose between national governments and the Community on social policies; certain social policies of the Community were not encountered on a national level. Furthermore, discussions started on the possibility of indenting national sovereignty.⁴⁶ A similar discussion will take place in the cultural domain regarding national identity versus European identity.

Thus result the *European Consolidated versions of the EU Treaty* and the *EC Treaty*, which includes the amendments made by the Treaty of Amsterdam, enfolding the social dimension – a key component of the European Integration process. Article 13 (new) encourages action in the refusal of discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, religion or religious belief, disabilities, age or social orientation.⁴⁷ Furthermore, emphasis is laid on the role of vocational formation and retraining as means of supporting the work force to adapt to the industrial and technological changes.⁴⁸

Strong bonds can be observed with the occupation of the work force, but also a continuation of the process of identifying issues which will eventually be taken over by other domains (in the case of retraining and

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

⁴⁷ EU Treaties - http://europa.eu/eu-law/decision-making/treaties/index_en.htm, December 2015.

⁴⁸ The Council and the Commission produce reports regarding the employment situation. The Council is empowered to form a consultative status with the Employment Committee to monitor the employment situation and issue opinions in consultation with management and workers' representatives (see Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 17).

vocational formation – these will fall under the umbrella of *life long learning*, an educational strategy adopted by the Member States).⁴⁹

The consolidated EC Treaty includes a section linked to culture. The signatories of this treaty express their intention to encourage the thriving of the Member States' cultures, concurrently observing the regional and national cultural diversity and, in the meantime, bringing forth the common cultural heritage.⁵⁰

The signing and the ratification of the Treaty of Amsterdam lead to a formal appreciation of the core importance of occupation as a European level issue.⁵¹ Article 1 of this Social Policy Protocol amended article 117 of the Treaty of Rome, excluding the references to the harmonisation of social systems through the alleged confidence in the automatic improvement of social policies with the functioning of the common market. These have been replaced with specific objectives and emphasis was laid on the importance of taking into consideration the various national practices.⁵²

Nonetheless, there are no appointed institutions to create a common social policy. The fear to not infringe on national sovereignty is increasing.⁵³

The role of the Community continues to be a complementary supportive one, although France has made efforts to convince the other government leaders to assign an interventionist role to the Community.⁵⁴ In 1970, Shanks writes about the role of the Commission in the social field: as a "catalyst", an educator and factor of influence, coordinator of research, "standard-setter".⁵⁵ Twenty years later, against the framework of social exclusion, another Social Affairs Commissioner, Pádraig Flynn, used similar terms to describe the role of the Commission as a compensation

⁴⁹ Jacques Delors wrote the report "Learning: the Treasure Within"; 1996 became the Year of Lifelong Learning – J. Delors, 1996, *Learning: The treasure within*, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, UNESCO – <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0010/001095/109590eo.pdf>, June 2011.

⁵⁰ Title XII, article 151 – European Union Consolidated versions of the EU Treaty and the EC Treaty, with the changes of the Treaty of Amsterdam, in Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, pp. 20, 226.

⁵¹ Linda Hantrais, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 11.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

⁵⁵ M. Shanks, *European Social Policy, Today and Tomorrow*, Oxford/ New York: Pergamon, 1977, p. 84.

office for information and "a catalyst for action".⁵⁶ Neill Nugent summarised the role of the Commission in six titles: initiator and developer of policies and legislation, executive functions, keeper of the legal framework, external representative and negotiator, mediator and conciliator and the conscience of the Union, its role being "both central and vital for the entire EU system".⁵⁷

At the end of the 80s, after 30 years of activity, the Community is no longer trying to convert the systems, but rather makes efforts to encourage the national policies to converge on a well-defined number of common objectives, without intervening in the systems which have created them from different traditions.⁵⁸ Following such debates, in 1992, the Commission removed from its agenda the harmonization of protection/social security systems and it emphasized the diversity of the Member States, the fact that they are deeply embedded in distinctive models, traditions and cultures.⁵⁹ The 1992 Council's recommendations regarding the objectives and policies of social protection acknowledged that harmonization was an unviable objective and was not endorsed by the Member States.⁶⁰ For the Consolidated EC Treaty of 1997, the Member States have confirmed once more that they were not prepared to surrender their national sovereignty in the social domain. *The Consolidated version of*

⁵⁶ "Preface" in "Towards a Europe of solidarity: combating social exclusion", *Social Europe Supplement*, 4/93, pp. 3-4, 1993, in Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 238.

⁵⁷ Neill Nugent, *The Government and Politics of the European Union*, USA: Duke University Press, 1994, p. 98, p. 122.

⁵⁸ The European Institute of Social Security, 1988, p. 9, in Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 26.

⁵⁹ O. Quintin, "The convergence of social protection objectives and policies: a contribution to solidarity in Europe", *Social Europe Supplement*, vol. 5, no. 92, 1992, pp. 9-12, in Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 25.

⁶⁰ The recommendation of the Council (on the 27th of July 1992) on the convergence of social protection objectives and policies, (92/442/EEC) (OJ L 245/49 26.8.92; Also, the "convergence" principle expressed in 1994 in *White Paper* (European social policies need to take into account and respect national differences) in Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 236 and Alfio Cerami, *Social Policy in Central and Eastern Europe. The Emergence of a New European Welfare Regime*, Berlin, Lit Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2006, p. 223.

the *EC Treaty* refers to convergence and economic performance (article 2), but does not expand over the social area.⁶¹

In the *EC Treaty*, The Council may make recommendations, but the Member States, on a national level operate the social policies following common objectives. The harmonisation of national legislation and orders is also excluded when referring to education, vocational training, youth (article 150 §4), culture (article 151 §5) and public health (article 152 §4c).⁶²

The emphasis is laid rather on the principle of subsidiarity and the supporting role of the Union. Sceptical views emerge: Laura Cram considers that the Commission is acting "purposeful opportunistic" in the social domain.⁶³

In the *European Commission, Social Action Programme 1998-2000* EMU creates the "necessary economic conditions to support the social progress"; it also includes matters on population ageing and its demographic implications, as well as the role of public policies in regard to the transition to the market economy of the countries joining the EU and the support in aligning their legislation on social issue in order to develop adequate social protection systems. Social policies ought to promote decent life standards and quality for all, in an active, inclusive and healthy society that encourages the access to occupation, agreeable working conditions and equal opportunities.⁶⁴ The European Court of Justice (ECJ) encourages national authority in social policies.

Social policies are the outcome of the time and space they were elaborated in. Social stratifications have repercussions on social policies. They were defined as the study of how, why and to what extent do different governments follow the various activity or inactivity paths.⁶⁵ The study of

⁶¹ Linda Hantrais, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁶² *Ibidem*.

⁶³ Laura Cram, *Policy-making in the European Union: conceptual lenses and the integration process*, London/New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 6.

⁶⁴ *European Commission, Social Action Programme 1998-2000*, OOEPEC, 1998 (COM(1998) 259, 29th of April 1998, p. 3, in Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK, MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 15.

⁶⁵ Arnold J. Heidenheimer, Hugh Hecló and Carolyn Teich Adams, *Comparative Public Policy: The Politics of Social Choice in America, Europe, and Japan* (3rd ed.), New York: St. Martins, 1990, p. 3, in Alfio Cerami, *Social Policy in Central and Eastern Europe. The Emergence of a New European Welfare Regime*, Berlin: Lit Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2006, p. 40.

various social policies implies making reference to a model. The difficulty in comparing social policies lays on the necessity to see beyond the national social system, cultural framework and personal opinions on what a society should be.⁶⁶ On the contrary, looking at these hardships related to the different cultural frameworks and definitions of society, one can distinguish the elements of uniqueness of each country, the cultural heritage and the manner of creating and implementing policies on a national level.

Each distinctive social protection system is a result of a lengthy process which reflects the idiosyncratic, socio-economic, political and cultural traditions, as well as the struggles of the administrative and financial structures.⁶⁷ Beyond the internal cultural implications which impose the organisation of the society, the external factors also have an influence. In the case of cultural policies, this is visible in what concerns globalisation and its effects on the internal factors.

Common values are perceived as a unifying force and these converge towards the European Social Model: democracy and individual rights, free collective negotiation, market economy, equal opportunities for all, social welfare and solidarity.⁶⁸ In Foucault's opinion, power is not something which can be taken into possession, but rather something which acts and manifests in a certain way, it is rather a strategy than a possession:

"Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain... Power is employed and exercised through a net like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or concentrating target; they are always the elements of its

⁶⁶ Alfio Cerami, *Social Policy in Central and Eastern Europe. The Emergence of a New European Welfare Regime*, Berlin: Lit Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2006, p. 40.

⁶⁷ Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK, MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 37.

⁶⁸ European Commission, A White Paper – European Social Policy. A Way Forward for the Union, OOEPC, 1994, (COM(94) 333, 27th of July 1994, p. 9, in Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 39.

articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application."⁶⁹

The post-communist countries entered the EU's gravity field at the meeting point of three main dimensions: the past dimension with long term repercussions on the democratization process, the EU with existing challenges and mutual influence transfer in the enlargement phenomenon, but also the larger dimension of globalisation with its economic and socio-cultural challenges. Some researchers consider that in this context it is essential to define the freedom in decision making on a national level.⁷⁰

Conclusions

Globalisation, Europeanisation and the issues related to postmodernism have faced the Western European welfare states with a series of difficulties and challenges, but the social policy systems adapted to these challenges in various manners and confronted them. There are no signs of collapse or convergence towards a given model. It seems that in the future these regimes shall maintain their "influence, dimension and distinctive elements"⁷¹.

The Open Method of Coordination (OMC)⁷² is a new approach to govern the European social policy and it was adopted at the end of the 1990s. It tries to offer a "substantial" solution to the dilemma of European social policy, where the EU plays a more powerful role in the coordination of the Member States' social policies while the Member States maintain their authority in the social policy. Applied in the case of some types of social policies, this governing pattern is also disposed in the cultural field.

⁶⁹ M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, London: Harvester Press, 1980, p. 98.

⁷⁰ Bob Deacon, Michelle Hulse and Paul Stubbs, *Global Social Policy. International Organizations and the Future of Welfare*, London: SAGE Publications, 1997, Ethan B. Kapstein and B. Milanovic, "Responding to globalization. Social policy in emerging market economies", *Global Social Policy*, 1 (2) , 2001, pp. 191-212, in Alfio Cerami, *Social Policy in Central and Eastern Europe. The Emergence of a New European Welfare Regime*, Berlin: Lit Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2006, p. 65.

⁷¹ Robert R. Geyer, *Exploring European Social Policy*, UK: Polity Press, 2000, p. 210.

⁷² M. Büchs, *New governance in European social policy: the open method of coordination*, Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 224, Palgrave Studies in European Politics - <http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/34136/>, retrieved in June 2011.

The final form of the Union shall be forged by years of disputes, negotiations and compromises of a great variety of actors. It can be expected that the social movements will be part of this ongoing process, gradually transforming the wider structures of the institutionalised power, at the same time being shaped by those emerging structures.⁷³

The European social policies are different from the national social policies; the Western social policies emerged from a variety of distinctive national factors. There are some challenges that play a key role in the formation of particular social policy regimes. They are related to: the development of civil, political and social rights related to citizenship, national unification strategies, the debates between capital and *labour*, the religious divisions, gender relations, the impact of war etc.⁷⁴

The nation state remains a "pivotal political entity in the integrated Europe"⁷⁵.

The social policies of today's Europe can be summarised as: 1. Obligations of international legislation to allow labour mobility across the borders, 2. Increasing interdependence with the players of other national systems, 3. Competition among the national systems for the mobile production factors.⁷⁶

If the European identity was defined depending on common values, the challenge we face nowadays is to include the dimension of cultural diversity as well, however maintaining the unity as a core value of the EU.

The relevance of the national dimension appeared more significantly in the social policies also as a result of the enlargement of the EU. This was the underlying element for the launch of the cultural dimension as an emerging domain of the EU.

⁷³ Gary Marks and Doug McAdam, "Social Movements and the Changing Structure of Political Opportunity in the European Union", in *Governance in the European Union*, Gary Marks, Fritz W. Scharpf, Philippe C. Schmitter and Wolfgang Streeck (eds.), London: Sage Publications, 1996, p. 120.

⁷⁴ Robert R. Geyer, *Exploring European Social Policy*, UK: Polity Press, 2000, p. 208.

⁷⁵ Wolfgang Streeck, "Neo-Voluntarism: A New European Social Policy Regime?", in *Governance in the European Union*, Gary Marks, Fritz W. Scharpf, Philippe C. Schmitter and Wolfgang Streeck (eds.), London: Sage Publications, 1996, pp. 66-67.

⁷⁶ Wolfgang Streeck, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-85.

At present, the incursion in the social field as a helping endeavour to support the economic challenges becomes the final aim of the economic objectives. It shall be seen if this shift of perspective is a desideratum or a reality. At the *European Forum on Social Policy* of 1996, the President of the European Commission, Jacques Santer declared: There can be no social progress without economic progress, but neither the reverse: the economic welfare cannot be built in a "social desert"⁷⁷.

However, the undertakings in the social domain were more political than legal.⁷⁸ A similar model was to be approached regarding the European cultural directives. Jacques Delors continued to encourage the platform for "social dialogue".⁷⁹ This desideratum perpetuates and is taken over by the directives on culture as the concept of cultural dialogue. The method of implementation was based on counselling, mediation through consultative boards and social dialogue. Stephen R. Thomas considers that social movements are provoked not only economically, socially, but also culturally and the *social question* is, in certain historical contexts, the development of a *cultural question*.⁸⁰

We have noticed the importance of social policies for the subsequent directives on culture. In the directives on culture the sectors of education, gender policies and mobility continue to be the coordinates that create unity on a European level. Based on the hitherto research, we consider that these are the only domains where common cultural policies can be made in the EU, the rest of the indicators being linked to the diversity and cultural uniqueness of the members states, and it is more difficult to develop common policies. The discussions related to the possibility of indenting national sovereignty in the process of social policy making⁸¹ are similar to those that will take place in the cultural domain regarding national identity

⁷⁷ Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000, p. 19.

⁷⁸ Linda Hantrais, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁷⁹ Jacques Delors, *Conference on the Future of European Social Policy*, 1994, in Robert R. Geyer, *Exploring European Social Policy*, UK: Polity Press, 2000, p. 203.

⁸⁰ Stephen R. Thomas, "What are social movements today?", in *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, vol. 9, nr. 4, 1996, p. 580.

⁸¹ Linda Hantrais, *Social Policy in the European Union*, 2nd edition, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd, 2000, p. 9.

versus European identity. There are two forces in Europe: a centrifugal one of the European Union which tends to repel the Member States from the decisional sphere of the EU and a centripetal one of the Member States, which tends to draw the member countries towards the center.⁸²

Some challenges that appeared in the process of social policy making shall be taken over by the cultural domain (it is the case of retraining and vocational formation – these shall fall under the incidence of the concept of *life long learning*, an educational strategy adopted by the Member States).⁸³

The socio-cultural diversity on the one hand, and the attempt to harmonise the national systems, on the other, are matters which have raised and continue to raise questions on a European level, both in what concerns the social and the cultural dimensions.

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⁸² Alfio Cerami, *Social Policy in Central and Eastern Europe. The Emergence of a New European Welfare Regime*, Berlin: Lit Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2006, p. 222.

⁸³ Jacques Delors wrote the report "Learning: the Treasure Within"; 1996 became the Year of Lifelong Learning – J. Delors, 1996, *Learning: The treasure within*, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, UNESCO – <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0010/001095/109590eo.pdf>, June 2011.

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